

# A Review of Mediterranean Civil Society



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## EDITORIAL LETTER

Engagement with Civil Society is an essential part of the EU's relations with the Southern Neighbourhood countries. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are fundamental partners in helping to build sustainable peace, stronger democracies and achieve better policy and economic and social development. They have also a key role in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The EU is funding various initiatives to strengthen the role and participation of civil society in ensuring that their views and concerns are taken into account. On a bilateral level, the EU is reaching out to smaller and newer organisations including those outside capitals and is implementing roadmaps for engagement with civil society. At regional level, the South Civil Society Forum is an essential contribution to the ongoing consultative process with civil society in an initiative, that aims to strengthen mechanisms for dialogue between civil society in the Southern Neighbourhood and the EU institutions.

In addition to the support provided through specific civil society programmes the EU is also financially supporting civil society through bilateral and regional operations in the field of rule of law, human rights, environment, gender equality, media, youth and culture. The EU thematic programme for Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities is another important funding source for the EU support to civil society in the Southern Neighbourhood.

The EU funded programme "Med Dialogue for Rights and Equality", together with the Majalat project, is an important component of the EU regional support to civil society. The technical assistance provided under the Med Dialogue programme aims at consolidating civil society's capacity to promote, influence and monitor democratic reforms in the region. The programme advocates for civil society solutions to regional challenges. This ultimate goal requires a better knowledge and understanding of the civil society networks or other entities as well as of associations, citizens' initiatives or larger NGOs existing in the Euro-Mediterranean region, and more specifically in the Southern Mediterranean.

BRIDGING THE SEA aims at filling - at least partially - that knowledge gap, providing Med Dialogue programme, civil society practitioners and the EU itself with a series of statistical data, analysis and good practices that can better guide EU engagement and cooperation with civil society.

I very much encourage supporters of civil society actors in the Mediterranean to make the best use of this publication as it has the unique specificity to provide a view on networks, platforms, and other entities, which work across borders in the whole Mediterranean geographic area, including Euro-Mediterranean networks, South-South platforms, or organizations, which connect practitioners or activists from the two shores of the Mediterranean.



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## ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

At its inception, *Med Dialogue for Rights and Equality* Programme faced a fundamental question: how can we better contribute to support civil society organizations (CSOs) in the region to work together and strengthen their strategizing capacities? And how can this Programme coach them in this endeavour? These queries emerged from the observation that issues and challenges related to rights in the region could attain effective solutions only through transnational cooperation.

To answer these questions, the Programme needed to understand better if there is an organised civil society in the region holding this vocation to act beyond borders, and how such a civil society is working. Research was therefore required.

*BRIDGING THE SEA: A Review of Mediterranean Civil Society* is, in this respect, the final output of such a research. Carried out by the Med Dialogue Programme, the research aimed at presenting a "portrait" of civil society working beyond borders in the Mediterranean Space, with the overall objective of strengthening the role of regionally active organisations in building regional cohesion, social resilience, sustainable development and a culture of rights, on the one hand, while influencing policy-making in the Southern Neighbourhood and the Euro-Mediterranean Space, on the other hand.

Led by a pool of experts, through deskwork, interviews and a general survey, the research explores several types of organizations, their capacities and experiences, and highlights on their achievements and impact. It includes the mapping of:

- Existing networks or other entities with a regional scope and/or a transnational structure in the Euro-MedSpace and in the Southern Neighbourhood region; and
- Existing initiatives and campaigns in the Euro-Med Space and in the Southern Neighbourhood region that have engaged in envisioning the Mediterranean as a common space.

For more information about the research, please check Med Dialogue website:

[www.meddialogue.eu](http://www.meddialogue.eu)



## What is the content of this publication?

Building upon data and findings of the research, this publication offers:

- A. Statistical data on needs, activities and orientations of the regional networks in the Mediterranean, including types of networks, geographical scope and action focus.

Key findings of the research are displayed in the form of tables and infographics covering several aspects, including:

- Networks' areas of work and geographical scope.
- Achievements in advocacy and policymaking.
- Networks' vision of the Mediterranean Space.
- Networks' experience and funding policies; and
- Networks' needs and Med Dialogue support.

- B. An assessment of the social, political and cultural implications of the regional networks' work through thematic contributions.

These are narrative contributions elaborating on the findings of the survey research. Prepared by six social scientists or CSO practitioners, these contributions combine the assessment of the collected data with general considerations and interpretations of the observed trends. The focus of the contributions was chosen on the basis of the questions raised by the respondents to the survey, and the most relevant issues emerged from the research:

- 1- *General overview on the lessons of the survey*

This section describes what the survey tells us with respect to Mediterranean networks, their work and focus. It elaborates on challenges and opportunities for the development of transnational CSOs in the region.

- 2- *CSO public mission and internal democracy versus the cause of democracy*

This section offers a balance of the role of CSOs in consolidating democratic practices. Particularly, it assesses how CSOs have internalized the value of democracy and focuses on alliance-building dynamics and opportunities.

- 3- *Successes and failures of regional advocacy action in the Mediterranean*

This section provides a global assessment of advocacy practices beyond borders in the region. Furthermore, it tries to identify the main challenges ahead for successful campaigning, and possible solutions for developing advocacy at the regional level.

- 4- *Environmental engagement beyond borders in the Mediterranean*

This section examines whether there a regional approach has emerged in civil society green activism. It explores why green challenges are to some extent still peripheral in Mediterranean CSO action, and provides examples of transnational environmental action.

- 5- *The issue of achieving sustainability in civil society work*

This section reviews the challenges for a sustainable civil society work: resources, funding policy, independence and organizational sustainability are some of the issues at stake. How these networks can overcome hindrances is the central question addressed here.

- 6- *Our common vision*

This section gives food for thought on the challenge of building a common vision for a free, just, and united Mediterranean, as well as on the future roles and prospects for Mediterranean integration through citizenship activism.

- C. Insight on "good practices" carried out by some of the identified civil society organizations.

The survey research gathered 53 initiatives/activities that – according to the respondents – could be defined as "good practices challenging divisive narratives and re-launching the idea of building a common and integrated space among the nations and communities of the Mediterranean region". Based on the assessment of the Mapping findings, 13 case-studies were chosen for their positive contribution in meeting the challenges related to the issues addressed in the analytical part: regional advocacy, CSOs and democracy, civil society work sustainability, environmental engagement, and a Mediterranean common vision.

## Who can use this publication?

*BRIDGING THE SEA: A Review of Mediterranean Civil Society* could be useful to a diversified range of stakeholders and for multiple purposes:

- from CSO training sessions to develop new ideas on how to manage a situation or solve a problem, to outreach/advocacy operations aimed at bringing together civil energies beyond borders; and
- from academic research purposes in the field of civil society space, to policy dialogue initiatives involving public decision-makers and community stakeholders aimed at social change and reform.

While this publication does not claim to "close the book" on what Mediterranean civil society is and what it could become, it does strive to provide a space to reflect and spark action on behalf of all those who wish to see a stronger civil society in the region, working toward establishing a shared culture of rights and equality, which is the necessary condition for a future of peace, stability, respect, and cohesion.





## THE SURVEY RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

The survey research, conducted between December 2019 and May 2020, provides a unique source of information on civil society networks, platforms and other entities with a transnational status or scope of action operating in the Mediterranean Space. The goal was not only to identify and study the main characteristics of the networks, but also to verify their interest in being engaged in Med Dialogue Programme activities and receive support to their advocacy work. Med Dialogue's initiative is based on the idea that tackling complex problems is possible only by networking with stakeholders from different countries and that civil society can provide an important contribution if it has the capacity to experiment methodologies of intervention and joint solutions that go beyond national borders.

This is particularly crucial in a period where we have been witnessing a massive, unprecedented decrease in space for civil society (Youngs et al., 2017; Tanzarella, 2017). Invoking national security, traditional values, religious beliefs, or social and economic reasons, governments willing to repress civil society have passed arbitrary laws, limited access to funding, imposed anti-terrorism and anti-protest measures to target human rights groups, applied travel bans, frozen assets and carried out legal harassment (Brenchenmacher, 2017). Through the connection with stakeholders outside its own national borders, civil society can find ways to overcome the limits of an increasingly shrinking national space and regain autonomy, express its voice and reassume a central role.

### Setting Survey Parameters

#### *How to identify those CSO networks working at a transnational level?*

It was a challenge to define a 'network', a loose term used to describe a variety of formal and informal aggregations. In this research process, we used the term 'network' to describe all the mapped entities although the general term 'organisation' was sometimes preferred for stylistic reasons.

As for the definition of Civil Society Organisation (CSO), the starting point has been the definition set out in the communiqué "The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations" (European Commission, 2012):

CSOs include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non-violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social, or economic. Operating from the local to the national, regional, and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal, and informal organisations.

Although this definition has the advantage of clearly identifying CSOs as the 'third'

sector of society (they are non-state and not-for-profit structures), the variety and types of organisations that can be considered CSOs still generate confusion. Therefore, this research process took into account several CSO characteristics emerging from the discussions set out in the framework of CSO mappings conducted in EU-funded projects. In view of having a working definition for collecting data, CSOs have been considered as all forms of non-profit grouping or aggregation (formal or informal) created by citizens to support a cause and/or address a problem that are characterised by autonomy, voluntary and free adhesion of members, independence, and action space outside political institutions.

In order to be mapped, organisations needed to be an aggregation of CSOs focusing on a sector, a geographical area or a campaign. Moreover, the mapping focused on those networks that recognise the need to tackle complex issues involving a variety of CSO actors going beyond the national level. The process, therefore, included networks that have engaged other CSO actors across national borders (involving at least 2 countries) and/or work at a regional level (Euro-Med Space, Southern Neighbourhood, Mashrek, Maghreb). In certain cases, individual CSOs were included mainly because: i) they operate in conflict areas that are deemed particularly relevant to understand the complex dynamics of the Mediterranean; or ii) they work at the national level, but they show an interesting added value in terms of their capacity to work at a regional or transnational level.

In view of engaging the most promising networks in the Med Dialogue activities, the research worked to identify those networks that were more relevant to the Programme's objectives at three interrelated levels:

**Areas of work:** their policy focus is aligned to the Programme's thematic areas – tackling socio-economic inequalities; consolidating the democratic space and citizenship rights; addressing ecological challenges; influencing institutions to better serve citizens; developing critical thinking; and preventing youth radicalisation.

**Target groups:** their activities and initiatives involve at least one or more of the following target groups – women, CSOs, activists, politicians, trade unions, professional associations, researchers, economic players and/or religious institutions.

**Tools of action:** the main tools of action used by the networks are considered relevant to foster positive engagement and future cooperation in one or more areas – advocacy, awareness campaigns, policymaking, capacity building, networking, strategizing and planning, research and use of innovative tools (e.g. performing arts, audio-visuals, role-playing).



## What were the research phases and applied tools?

The research process followed a set of defined steps, which can be summarised as follows:

1. *Analysis of relevant literature:* collecting and analysing information contained in existing documents related to the CSO sector in general and in the Euro-Mediterranean space specifically.
2. *Analysis of online sources:* analysing available online information related to CSO networks with the aim of understanding the nature and structure of existing networks.
3. *Contact with key informants:* contacting informants having knowledge of the sector who helped in identifying CSO networks relevant to the objectives of the Med Dialogue Programme. In a few cases, national CSOs were consulted to identify other transnational networks with a Mediterranean vision and eventually joined the survey.
4. *Preparation of a database of organisations:* preparing a list of organisations to be included in the mapping process was an essential juncture in view of the need to select networks that would subsequently participate in an in-depth questionnaire to analyse qualitative and quantitative aspects. About 3,200 organisations were screened in order to have a list of around 150 networks to be surveyed.
5. *Elaboration of an in-depth questionnaire:* administering a semi-structured questionnaire to gather in-depth information and identify general features and trends. The questionnaire was administered online from 10 February to 30 April 2020 in Arabic, English and French to give respondents the chance to express themselves in their preferred language. The researchers and the Med Dialogue Programme Team ensured follow-up and assistance to facilitate the process of filling out the questionnaire. Ninety-eight organisations answered the questionnaire providing quantitative and qualitative results.
6. *Data analysis:* analysing information collected through the questionnaire; both qualitatively, using the statistical analysis software SPSS, and qualitatively by conducting content analysis of the open answers provided by the interviewed networks.

## CSOs for a Mediterranean Vision

It is worth adding that the research project also engaged with key informants who were knowledgeable of Euro-Mediterranean civil society to get feedback on one of the key issues tackled by Med Dialogue: Which are the CSO networks that have been working on the idea of “cooperating with others towards a common objective”, promoting the vision of the Mediterranean as a common space and challenging the narrative of separation and division between the two Mediterranean shores? This exercise was very useful in order to go beyond the information available online and in relevant literature, to reach out to the reality of networks and cross-check information in view of identifying CSO networks that would merit an in-depth analysis.

## Difficulties and Challenges Encountered

The lack of a clear research population generated difficulties in estimating the number and main characteristics of CSO networks operating in the Mediterranean. However, analysis of the information available online and contacts with key informants have shown that the transnational dimension of a network is not always clear. Some organisations based in a single country have the ability to work transnationally, while other organisations – despite having headquarters or representatives in different countries – do not express how they work beyond the national level in a clear way.

In some instances, the involvement of Israeli organisations was perceived as a “political stance” in favour of Israel, and certain organisations objected to participating in the research process. In some cases, organisations accepted to send the questionnaire, but stated their unwillingness to attend events or organise joint activities with Israeli organisations. Although the Med Dialogue Programme is an EU-funded initiative and it is meant to be inclusive, the presence of Israeli organisations was seen as an obstacle by other organisations coming from Southern Mediterranean countries. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict persists against the background of Euro-Mediterranean relations and maintaining a neutral role will not be an easy task in the future.

For civil society organisations, the developments of the past decades have led to a progressively shrinking space within which to operate without being subjected to pressures and restrictions from governments and other power groups. This situation has generated a certain diffidence and a great reluctance to speak or share information on civil society work, in fear that it may be leaked to or land in the hands of those who might use it for repressive purposes. For this reason, a bond of trust and collaboration had to be built with key informants involved in the mapping process, guaranteeing their anonymity in view of making them free to express their point of view and protect their work.

Identifying informal CSO networks has proved exceedingly difficult. Although social media are a good source of information on informal events, it is complicated to identify CSO networks that work informally. The research thus focused on formal networks and the question of identifying informal networks may be addressed at a later stage, when the mapped networks will be involved in Med Dialogue activities and asked to assist in identifying informal networks.

The mapping process did not have the objective of being exhaustive and identifying all CSO networks active in the Mediterranean space. It was conceived as a practical tool for the Med Dialogue Programme to engage with CSO networks aligned with its objectives and thematic areas. The database containing information about the roughly 150 mapped organisations is a starting point and it will be expanded over time to include new networks. Ideally, at the conclusion of the Med Dialogue Programme, the database could be transferred to the EU to become part of its information and knowledge base on civil society and could be used for future initiatives.



# GENERAL OVERVIEW

“ Knowledge is the conformity  
of the object and the intellect ”

Averroes (Ibn Rushd), philosopher and scientist,  
1126 - 1198

## Engaging Beyond Borders: challenges and opportunities

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### ABSTRACT

This chapter summarises and contextualises the findings of the mapping exercise on civil society networks, platforms and other entities in the southern Mediterranean and Euro-Med space undertaken by the Med Dialogue Programme. These findings allow for general conclusions and recommendations to be presented regarding the value of the survey, what it means, how it can be used and how to build upon it for future quantitative and qualitative research into organisations and networks that work across borders in this region and which seek to advocate for rights and equality within their countries of origin and the region as a whole.

## Political Background

Southern Mediterranean civil society organisations (CSOs) flourished in the 2000s and reached a zenith in the socio-political arenas of their countries in the early 2010s after they played vital roles in the uprisings that reverberated throughout the region. During the heyday of the 2011 social protests, CSOs mobilised the masses, helped articulate their demands, advocated with them, and on their behalf, and provided experts, politicians and organisers.

A few years later, by the end of the same decade, and despite another wave of protests in 2019, such a seemingly tectonic shift appeared to have been largely reversed in the face of successive waves of crushing backlashes and under the weight of internationalised civil wars. Instead of the dignity and freedom the protestors had demanded, many Arab cities were either devastated by internecine conflicts, at worst, or a return to the status quo and being subjected to repressive and whimsical rule dominated by security agencies, at best. Neoliberal police states are firmly in control in countries like Egypt, Bahrain, Algeria and Morocco, while networks of elites, bound together by socioeconomic interests and depending on external support, are engaged in bloody civil wars in Syria, Libya and Yemen. Lebanon is imploding while Iraq, Sudan and Tunisia are on shaky transitional ground.

During the years after the first wave of social protests had subsided, “ruling regimes sought to subjugate [CSOs], impede the application of their programmes and the continuity of their work by passing arbitrary laws, restricting access to funding sources, imposing antiterrorism and anti-protest measures to target human rights groups with travel bans, asset freezes and legal harassment” (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p. 1).

As highlighted above, the backlash from regimes in restricting civil space for most CSOs was severe and evident through legal and extra-legal harassment, including imprisonment. The repression was dramatically harsher for political movements such as April 6 in Egypt or the Coordination Committees in Syria. Several CSOs migrated or closed down, some toned down their rhetoric and public persona, while others decided to work closer with governments and stay away from any seemingly political issues (e.g. CSOs working predominantly in aid and services in countries such as Egypt and Syria).

## Mapping Exercise

This is why the mapping exercise, a critical part of the overall survey research, is timely as it strives to study civil society actors and highlight their practices, largely in the southern Mediterranean, at a sensitive and pivotal time of their evolution, while assessing whether transnational and trans-Mediterranean activities can help them work more effectively to realise common goals, undertake joint advocacy projects and work on regional challenges.





This process was initiated as part of the Med Dialogue for Rights and Equality Programme, which aims at bringing CSOs from all relevant countries to discuss and seek solutions to common problems in this region.<sup>1</sup> Med Dialogue envisages a role for the NGOs “in building sustainable development, regional cohesion and resilience, as well as influencing policy-making in the Southern Neighbourhood and the Euro-Mediterranean Space.”<sup>2</sup>

The exercise paints a picture of a lively civil society space post-Arab spring, despite the well-documented ‘revenge measures’ of reinstated repressive regimes which are restricting civic space in several countries. Nonetheless, CSOs seem to be increasing in number and scope of work despite this repression: notwithstanding the wars that have ravaged several countries and the tough transition for many activists having to grapple with complex economic and security issues in countries such as Tunisia.

For several years preceding 2011, southern and eastern Mediterranean CSOs struggled for democratisation and human rights. They were advocates, representatives, lobbyists and members of transnational networks conveying pressures from western capitals to their own capital. These multiple roles varied greatly from one country to another in the region. Most politically impactful and visible CSOs in the late 2000s – informal associations such as football fan clubs, or *Ultras* and the April 6 movement in Egypt, the *Rif* protest networks in Morocco or the Coordination Committees in war-torn Syria – were not necessarily the kind sought by this mapping process. However, these large, informal and loose networks also worked with the smaller and/or more formal CSOs which focus more on advocacy, lobbying and research rather than mobilisation and confrontation. It is on these latter groups that the mapping exercise has shone a valuable light.

## Methodology

Any survey must have an initial framework to fence in the terrain it wants to map. This survey started with the broad EU definition for civil society entities that could be included in the mapping process.<sup>3</sup>

Aided by this approach and interviews with key informants,<sup>4</sup> an extensive list of 3,200 organisations was assembled from main stakeholders and online desk research. The long list was then filtered through multiple criteria to reach a short register of 146 organisations. The main criterion was that an organisation or a network invested in issues related to equality and

<sup>1</sup> This includes as well a regional public consultation process involving CSOs, regional initiatives and entities, and other stakeholders in the region aiming at producing a vision on the Mediterranean region as a common space (see footnote 6).

<sup>2</sup> See [www.meddialogue.eu](http://www.meddialogue.eu)

<sup>3</sup> CSOs include “all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and nonviolent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social, or economic. Operating from the local to the national, regional, and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal, and informal organizations” (European Commission, 2012, p.3).

<sup>4</sup> Key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who know what is going on in the community.

human rights and had “a regional scope of action and/or a trans-national structure.” (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p.1) This regional approach was indeed broad as it included “the Euro-Med Space, Southern Neighbourhood, Mashrek, and Maghreb Regions”, (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p.3) and even a few Syrian organisations that work largely on national issues but operate from diverse locations outside the war-torn country. Consequently, the selected organisations had to be interested in transnational issues, especially those of interest to both Mediterranean shores.

The study focused on organisations with specific political positions which they advance through policy advocacy on issues such as “confronting *socio-economic inequalities*; preventing youth *radicalisation* ... addressing the *ecological challenge* ..., [and] consolidating the *democratic space and citizenship rights*” (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p.3). They also needed to produce ‘good’ work, a criterion that was investigated through interviews with key informants to judge the quality of the organisational output.

For each CSO on the long list, the researchers collected information such as domicile of headquarters, contact information, legal status, main activities, geographic scope of work, target audiences and strategies. A total of 98 CSOs out of 146 responded to the questionnaire. Their responses are the basis of the mapping report which we analyse in this chapter.

Restrictions on travel, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, forced the researchers to cancel field visits. This has deprived the exercise of rich information that could have been yielded through open-ended questions and face-to-face meetings with respondents (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p. 14).

## Main Findings

Most respondents (42) answered the questionnaire in English followed by 29 in French. These are noteworthy choices since less than a third returned their answers in Arabic while most of them work in or on predominantly Arabic-speaking countries.

Language	Number of Questionnaires
Arabic	27
English	42
French	29
Total	98

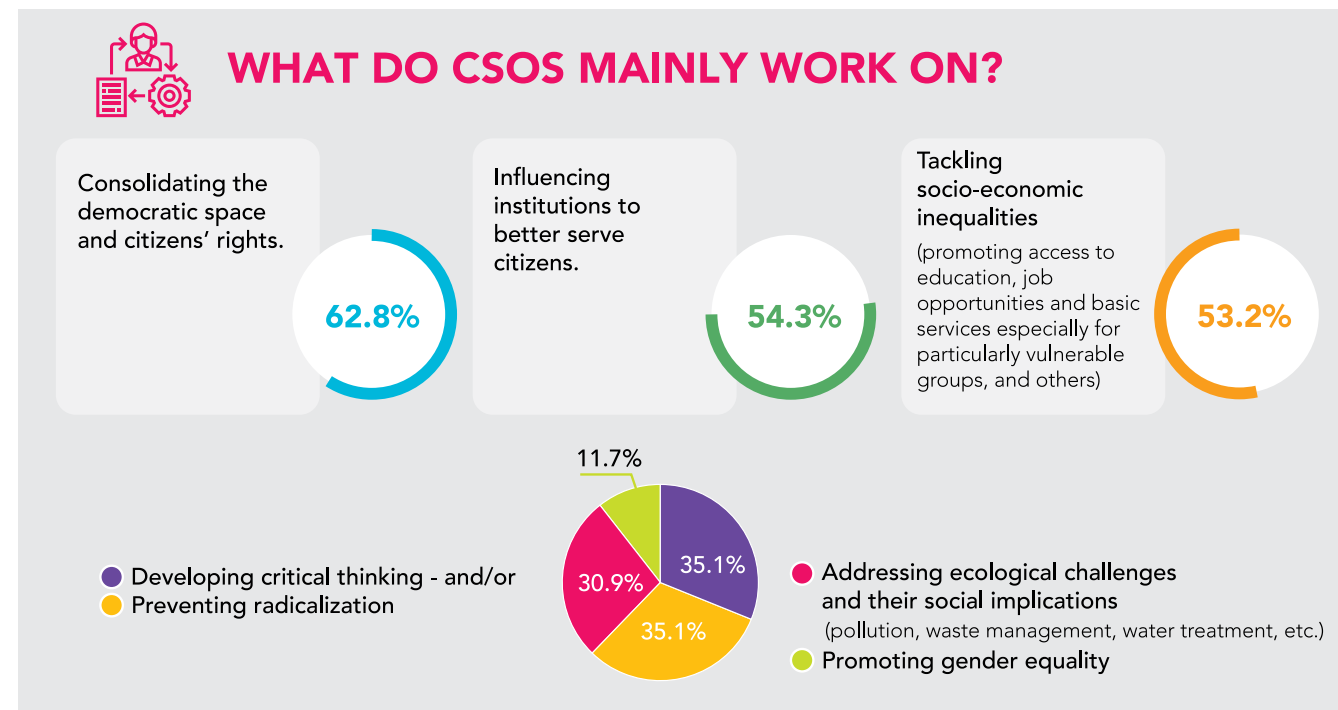
Table 1: Questionnaires collected

This could be an indicator of the educational and cultural background of senior employees in these organisations who more often than not come from upper-middle class or higher



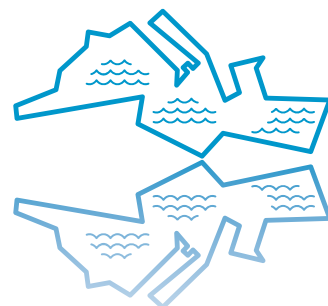
economic levels. This raises issues related to representation, gaps in world views and possibly a lack of articulation with actual constituencies.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than identity politics or narrow nationalist motivations, these organisations are largely driven by a strong belief in democracy, human rights and economic justice. This is proven by the fact that nearly 63 percent of respondents work on democratisation and rights in general, while more than 53 percent included socioeconomic inequalities as part of their mandate (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, pp. 10-9).



Infographic 1

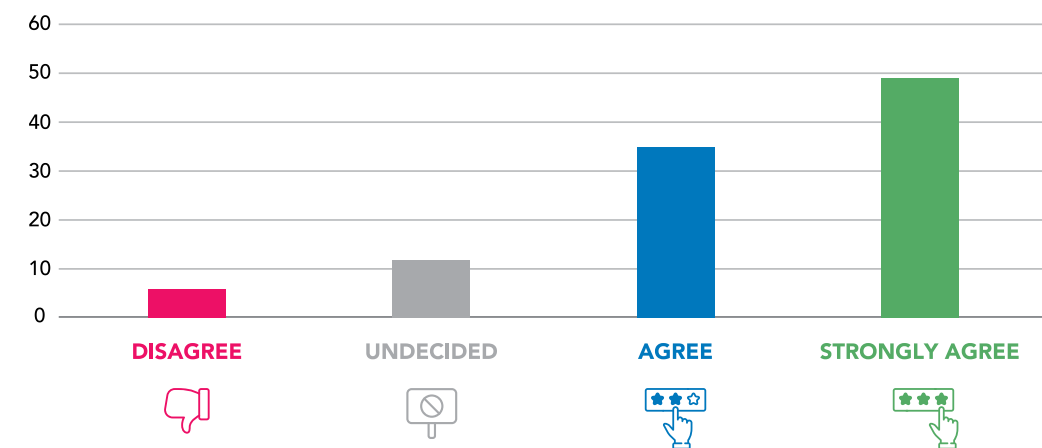
The large majority of these organisations, or 84 percent, believe that there are common values among the Mediterranean countries from all sides and that these values could serve as the basis for effective cooperation.



<sup>5</sup> There is a large body of literature on the dilemmas of legitimacy and representation of non-governmental organisations and civil society non-membership associations. For a recent field study see Adly, A. (2018). The Human Rights Movement and Contentious Politics in Egypt (2004-2014). Arab Reform Initiative. Available at <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/the-human-rights-movement-and-contentious-politics-in-egypt-2004-2014/>

## NETWORKS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS MEDITERRANEAN COMMON VALUES

The mapped networks believe that Euro-Mediterranean and Southern Mediterranean countries share common values that could be the basis for effective cooperation.

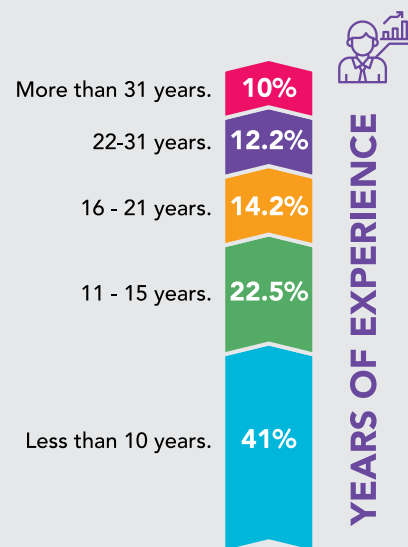


Infographic 2

However, their views on how to democratise and bring about a more equal society are often frowned upon by the ruling regimes in the southern and eastern Mediterranean. It is with these regimes that the EU and European countries need to work, to ensure stability and security in a region where change through massive movements of people is perceived by many in the European Mediterranean as a threat to be contained. This tension between common values with CSOs, on the one hand, and common interests with the ruling regimes in the southern/eastern Mediterranean, on the other, presents the EU with a policy dilemma.

These organisations are also ready to work with and on the EU as an organisation as well as with individual states. Almost 80 percent of respondents use advocacy to realise their goals (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p.10). It is safe to assume that most work on Europe and the US; as the main allies or donors to their own governments who can, therefore, bring pressure to bear on Arab capitals or assist in ways that are compatible with the desires of these CSOs for deeper democratic practices, rule of law and less socioeconomic inequality.

The CSOs in this mapping exercise are young with more than 90 percent of them being established after 1990 and nearly 64 percent after 2005. Most are also small in size with 64.5 percent of them employing 20 employees or less and 57 percent operating on less than 300,000 euros a year (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, pp. 13-12). The EU might like to strengthen mechanisms to support and work with such small organisations – which are usually unable to satisfy arduous EU bureaucratic requirements or justify their workload and the higher risks usually incurred – by awarding relatively small funds to a large number of mid-sized organisations.



Infographic 3

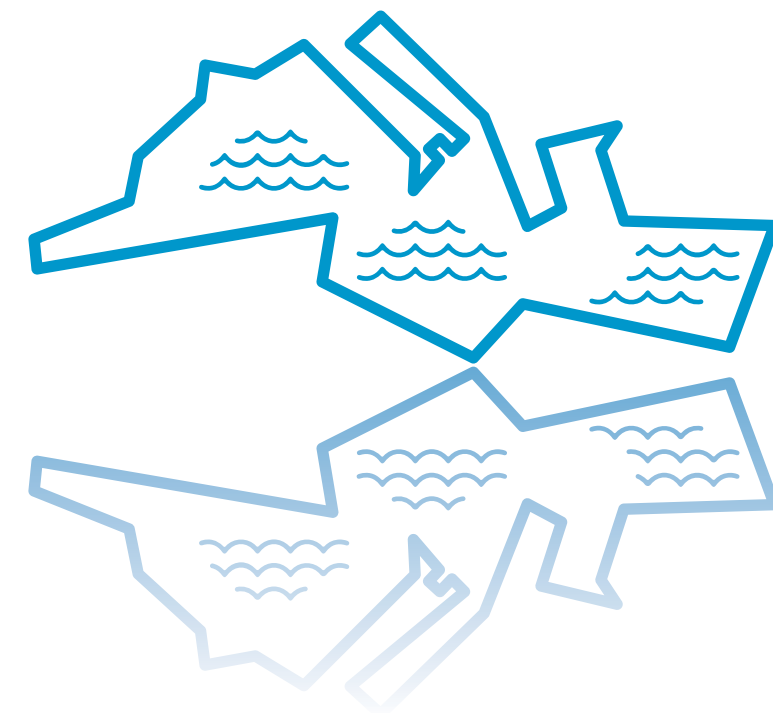
If the EU provided funding for over 56 percent of these CSOs, and some of them probably also received additional funds directly from European governments and foundations, attention should be paid to the fact that 28.6 percent of them got funds from their own states or local sources. This must be encouraged through bilateral work with governments and streamlining laws that allow CSOs to apply for state funds, regardless of their registration and type of activity; a privilege that is rather difficult to obtain in North African countries for advocacy-centred organisations. The fact that 24.5 percent of respondents received funding from individuals and 24.1 percent from private sector donors is also a good sign that should be further studied to encourage and deepen autonomy, diversification of funding and local buy-in. Though the majority of CSOs in this region are not open membership organisations, the fact that 6.1 percent of those interviewed received funding through membership dues, is a positive sign as well (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p. 14).

Despite the fact that over 60 percent of respondents engage in transnational advocacy, those who claim the ability to influence the drafting of laws among their achievements, are no more than 34.7 percent, far behind those who claim that they have been successful at mobilising communities and sensitising politicians. It would help to deconstruct these categories further to explain what constitutes actual influence over legislation or what is deemed as successful mobilisation (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p.15).

Some eminent researchers still claim that NGOs are beholden to largely western donors who depoliticise what is fundamentally a political terrain (that of rights and democratisation). Still, nearly 70 percent of those interviewed who said they were under external pressure, said their government was the source of that pressure while only 3.9 percent pointed at donors trying to shape agendas and priorities (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p. 15).

Most of the organisations interviewed envision the need for building the Mediterranean as an integrated common space with 62 percent of them stating that they would like to be involved in the Vision Med 2030<sup>6</sup> process. In this regard, many organisations seem to be engaged in trying to influence common Mediterranean policies through advocating for shared interests, rule of law, human rights, conflict resolution, peace building, youth participation and consolidating CSO networks across the region (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, pp. 18-17).

In fact, nearly 93 percent of respondents agree that: "Civil Society players in the Mediterranean should work together in a transnational way to foster rights and equality, as well as a more equitable socio-economic development of the Mediterranean countries" (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p. 19). Regarding the role of the Med Dialogue programme if, on the one hand, 66 percent of the CSOs preferred to receive capacity building support, on the other, two thirds of them as well stated their will to be involved in regional festival-like events promoting active citizenship in the Mediterranean.<sup>7</sup>

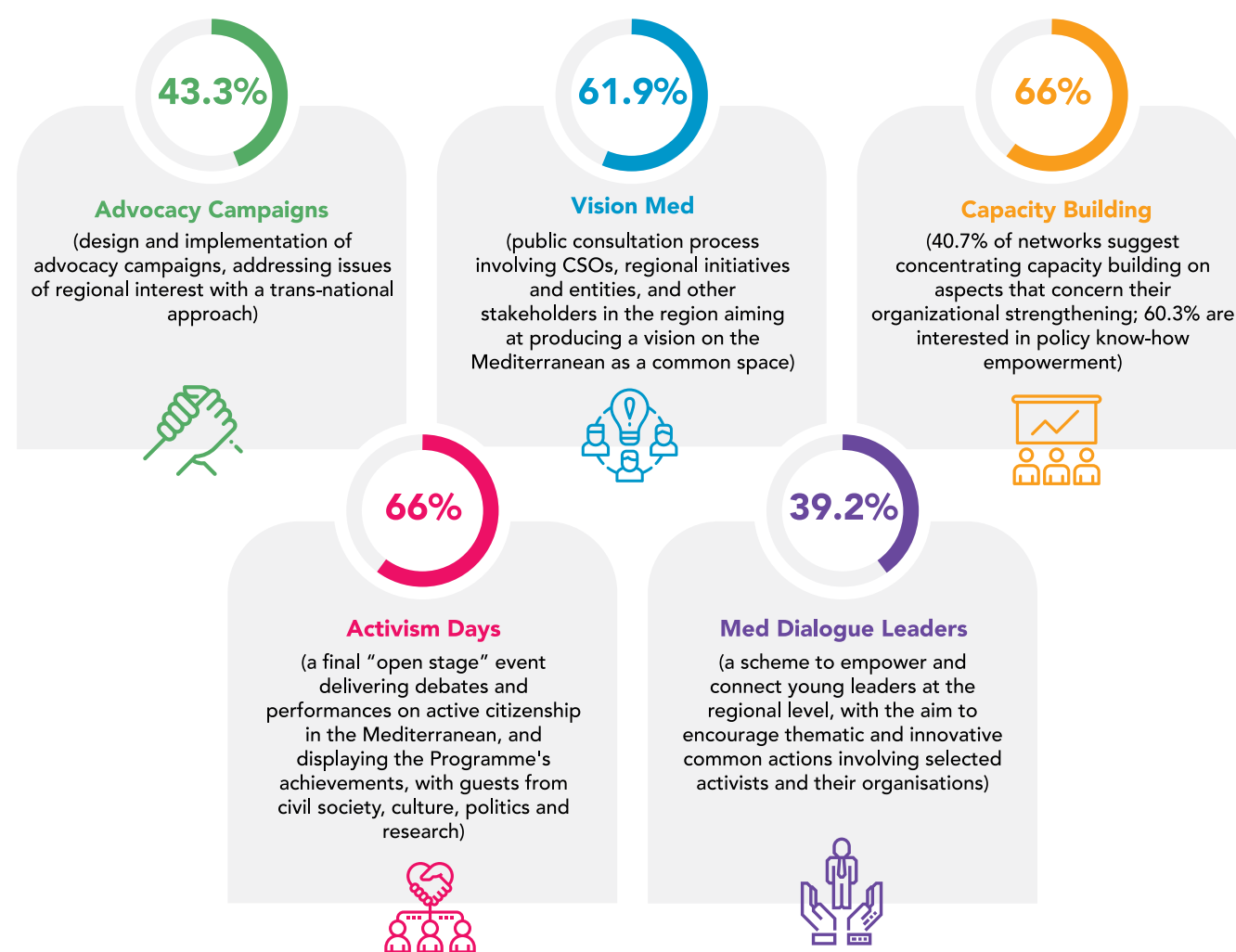


<sup>6</sup> Vision Med 2030, is a participatory Med Dialogue initiative carried out through sub-regional consultation workshops and aimed at drawing a vision for the future Mediterranean. See <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/med-dialogue-for-rights-and-equality/comment/7750>

<sup>7</sup> Additionally, 43.3 percent would like to be involved in the design and implementation of advocacy campaigns and 39.2 percent would be interested in the Med Dialogue Leaders programme; a scheme to empower and connect young leaders at the regional level, with the aim to encourage thematic and innovative common actions.



## MED DIALOGUE PROGRAMME SUPPORT PREFERENCES



Infographic 4

This all demonstrates a strong interest in more engagement with this programme as a tool to build upon CSOs' commitment to an integrated Mediterranean common space (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, pp.20-19).

Democratisation, human rights and migration topped the interests of most of these organisations. The following are the themes respondents focused on when asked to suggest campaigns to be organised with support from Med Dialogue:

- ◆ The foremost thematic area was democratisation with 37.5 percent having a focus on youth participation and strengthening institutions;
- ◆ The second thematic campaign was migration with 35.4 percent; and
- ◆ Noteworthy is also that about 21 percent suggested campaigns against socio-economic inequalities, calling for the creation of decent jobs and for inclusive growth (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, pp. 21-22).

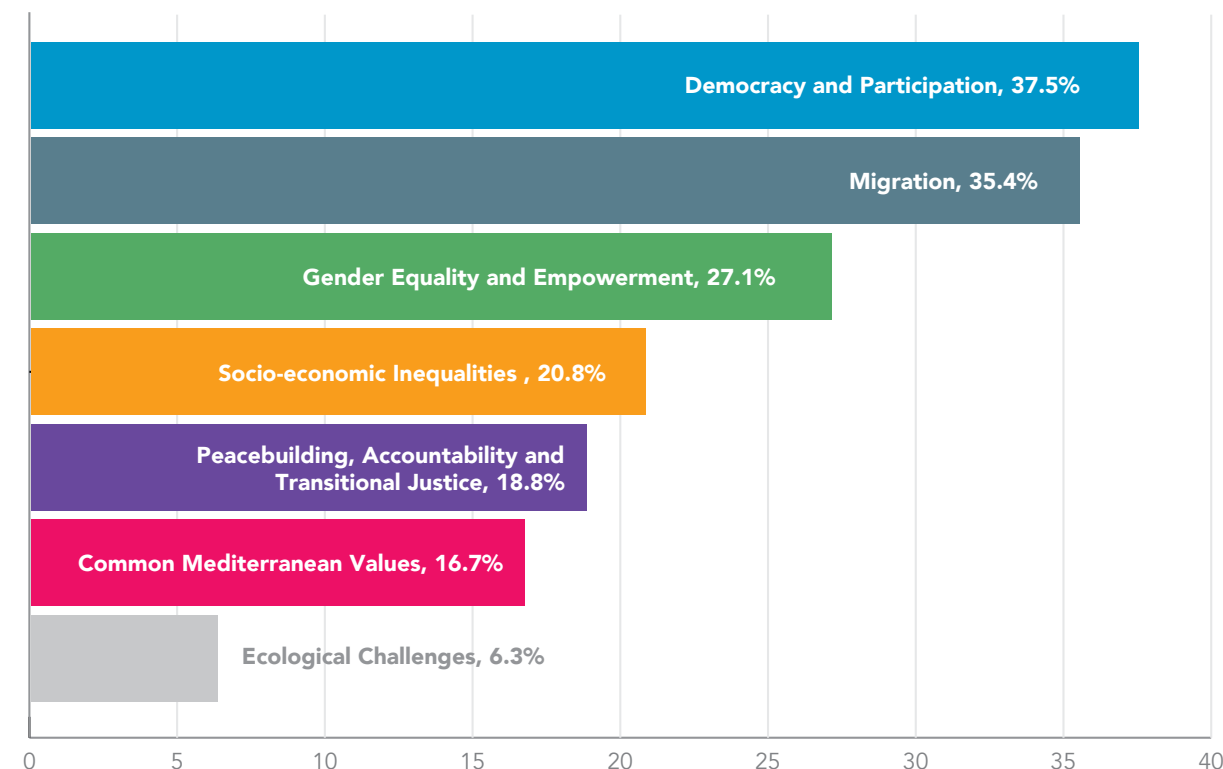


Table 2: Suggested Thematic Areas for Advocacy Campaigns

## Conclusions

The success or failure of CSOs working in the Mediterranean space today may depend on their ability, and that of their respective backers, to harmonise and prioritise the needs of citizens and effectively represent and promote them in the entire region. Conclusions regarding the mapping process, which may provide some crucial guidelines, are divided into two parts. The first focuses on the mapping exercise itself and ways to improve similar undertakings in the future, while the second is more substantive and outlines opportunities revealed by this mapping process that all stakeholders can seize.

### The mapping process

The EU should commit to undertaking a broader and more in-depth survey with the lessons learned from this constructive process, investing more resources and employing a larger team to undertake an independent qualitative and quantitative survey of civil society in the Mediterranean region. The resulting analytical survey should be made public.

This particular mapping exercise faced many challenges, some of which should probably be taken into account at an early planning stage for the next study. Primarily, the exercise showed that it is important for the Med Dialogue Programme, and probably for the EU at large, to better brand their engagement with civil society and be more up front about it in a region that





is suspicious of outside actors and their inscrutable motivations, especially in light of conflicting public positions and policies by those same governments or organisations.

In addition to this overall challenge, the researchers faced a major hurdle because they could not benefit from baseline surveys of CSOs in this region to build upon. Most of this information is proprietary internal research or not easily available. Secondly, due to resurgent waves of repression and the increasingly shrinking space for civil action in the region and globally,<sup>8</sup> many CSOs and activists have become more interested in their own security and increasingly reserved about sharing information with researchers. Thirdly, most civil society activists and organisations in predominantly southern and eastern Mediterranean countries still find it objectionable to be part of common activities with Israeli organisations, even if the issue is simply being part of the same mapping exercise, let alone carrying out joint advocacy campaigns. There are a few important exceptions related to human rights work with Israeli organisations; especially those established by Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, or involving Palestinians from the Occupied Territories, but these remain exceptions (P. Carlini, personal communication, September 2020 ,24 & I. Heggi, personal communication, October 2020 ,1).

The exercise should have included a broader geographic spectrum of Euro- Mediterranean organisations including CSOs from countries such as Turkey and Bulgaria, as well as more organisations originating in the northern Mediterranean. This relative presence (around 50 out of 146 are entities originating in the Northern Mediterranean, of which a dozen are Arab Diaspora organisations) deprived the survey of the ability to formulate more comprehensive areas of cooperation that Euro- Mediterranean organisations might like to work on, as well as avenues for advocacy that would allow organisations from all sides to embark upon.

### *Opportunities to seize*

Despite repression, fluctuating resources, disenchanted local constituencies and rising walls between and within nations, Mediterranean CSOs are still energetic and engaged in various vital roles from service provision, to advocacy and from research to mobilisation. Rather than identity politics or narrow nationalist motivations, these organisations are largely driven by a strong belief in democracy, human rights and economic justice. The challenge in working with these organisations, more specifically for the EU, would not so much be identifying a commonality of values but that civil society's views on how to democratise and bring about more equitable societies are often frowned upon by the ruling elites; those same leaders that the EU and European countries need to work with to ensure stability and security in the region. The EU should seriously consider ways to support these organisations through third-

party mechanisms, and even to acknowledge the chasm between values and interests and see how creative policy interventions can maintain some balance between the two when it comes to supporting such CSOs.

Most of the CSOs surveyed advocate internationally and focus mainly on Europe and the US as the main allies or donors to their own governments. Influencing American or European foreign policies or attitudes has a boomerang effect in the eyes of these organisations as it brings pressure to bear on Arab capitals regarding human rights or economic justice issues. This creates a major opportunity in terms of working with these CSOs, by providing them with better access to EU corridors, including meetings and hearings with senior officials and parliamentary commissions, as well as by sponsoring more robust common advocacy efforts among CSOs from all sides on common issues such as migration, socioeconomic inequalities and radicalisation.

These organisations are not primarily after funds from the EU, though it still serves as their most important source of support. Funding from their own states or local sources must be encouraged through bilateral work with governments and streamlining laws that allow CSOs to apply for state funds regardless of their registration identity and type of activity. The fact that one quarter of respondents receive funding from individuals and/or from private sector donors is a good sign that should be further studied to encourage and deepen autonomy, diversification of funding and local buy-in.

The majority of respondent organisations envision the need for building the Mediterranean as an integrated common space. In this regard, many organisations seem to be engaged in trying to influence common Mediterranean policies through advocating for common interests, rule of law, human rights, conflict resolution and peace building, youth participation and the consolidation of CSO networks across the region. Many CSOs work on socioeconomic mobility, or rather, on challenging obstacles to free movement within the Mediterranean countries and between them.

Most respondents strongly believe in the rights to asylum, refuge and inclusiveness in host countries. Follow-up discussions with the mapping researchers on how CSOs explained the root causes of irregular migration, pointed out economic conditions and huge inequalities between countries and within them. Sustainable economic development of southern countries was often raised as a way to start solving this problem and to reduce migration flows.

Democratisation, human rights and migration, as expected, topped the interests of most of the CSOs approached for this mapping exercise. And these probably should be the key policy areas the Mediterranean common space efforts should be focused and based on, as success in these areas would permit addressing other challenging issues, such as ecological crises, security threats and radicalisation, more effectively over the long term.

<sup>8</sup> There is a vast literature on the shrinking civil space globally with case studies in many countries. See Carother, T. (2016). Closing Space for International Democracy and Human Rights Support. Journal of Human Rights Practice. Also see Brechenmacher, S. & Carother, T. (2019). Defending Civic Space: Is the International Community Stuck? Available at <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/22/defending-civic-space-is-international-community-stuck-pub-80110>. And see also the work of the International Consortium on Closing Civic Space at <https://www.csis.org/programs/international-consortium-closing-civic-space- icon/resources>



# 01

## DEMOCRATIC CAUSE

“ And is not that the best-ordered State in which the greatest number of persons apply the terms ‘mine’ and ‘not mine’ in the same way to the same thing?” ”

Plato, philosopher, 428/427 BCE - 348/347 BCE



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# Civil Society's Governance in the Mediterranean: A Strenuous Path Filled with Opportunities

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## ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the opportunities and challenges of CSOs on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, focusing on political context and CSO strengths and weaknesses, while paying particular attention to the responses of CSOs that participated in the mapping survey. External pressures to silence and de-legitimize CSOs through defamatory narratives, suppression and a shrinking civic environment are discussed as well as the challenges of internal governance with regards to credibility, transparency, funding requirements and a tendency to adopt top-down approaches. Opportunities such as the development of networks, effective use of social media and governance training are considered to contrast challenges CSOs identified, such as deteriorating freedom of expression, lack of security and socio-economic inequalities. Finally, the need to balance stronger accountability with the representation of constituencies is addressed as well as how donors can contribute to enhancing internal governance structures.



## Introduction

The relationship between civil society and democracy has been the focus of interest of various studies and research, yet with diverging perspectives. Most of the research has focused on the role civil society can play in democratization, especially after political developments that took place in Eastern Europe and Latin America in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The 1990s, in particular, witnessed broader enthusiasm for civil society especially with Huntington's "third wave" (Pierre, 1992) concept which focused on civil society's role not only in introducing democracy, but also in facilitating democratic consolidation (Patrick, 1996). In this context, civil society played the roles of the 'watchdog' sometimes and partner of the state in policy implementation other times. It also spearheaded the mission of disseminating democratic values; through civic education in schools or other societal associations and community engagement in the various types of civil society organizations (CSOs).

The enthusiasm for civil society has started to fade out gradually with the claims of representativeness, democratic operations and proximity being challenged, especially after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks in 2001 with the rise of the war on terror (Howell et al., 2008). The waning enthusiasm has continued and the past ten years have witnessed a trend of shrinking civic space restricting citizens' engagement and CSO operations in many countries around the world (Steimann, n.d.). Civil society was under indictment from both governments and business communities and accused of lack of transparency and accountability to its constituents as well as of legitimacy regarding its democratically elected representatives (Naidoo, 2014). Those accusations were further aggravated with media disclosing scandals of financial fraud or personnel misconduct<sup>1</sup> in some major international non-governmental organizations and in some local NGOs as well.<sup>2</sup>

Acknowledging the danger of those accusations to their legitimacy and admitting some practices of misconduct by employees or misuse of resources, civil society organizations adopted better managerial and organizational measures including transparent communication, internal policies against harassment and discrimination in the workplace and better financial management procedures. In response to those accusations, CSOs focused their efforts on internal governance and institutionalization to save an eroded public image, nonetheless the impact of those measures on the questions of accountability to and representativeness of constituencies were not widely explored.

<sup>1</sup> Among the most recent scandals, is the Oxfam scandal in Haiti that triggered a wave of similar allegations. <https://theconversation.com/reporting-aidtoo-how-social-media-spaces-empowered-women-in-the-2018-charity-scandals-133090>

<sup>2</sup> For example, in 2018, there were accusations of sexual harassment in some local NGOs in Egypt. <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2018/03/15/feature/society/looking-past-forced-smiles/>



## Civil Society Governance in the Mediterranean: Incomplete Attempts in a Challenging Enabling Environment<sup>3</sup>

Civil society in the Mediterranean region was no exception, facing the same challenges that global civil society has faced in the past ten years. In the Northern Mediterranean, several CSOs, which played a crucial role in conducting Search and Rescue (SAR) operations off the Libyan coast, were accused of facilitating irregular migration. Those charges have escalated into investigations by Italian and Maltese courts and implementation of various policy initiatives restricting non-governmental ships and their access to European ports. Although all NGOs investigated to date have been acquitted, the combination of criminal investigations and policy restrictions that have taken place in Italy since 2017 has severely hindered non-governmental SAR operations.<sup>4</sup> Recently, CSOs working in the field of human rights and democratization in some countries in Central Europe also faced accusations of a lack of transparency in their financial resources or of working as foreign agents.<sup>5</sup>

In the Southern Mediterranean in particular, the winds of change of the Arab Spring have left some countries suffering from the collapse of state institutions, others from a major crackdown on civic space and even the success story of Tunisian democratic transition is facing its own challenges (Ghali, 2018). In such a context, CSOs had to face the pressures of a shrinking civic space, function in countries with troubled state institutions (Romanet Perroux, 2015), or build trust within state institutions in a nascent democracy (ICNL, 2018).

This difficult political context made attempts to establish mechanisms for internal governance, alliance building and internal democratic practices challenging for many CSOs. For example, better transparency of decision-making processes, and financial resources related to CSO decisions, required disclosure of sources of funding from foreign donors. However, some CSOs feared revealing their funding sources or budgets publicly on their websites dreading a backlash from authorities, who might accuse them of being “foreign agents” (Kiain, 2013) especially in countries that severely restrain freedom of assembly and association. Weak transparency and disclosure mechanisms on the other hand, harm the public image and credibility of CSOs, which makes them easier targets for accusations, disinformation and defamation campaigns.

Moreover, such failings create internal tension between senior management and the rest of the staff, in particular in organizations that have not established rigorous internal channels of communication.

The dependency on foreign funding is another challenge CSOs in the region face. Around 75% of the CSO networks in the mapping survey research stated that they depend on funding from various sources including aid agencies, philanthropic foundations or, in some cases, the private sector. This dependency, on the one hand, feeds into the defamation campaigns against CSOs (Brechenmacher, 2019) while having implications on their accountability on the other. CSOs and their teams give priority to the reporting requirements of donors to continue to secure funding, while less time is invested in engaging citizens and members of the community in shaping policies, strategies and activities.<sup>6</sup>

The challenging enabling environment for civil society in the Mediterranean region has another major implication on the most crucial element of internal governance: governance boards. Governing bodies address all aspects of governance; at the top of the list, is the issue of building a bridge between the organization and the broader community (Ryan, 2005). This aspect remains the most challenging as it requires representative boards with diverse membership. In some cases, boards are not diverse enough or “tend to be upper to middle income professionals with managerial positions” (Guo, 2019). Another difficult challenge is to recruit engaged members, who have the time, interest and capacity to perform their roles and functions.<sup>7</sup> In the Mediterranean region, all these challenges similarly exist. In countries with more restrictive civic space, it is more difficult to recruit board members with all the associated legal liabilities and security threats.<sup>8</sup>

3 An “enabling environment” refers to the political and policy context created by governments, donors and other actors, which affects the way civil society actors are able to carry out their work. See <https://www.helvetas.org/en/switzerland/how-you-can-help/follow-us/blog/highlights/Enabling%20Environment%20for%20Civil%20Society>

4 For a full description of the accusations against NGOs and the ensuing combination of legal criminalization see the September 2020 article by E. Cusumano and M. Villa, From “angels” to “vice smugglers”: the criminalization of sea rescue NGOs in Italy, in European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10610-020-09464-1>

5 See the article in the 2019 issue 3 of *Activenship* by S. Kapronczay, and A. Kertész, Responding to the “foreign agent” challenges in Hungary: A storytelling campaign, pp.74-75. Also in the case of Poland, see F. Pazderski, Understanding civil society structural challenges in the Visegrád region to build trust: the Polish case, pp. 10-15. <http://civic-forum.eu/publication/view/activizanship-3>

6 Interesting to note is that the mapping researchers highlight that CSOs - when asked about the strategies of independence - talk about democratic decision making which “gives [a] good impression to donors” not to their community. (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p. 16.) See as well, an interview with Veronika Móra on Hungarian civil society, Back to the roots to resist backslidings in democracy and attacks to civil liberties: A wake up call from Hungary, in issue 3 of *Activenship*, 22-23. <http://civic-forum.eu/publication/view/activizanship-3>

7 A study by the Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies in Australia shows that recruitment of board directors is difficult because of the increasing legal and social expectations of its boards. The study also referred to similar trends in the UK and USA. See A. Hough’s March 2006 working paper, The training ground for democracy? Social trends and nonprofit governance. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/3545/>

8 For an example of challenges of recruiting boards see the 2017 paper by Y. Shahin, Unsolved dilemmas: Issues of internal governance in Egypt’s human rights NGOs. <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/unsolved-dilemmas-issues-of-internal-governance-in-egypt-human-rights-ngos/>. In general, tracking and examining the challenge of recruiting boards in Mediterranean CSOs could be a recommended area of future research.





A Difficult Path Embedded with Opportunities

Acknowledging the challenges and their impact on the legitimacy of civil society, many CSOs in the Mediterranean region have taken steps for better internal governance mechanisms. Those have included better financial management, participatory planning and decision making within the organization, stronger external communication strategies and recruitment of more engaged governance body members.<sup>9</sup>

In attempting to address the accountability question, many CSOs adopted “horizontal or peer accountability” (Naidoo, 2014, p. 21) through building coalitions and alliances among various civil society actors. CSOs realized that advocacy campaigns and common objectives also contribute to countering de-legitimizing narratives against civil society and its role. This is reflected in the results of the mapping process as when asked to describe their organization and the role they perceive playing in the region, around %60 of the CSOs described themselves by highlighting their capacity of networking and working collectively.

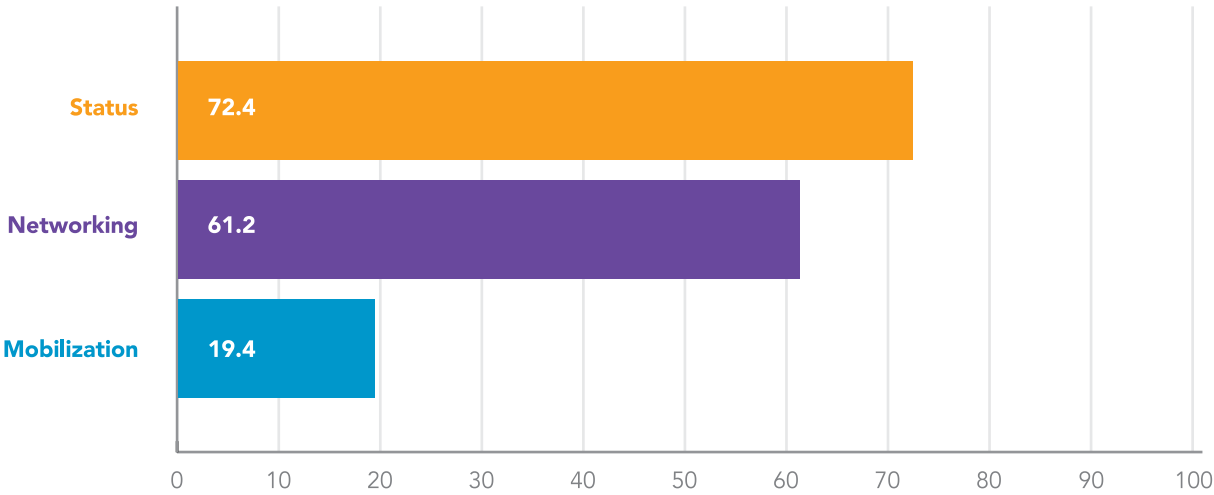


Table 3: Respondents’ Description of the nature of their own Organizations

Additionally, coalitions and networks enhance civil society’s public image and restore the trust of the communities in their mandate and mission. Mediterranean civil society on both shores has recorded interesting success stories in building regional networks and coalitions. The

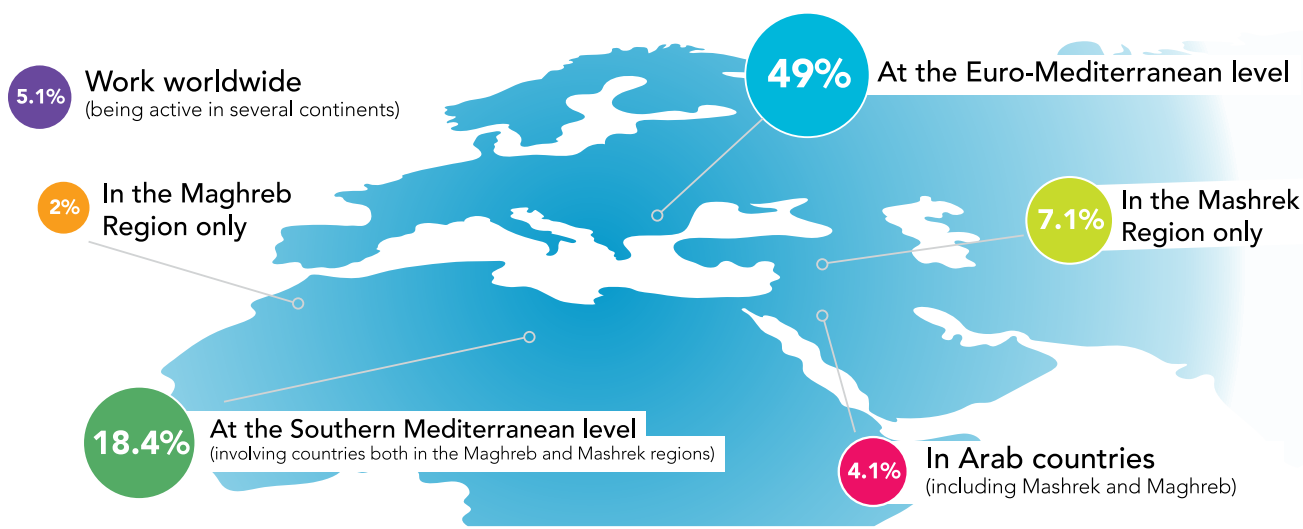
<sup>9</sup> For examples of the steps taken by CSOs in three MENA countries see: M. Tariq, Governance and the human rights movement in Morocco, H. Chekair, The problematics of the human rights movements in Tunisia, and Y. Shahin, Unsolved dilemmas: Issues of internal governance in Egypt’s human rights NGOs, in the Arab Reform Initiative project: The Future of Human Rights Work in North Africa”, 2017-2018. <https://www.arab-reform.net/project/the-future-of-human-rights-work-in-north-africa/>



mapping survey research showed that networks have a wide geographical scope in several countries, with %49 of networks active at a Euro-Mediterranean level, %18.4 at a Southern Mediterranean level (involving countries both in the Maghreb and Mashrek regions) and %7.1 working in the Mashrek region only. In the Southern Mediterranean in particular, networks and coalitions were a crucial mechanism for solidarity and resilience among various CSOs functioning in challenging political contexts and difficult enabling environments. At the same time, in the Northern Mediterranean, CSOs adopted several voluntary, self-regulatory initiatives to achieve better results in CSO operations, enhanced collaboration and cooperation and, more importantly, established common standards.<sup>10</sup>



GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES



Infographic 5

One of the new opportunities that CSOs seized to reach out for new audiences and counter the defamation narrative was social media. The use of social media started firstly, as a free and open space for various social groups to express themselves and connect and to achieve a broader social movement base. It has shown strong potential for collective civic engagement, especially with the recent various uprisings in Arab countries and later worldwide. Nonetheless, it turned into a platform for disinformation and defamation against CSOs. Recently, CSOs all over the Mediterranean started to form long-term, systematic campaigns to strengthen the civic sector and to improve its tarnished image within society (Setniewska, 2019).

Finally, as the mapping survey research affirms, more than %20 of CSOs perceive socio-economic inequalities as an important thematic area for advocacy campaigns. They gave examples of related necessary activities like job creation and inclusive ‘social security’ in the global health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. Socio-economic issues are more relevant to people’s daily lives; they are a thematic area that engages communities and helps CSOs gain trust and further their role.

<sup>10</sup> This report of the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law includes many examples for self-regulation in several European countries. See: Current Trends in Self-Regulation of Civil Society Organizations in Europe, 2015. <https://ecnl.org/sites/default/files/files/Current-Trends-in-Self-Regulation-of-Civil-Society-Organizations-in-Europe.pdf>



## Conclusion and Recommendations

The above overview looked at the challenging enabling environment that CSOs on both shores of the Mediterranean face and highlighted possible opportunities to capitalize on to legitimize their existence and role when under attack. As reflected in the mapping survey research, it has been shown that many organizations adopted more rigorous and innovative governance policies in response to attacks and accusations and a shrinking civic space. The mapping results also have shown that 60% of the organizations work on consolidating democratic space and citizens' rights, especially for youth and women, and also highlight the thematic area of social mobilization for democracy as an area of good practices for CSOs.

Nonetheless, there is a disconnection between the adopted measures of internal democracy and governance from one side, and the mission of democratic consolidation on the other, which is stronger accountability to and representation of constituencies. On the one hand, the measures of internal democracy served the purpose of better internal decision-making mechanisms, stronger organizational structure and a "better impression to donors" (Carlini & Heggi, 2020, p. 16) according to the responses in the mapping survey research. On the other, CSOs work with various marginalized and vulnerable groups in the community to implement activities for accessing public institutions or advocacy or to shape policy. But those communities - that reflect the various levels and types of CSO constituencies - are not engaged in the process of shaping CSOs' internal governance mechanisms. It is only through more engaged and representative governance boards or wide membership organizations that CSOs' downward accountability towards its constituencies becomes deeper and stronger. This deep engagement of the community is nonetheless a long and complex process which:

- ◆ Requires CSOs to acknowledge the shortcomings in current internal practices, openly disclose any misconduct with full transparency and share the results of investigations and internal decisions publicly, even in the most hostile settings, to civic groups;
- ◆ Demands longer-term communication strategies that target various audiences and stakeholders such as peer organizations, government authorities, mainstream media, donors and, more importantly, constituencies;
- ◆ And while social media is becoming a powerful tool for connection and outreach, CSOs should continue adopting the traditional approaches to engage communities through deliberative dialogue and participatory assessments in issues of relevance to people's direct lives. This remains a key approach for building the trust of local communities especially in places without much access to internet and its online tools;
- ◆ Finally, members of governance boards should invest time and effort in the difficult task of building bridges with the community and advocating for the cause of a dynamic civic space.
- ◆ Donors can also contribute to CSO efforts to enhance their internal governance structures through:

- ◆ Funding governance-related activities like strategic retreats and workshops, consultants to develop anti-harassment policies, financial management and communication strategies;
- ◆ Building resource centres in various regions that provide capacity building and expertise for CSOs in the various aspects of governance, management and community engagement;
- ◆ Commissioning research to counter the systematic disinformation campaigns against civil society;
- ◆ Finally, donors should have an open communication channel with CSOs, to address any cases of misconduct by listening, encouraging transparency investigations and supporting the victims of any misconduct rather than punishing the whole organization or the sector by withdrawing funding.



## The Social Contract Campaign

Good Practice 1

### CIVITAS - Palestine

CIVITAS, which stands for “Civil Independent Volunteer Initiative Towards Achieving Sustainability”, is a Gaza-based independent organization, an initiative of democrats, young community leaders, journalists, activists and human rights and civil society advocates. CIVITAS believes that reform and development are cornerstone elements which can carry out change and shape a better future for society through education, training, empowerment, respect for human rights, policy dialogue, and/or government watchdogs. CIVITAS recognizes that democratic governance is an evolving and dynamic process, created by and meeting the needs of the people it serves. CIVITAS – which has 19-years experience in Democracy & Good Governance, including human rights issues and concerns – has developed four programmes: democracy and governance; strengthening civil society; studies and research and peace-building and social cohesion.

To meet its objectives, CIVITAS has established “CROLD”,<sup>11</sup> a consortium for rule of law and democracy, through an open call among its long-term partners. Fourteen founders teamed up to lead CROLD in February 2015 – following the efforts of the “Reconciliation Monitoring Team”, established as a result of a 3-year [campaign for dialogue approaches among Palestinians](#) toward reconciliation and the spreading of a dialogue culture. CIVITAS and CROLD reached the conclusion that Palestinians are in need of a Social Contract<sup>12</sup> that fills the gaps and responds to new realities on the ground and to the overall context Palestinians face both in the



“**Current reality [forces] Palestinians towards formulating a new social contract that demonstrates a common ground for all Palestinians as a peaceful approach that sets the basis for our coexistence and identifies rules and relationships.**”

*Maher Issa  
Director General, CIVITAS*

homeland and the diaspora – taking into account the different ideologies and cultures within the Palestinian community. The formal documents for the Palestinians in the background of the dialogue exercise were the Palestinian National Charter (1964), Hamas’ Covenant (1987), and more recently the Palestinian Basic Law initiated by the Palestinian Legislative Council in 1997 and approved in 2003, in preparation for the January 2006 general elections. (It was later amended in 2015 in Cairo). Amongst all of these circumstances and changing realities, considering the diversity in ideologies, strategies and approaches, it became a *must* to find common ground that unites Palestinians and that is preserved and developed by the majority of Palestinians to seek a consensus at a later phase.

Thus, the partners (CIVITAS and CROLD) carried out six comprehensive workshops in Gaza/West Bank from September to December 2018, attended by key actors of civil society, political parties, labour unions, Palestinian Legislative Council members, women’s organizations, governmental officials and youth social movements, to discuss reconciliation and cohesion. They resulted in determining highlights of the needs to meet for unification, particularly the notion of a “Social Contract” that was initiated, developed and formulated by a [“20-member Social Contract committee”](#) selected among the participants in these workshops and announced formally at a [final conference](#) held on 28 December 2019 in Gaza.

Since then, CIVITAS and CROLD have continued their efforts around three pillars aimed at promoting the “Social Contract” by holding workshops on policy papers assessing the necessity for a Social Contract,<sup>13</sup> in addition to carrying out a campaign among grassroots entities to create and make public a bottom-up, supportive momentum for the Social Contract.



*A community campaign organised by Civitas to promote a culture of dialogue and reconciliation (2017).*

<sup>11</sup> The Consortium for Rule of Law & Democracy consists of (85) CSO's in Palestine, and comprises NGO's, CSO's, platforms, and labour movements.

<sup>12</sup> The Social Contract concept was developed after having carried out field activities over the last three years, within a long-term programme (2007 to now) funded by SIDA via the Olof Palme Center, in partnership with the Religious Social Democrats of Sweden. The “Civil Society Strengthening” programme has several components, including civil society empowerment towards engagement in governance.

<sup>13</sup> The policy papers were prepared by Ghassan Abu Hatab, a senior researcher at Birzeit University.





## Towards a Promising Future

Good Practice 2

IDA2AT - Egypt



Ida2at's team in 2018.

Ida2at's electronic magazine was launched in 2016 to be a digital platform built on practicing freedom of expression and bringing up sensitive issues in light of receding democratic dialogue and the frequent violations against the work of activists, advocates and human rights defenders.

The platform has been committed to the case of democratic transition as a central issue in which the various matters and crises of the Arab region intersect. It has dealt with issues of people's social, economic and political rights, such as citizenship and human rights, as well as the obstacles faced to obtain these rights in light of sectarianism, inequality and lack of social justice. Furthermore, it has identified the need for religious reform together with the struggle against class discrimination, and gender and ethnic segregation reparation. It has also taken an interest in the Palestinian issue and the national and humanitarian tensions it causes and with which it is impossible to achieve democratic and developmental stability in the whole region. Ida2at has attracted researchers and thinkers from different backgrounds who found a safe haven in the platform that facilitated exchanging ideas and discussing contentious topics, adopting a language that reinforces the values of democracy, human rights and equality, rejecting racism and discrimination. The work on defining the vision and mission of Ida2at and what distinguishes its subject matter, in form and content, has led to a convergence

of ideas, a cooperative and non-egocentric approach to journalism and the overcoming of class differences among its contributors, as well as the creation of a homogeneous fabric that combines the same concerns, goals and plans. Therefore, the Ida2at family, which started with about 50 members, has expanded to reach 70 members.

Over a four-year period, Ida2at has produced nearly 10,000 journalistic articles, which were prepared and written by more than 1,000 Egyptian and Arab writers. These resources were characterized by documented information and in-depth analyses; moreover, they have formed a database that could be used in developmental projects. Ida2at has also succeeded in attracting readers from all over the Arab world, as the site has recorded one million visits per month, half of which were from outside Egypt. The platform also won the 2018 Mustafa Al-Husseini Award for the best newspaper article by a young Arab writer.

Such a creative and diligent work team has had a pivotal impact on Ida2at's ability to overcome many of the challenges it has faced during its development. The Arab context proved to be more dynamic than what was expected of it after the faltering of the Arab popular uprisings in 2011, as these dynamics and profound transformations, marked by their revolutionary character, formed an incentive for Ida2at and its team to complete their journalistic mission. It turned out that the interest in the issue of democratic transition and its various files was not the result of a transient event that elapsed when it ended.

Finally, stable financial support remains one of the necessary conditions for preserving the project's sustainability in digital journalism and social development. Also, providing a space for women's participation in the work team is an essential element due to the fact that their presence contributes to the multiplicity and diversity of viewpoints and interests, as well as the increased efficiency of the team.





# 02

## REGIONAL ADVOCACY

“ And we will continue our protest incessantly at those oppressive and unfair measures that your Excellency is taking against us, and which are stirring the anger of people and the anger of God! ”

Huda Sha'arawi, feminist activist, 1879 - 1947



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# Regional Action in the Mediterranean: A Balance of Advocacy Practices Beyond Borders

Nejla Sammakia

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## ABSTRACT

The World Bank has defined civil society organisations (CSOs) as including “the wide array of non-governmental and not for profit organisations that have a presence in public life, express the interests and values of their members and others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations.” (World Bank, n.d.) This chapter addresses the potential for introducing network advocacy activities among CSOs with a Mediterranean identity at a regional level. It looks at the current challenges facing civil society organisations and actors in the southern Mediterranean, on political and other levels, and examines the opportunities that exist for cross-border activities on the southern shore and between the two shores. It is a product of information obtained through desk research and the writer’s own experience, as well as semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives who have participated in the Med Dialogue mapping exercise.

## Regional Networking and Challenges

### *Regional networks and occasional coordination*

Networks formed of CSOs in the southern Mediterranean are few and, apart from a limited number of permanent ones, mostly consist of occasional coordination. Local ad hoc networking and loosely structured groupings have focused on environmental issues, workers rights, migrant rights and budget transparency, to name a few. Activities between them have included: capacity building, awareness raising and lobbying at regional or international venues, such as with EU or UN treaty body mechanisms. In most cases, when the goal has been reached, or when there is no more possibility for action, the networking cooperation has ended.

For example, in 2016, feminist CSOs<sup>1</sup> worked on legal reform and addressing cultural norms, some of which are based on Islamic law and generally considered to be untouchable, such as the inheritance law. These entities pushed for reform in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, starting a debate in the media and among academics and religious clerics, and breaking a hitherto taboo subject.<sup>2</sup> Due to emerging different political considerations in the individual states, however, the coalition has since then focused more on researching the issue in order to establish a more effective strategy; a reflection not so much, as yet, of a breakdown in the coalition, but of a slower and different approach.



<sup>1</sup> Coalition among the Democratic Association of Women of Morocco (ADFM), the Algerian Centre for Information and Documentation on Rights and Women (CIDF), and the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development (AFTURD).

<sup>2</sup> In 2018, the Tunisian government approved a bill requiring that male and female heirs receive equal inheritance shares. The bill has yet to pass in parliament. For Collectif Maghreb Egalité, see <https://www.cairn.info/revue-nouvelles-questions-feministes-2014-2-page-132.htm>



## Challenges of regional networking

Internal governance issues have, in some cases, hampered cooperation as attempts at forming a common group, through platforms or networks, were fraught with rivalry over which CSO would take a lead role or manage the grant. This often resulted in the fragmentation of the network, an unequal participation by smaller organisations, or a halting of its formation from the start. At the same time, external obstacles, such as visa restrictions sometimes imposed by European and other states of the region, have made it hard for CSO representatives to network effectively and present their campaigns at EU and international venues.

From the writer's own observations, these difficulties were set aside to varying degrees in the years following the 2011 Arab Spring as opportunities opened up for civil society activism and alliances. Partnerships were formed within the Maghreb and the Mashrek regions, with occasional links between the two, as they addressed challenges common to the whole Middle East North Africa region (MENA) like land rights, gender equality, migrant issues and socio-economic rights. For example, in 2014, the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR) joined forces with the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), the Tunisian Observatory of the Economy (OTE) and the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES) to campaign on tax justice.<sup>3</sup>

Coalitions on migrant issues were also set up as think tanks, trade unions and independent associations in the MENA region partnered with CSOs in Europe, in order to monitor the situation of migrant workers with the aim of promoting rights-based and coherent migration and integration policies.<sup>4</sup> In addition to that, two World Social Forums, held in 2013 and 2015 in Tunisia, brought together international and European organisations and trade unions with civil society organisations from the southern Mediterranean.

These partnerships often consisted of European civil society organisations providing financial and technical support to their southern counterparts. Through a 2015-2019 EU-funded project on decent work, freedom of association and social justice in the MENA region, the European SOLIDAR network supported CSO advocacy alliances, strengthening existing networks and independent trade unions.<sup>5</sup>

Since then, restrictions on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and independent trade unions in countries like Egypt and Algeria have, to varying degrees, limited the possibility for national or regional advocacy activities. In this environment of shrinking space for civil society activists, one of the very few consistent and formalised networks has been, and continues to

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Ecosoc-3-Assessing-civil-society-initiatives-in-the-field-of-economic-and-social-rights-EN.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.solidar.org/en/projects/decent-work-social-protection-and-freedom-of-association-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa>

be, the Beirut-based Arab NGO Network on Development (ANND), which covers 12 Arab states and at least 23 non-governmental organisation members, and focuses on strengthening social and economic policy reform.<sup>6</sup> Being part of a network offers advantages, strengthens individual organisations and allows for an exchange of experiences when campaigning regionally or internationally. However, a lack of political will for real participatory dialogue and the near-absence of progressive parties and representative trade unions, which are enabled to operate, has added to the regional challenges for advocacy.

## Potentials for Regional Advocacy

### Significant issues in common

A few significant issues are shared across both the Maghreb and Mashrek areas. Economic and social rights, migration and women's rights are among those most often cited and, while those differ from one part of the MENA region to the other, there is plenty of scope for common action, as well as for partnerships with European organisations. For instance, in the Mashrek, a number of organisations work on migrant industrial and domestic workers issues, while in the Maghreb, the focus is on migrants in transit attempting to reach Europe, with a rights-based approach throughout. The Arab network organisation, ANND, has found that issues of mutual interest to the north and south Mediterranean – like migration, trade, and investment – presented entry points for network campaigning at EU and international levels.

### Cross-border emerging initiatives

The CSOs cited below provide prime examples of interaction across regional borders, with a Euro-Mediterranean perspective and in the form of partnerships, addressing concerns that are common to all, and using a rights-based approach for advocacy. Tadamon, the Arab Trade Union Confederation (ATUC), ANND and others were identified in the mapping survey research for their credibility and effective means of action.

In Egypt, Tadamon – the Egyptian Refugee Multicultural Council<sup>7</sup> has partnerships at a national level and has also joined in campaigns with European civil society. It is one of the few effective entities working with and for migrants in the southern Mediterranean that also has links with the north.

Tadamon works primarily on improving the lives of refugees and migrant workers in Egypt, and has succeeded in lifting obstacles to their enjoyment of education, employment and health rights. Tadamon and its partners have also lobbied at the level of international bodies and

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.annd.org/english/page.php?pagelid=1&#sthash.iUpHoi8M.dpbs>

<sup>7</sup> Tadamon is an umbrella group of over 35 migrant-related community-based organisations from Egypt and also from Libya and Sudan.



European embassies and run various cultural and dialogue activities with NGOs in the northern Mediterranean and in Europe, including for example with the Maydan Association<sup>8</sup> in Italy (F. Idriss, personal communication, September 2020 ,13).

The Jordan-based ATUC focuses on protecting migrant worker rights from exploitation through social dialogue.<sup>9</sup> “It has recently launched a project supported by the EU that started working on implementing and expanding the Charter for Social Dialogue in the southern Mediterranean, to include cross regional activities addressing decent work, informal economies, women’s rights and corruption” (M. Al-Maita, personal communication, September 2020 ,15).

The initiative was carried out in partnership with ANND, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and Tunis-based BusinessMed, an umbrella for industrial employer organisations located in Europe and the MENA region, and working with partners such as federal and independent trade unions.

On a more grassroots level, and looking toward a shared Mediterranean identity, the Italy-based Maydan Association was inspired by the Arab Spring and now has around 50 members including intellectuals, artists and grassroots activists in different northern and southern Mediterranean countries.

Maydan collected more than 5,000 signatures for a manifesto on integration of the European continent and the Mediterranean space that they presented to candidates of the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections.<sup>10</sup> They have also organised cultural and debate events to advocate for the manifesto,<sup>11</sup> with the participation of organisations from the Netherlands, Albania, Egypt and Morocco among others (D. Del Pistoia, personal communication, October 2020 ,7).

### Online dialogue spaces

In the past few years, the use of the Internet and social media has allowed for a new generation of activists and informal community-based organisations to break out of civil society’s shrinking space, often working on a voluntary basis. Their use of Twitter, Instagram and other social media gave them relative security, a wide reach across the region and a loud voice for change. A Tunisian Facebook page<sup>12</sup> offered safe spaces for female victims of harassment and for LGBTQA people; and an Instagram account<sup>13</sup> for rape victims in Egypt became part of a large

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.maydan-association.org/>

<sup>9</sup> ATUC interacts with partners in the Gulf region as well as with a network of regional and international civil society organisations. On social dialogue see: <https://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/areas-of-work/social-dialogue/lang-en/index.htm>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.maydan-association.org/eu-elections-appeal/>

<sup>11</sup> Maydan Association is one of the “Good Practices” initiators identified through the Med Dialogue for Rights and Equality mapping exercise presented in chapter 5 (Common Destiny).

<sup>12</sup> For more information see <https://www.ivint.org/en/ezeda-a-tunisian-movement-against-sexual-harassment/>

<sup>13</sup> See BBC article on this initiative, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-53903966>

movement resulting in the persecution of alleged rapists and in legislation for the protection of female victims.

Openings for regional dialogue also lay in the creation of safe spaces for controversial or taboo issues to be raised, as cited above. Discussion of religious freedom and tolerance was often shunned, but sensitive debates among the different cultures of the southern Mediterranean region have taken place and have offered scope for tolerance to replace religious radicalisation. These activities could be expanded in the future to develop into partnerships with civil society from the northern Mediterranean, which also faces intolerance and radical religious views.

For example, the Beirut-based Adyan Foundation’s<sup>14</sup> media platform *Taaddudiya* [Pluralism] is accessed across the Arab world, reaching an estimated 86 million people. “[I]t produces articles, videos and webinars on debates around controversial religious issues aimed at youth, academia and faith-based civil society organisations to challenge extremist and sectarian narratives. The group plans to tie together their activities for more targeted advocacy” (C. Thomas, personal communication, September 2020 ,28).

### Mediterranean networking protects activism

For activists in countries where stringent measures restrict civil society life, becoming part of a regional network can safely allow for cross-border action that would otherwise be limited. A number of Egyptian activists have been barred from travel and assets of human rights organisations have been frozen; networking with a regional and Mediterranean outlook would conceivably provide a form of protection and strengthen their voice at EU or international venues.

The Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)<sup>15</sup> participated in a coalition with Tunisian activists for freedom of expression that worked to expose human rights violations during the Ben-Ali era. It also succeeded in amending some articles of the Egyptian Constitution after the 2011 uprising and it continues to operate as an open online source of human rights information for civil society in the Arab world. In light of current restrictions on civil and political rights in parts of the MENA region, ANHRI’s work on freedom of expression is significant. The Med Dialogue Programme’s mapping survey research has also highlighted the role of activists in war zones, particularly Syria and Libya. These are new and relatively local efforts, but a number stood out because of their focus on youth and democratic transition and a strong potential to eventually join regional advocacy.

<sup>14</sup> Based in Lebanon, Adyan Foundation aims at counterbalancing religious extremism and works jointly with partners in the Arab world, including Yemen, Syria and Iraq, focusing on promoting religious co-existence, developing critical thinking and promoting inclusive citizenship. See also “Good Practices” in chapter 5 (Common Destiny).

<sup>15</sup> ANHRI, set up in 2004, works on freedom of expression by documenting violations, training journalists and campaigning for the release of prisoners of conscience.





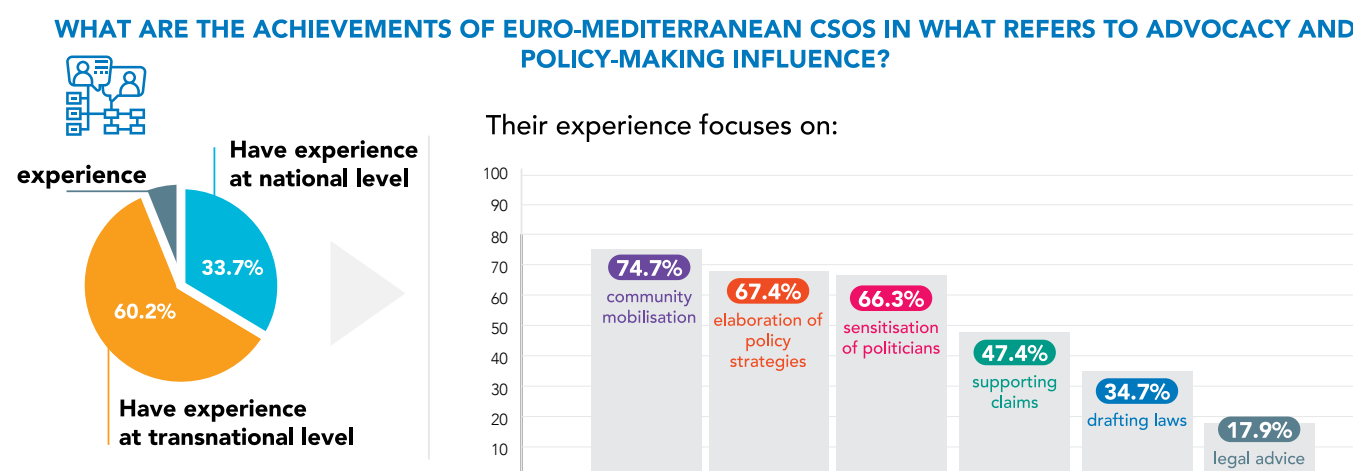
H2O, based in Libya, has experience in monitoring elected politicians and lobbying for constitutional and legislative reform.

It works with partners around the country and with different ethnic groups along the borders with Tunisia and Algeria that share similar challenges. The group has also participated in observing the Tunisian constitutional drafting assembly in 2013 and has continued to exchange experience with Tunisian and Moroccan groups that work on holding elected officials accountable (M. Zegallai, personal communication, September 2020 ,10).

We Exist, a cross-border entity based in Europe, is an alliance of Syrian CSOs that campaign for participation in their country's future and work to present a balanced picture of the war. "The organisation's experience in maintaining links with its partners and in producing creative messages to different audiences beyond borders can be a solid tool for potential regional work" (J. Kahhaleh, personal communication, September 2020 ,11).

## Conclusions: Common Challenges Require Regional Work

There is broad scope for joint and equal partnerships between civil society organisations in the northern and southern Mediterranean regions to organise activities that go beyond national boundaries and which are built upon the acknowledgment of sharing a common Mediterranean identity. This encompasses nature and wildlife, landscapes and similar climate features on both shores; a shared culture, lifestyle and food, in addition to historical and linguistic cross-border heritages to a large extent. Common concerns and challenges also are prominent, such as migration flow from the south to the north – both legal and undocumented – youth and unemployment and radicalisation, to name a few. These shared features and concerns all have allowed for common action, however limited, and they continue to provide the opportunity for much more regional advocacy-oriented strategies.



Infographic 6

From past experience and from the Med Dialogue mapping exercise (see Infographic 6), it is clear that a number of opportunities exist which, while not being fully exploited for various reasons, can be used to bring together civil society groups. It is also apparent from the mapping survey research that a large majority of activists agree that CSOs in the Mediterranean should join forces in a transnational way to foster rights and equality and to build an integrated Mediterranean space with common policies.

As mentioned, many common themes exist along both shores of the Mediterranean, ranging from socio-economic equality to migrant rights and environmental protection, which can bring in traditional and new civil society activists. More recently, younger emerging activists have used social media to easily and informally convey their message to a significantly broader public, introducing a number of more sensitive or controversial issues, such as sexual harassment and gender rights, among others.

Funding, capacity building and training will be important steps in the support of networking across the region and with European counterparts, with an emphasis on the vision of a Mediterranean identity.

Political restrictions have limited the ability of CSOs to work, to coordinate with partners around the region and to travel. Visa restrictions, poor internal CSO governance, a lack of vision beyond the immediate circumstances and the temporary nature of alliances that end when the aim is reached, are all important factors when considering the formation of networks.

A shrinking civil space, combined with the shortage of a coherent transnational civil network and the existence of deep geopolitical divisions and rivalries in the region, have all led to a diminished chance for effective advocacy by independent and viable civil society organisations, limiting not only local action but also regional partnerships. Equally, where the possibility in some states for national activity does exist, there is little political appetite to engage with CSOs in any meaningful dialogue.

A new factor, the COVID-19 pandemic that has swept across the world in 2020, has limited physical meetings for potential networking; that problem has been largely overcome by using the Internet for a notable variety of online gatherings.

## Recommendations: Towards Strategic Advocacy Through Equal Decision-Making and Bottom-Up Action

Efforts must be focused on supporting advocacy for issues that are of interest to both shores and that have a common Mediterranean reality, essence or impact. As the Med Dialogue mapping of networks and CSOs has shown, some possibilities are in regional migrant and asylum rights issues, democracy and political participation, gender equality, public health, ecological challenges, socio-economic inequalities and the prevention of youth radicalisation.

In contrast to the northern Mediterranean, civil society activists in the south often operate under restrictive conditions, limiting the possibility for active participation in local or national policy-making. Therefore, in designing network and advocacy strategies that would engage CSOs from both shores of the Mediterranean, it would be useful to continually consider including campaigning for the respect of civil rights and the rule of law.

There has, however, been some more space for the growth of young civil society activists in the Arab world that work on themes 'tolerated' by their governments, such as the preservation of the environment, promotion of sustainable development and gender rights. There is, therefore, room for enhancing their capacity to cooperate and advocate for reform in innovative ways. Med Dialogue has already launched activities in that direction with a [first boot camp with 30 young leaders](#) from ten Arab countries to look at their potential role in addressing ecological challenges together.

As cited above, considerable regional networking for advocacy purposes, however brief, has been accomplished in the last ten years or so. The activities involved, and the experiences gained, can be built on and lessons can be learned from the successes or limits of past efforts in order to support engagement among CSOs in forming new networks, or strengthening existing ones. These would also include CSOs working under war conditions: such entities have shown an ability to carry their experience into broader advocacy, such as younger groups in Libya and Syria trying to foster reconciliation and combat extremism.

While these opportunities exist, a programme such as Med Dialogue and other CSO support programmes must also address current weaknesses in civil society networking by supporting capacity building on good internal governance, on the use of innovative advocacy tools and media presentation and on suggesting visions for work beyond the immediate circumstances. In supporting advocacy networking, attention must be paid to ensure equal decision making among advocacy partners across joint projects and to avoid any top-down planning.



## CEDAW: An Appeal for Equality without Reservation<sup>16</sup>

Good Practice 1

### Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM) – Morocco



The reservations related to the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women" (CEDAW) agreement,<sup>17</sup> expressed by Arab and other countries, impede the dynamics of equality in the accord, resulting in an inferior position for women within the family as they perpetuate discrimination and stereotypes, thus emptying the convention of its content. They are reservations that encourage an unequal social order, which affects the performance of development, by indicating that only parts of rights are recognised and that there is a distinction between the rights themselves: whether they are those related to the public sphere or those of interest to the private one.



A press conference organized by ADFM : launch of the National Caravan of Soulalain Women (Rabat, 2017).

Therefore, seven organisations belonging to the Maghreb and Mashrek regions, the Gulf States and Turkey decided to invite Arab countries and government leaders to lift reservations on the convention and remove all discriminatory provisions against women, through the

<sup>16</sup> The Vienna Convention defines a reservation to a treaty as "a unilateral statement, however phrased or named, made by a State, when signing, ratifying, accepting, approving or acceding to a treaty, whereby it purports to exclude or to modify the legal effect of certain provisions of the treaty in their application to that State." See <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/8/issue/11/reservations-treaties-and-united-states-practice>

<sup>17</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>



Rabat Call,<sup>18</sup> on the 30th anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the CEDAW agreement. The, thereafter, consolidated Equality Without Reservation Coalition (EWRC), furthermore called for the inclusion of the principle of equality and full citizenship in constitutions, legislation, programmes and action plans and a commitment to putting them into practice.

In addition to supporting the awareness-raising campaigns of non-governmental organisations in the Convention and the Optional Protocol attached to it applied at a national level, the appeal called on the League of Arab States to adopt a regional approach to celebrate the International Human Rights Day, while ensuring the participation of national institutions and non-governmental organisations.

The EWRC held a regional seminar in Amman in May 2009, with coalition members, women activists and women's organisations, as a reminder that women in the region still did not have their qualifications fully recognised and that they were still deprived of equal opportunities due to multiple types of discrimination. Along with this, they identified the almost complete exclusion of women from participation in political life, not to mention their low rate of participation in public life, their exposure to violence and their inferior status in family and criminal legislation. In addition, the coalition sought to emphasise the need to empower women in the region regarding their rights, as well as ensure their complete participation as citizens who benefit from the same rights as male citizens do, therefore constituting a force that would enable them to achieve more prosperity and lead to effective human development for all.

Moreover, they affirmed the coalition's commitment to continue its solidarity and struggle to achieve the goals for which it was established, by mobilising its members in all countries of the region in order to work to influence governments to respond to these demands. Accordingly, the Equality Without Reservation Coalition carried out advocacy and sensitisation activities with the Arab League in March 2008, before the European Parliament during May 2008 and distributed the Rabat Call on the occasion of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)<sup>19</sup> in April 2008. Thus, the file of lifting reservations made progress, as the struggle bore fruit resulting in the organisations finally managing to persuade their countries to adopt a number of positive measures in this direction, the most important of which are:

- ◆ Lifting of the reservation about Article 9, Paragraph B, related to nationality, by the Egyptian and Algerian governments;
- ◆ Lifting of the reservation about Article 15, Paragraph 4, related to freedom of movement and choice of housing, by the Algerian government;

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.peacewomen.org/content/rabat-appeal-regional-campaign-equality-without-reservation>

<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/uprmain.aspx>

- ◆ Lifting of the reservation about the Convention, and ratification of the Optional Protocol, by the Moroccan government;
- ◆ Ratification of the Optional Protocol by the Tunisian government; and
- ◆ Accession to the Convention by the State of Qatar in December 2008, thus leaving only two Arab states that have not joined the agreement so far, namely Somalia and Sudan.

Thus, the EWRC achieved great success and constituted a best practice, which had a great impact on women's struggles in the region:

- ◆ In terms of participation, it managed to bring together 20 human rights and women's organisations at the regional level belonging to 13 Arab countries, plus Turkey, as well as male and female experts from different backgrounds and many areas of specialisation, 30 organisations and representatives of national institutions, political and parliamentary bodies, and male and female experts at the national level, while also receiving the support of organisations from outside the region;
- ◆ In terms of media coverage, it had wide resonance at the international, national and regional levels;
- ◆ In terms of mechanisms, the coalition issued the Call to Rabat and developed a regional advocacy strategy, while working on launching national campaigns for each country, as well as establishing a regional committee for monitoring.

Nevertheless, fourteen years after the Equality Without Reservation campaign, and despite the relative progress recorded in the field of advancing women's rights and implementation of the demands in all constitutions in the region on the principles of equality and non-discrimination between citizens, there is still a gap between the constitutional texts and the requirements of national legislation, as well as the political obligations and institutional practices, to realise this principle on a practical level. As a result, the region's women, especially vulnerable segments, are highly prone to discrimination, violence and marginalisation at all levels, both in the public and private spheres. Evidence for such practices is the treatment women received during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the vulnerability and discrimination they have endured.<sup>20</sup>



<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-crisis-in-the-mena-region-impact-on-gender-equality-and-policy-responses-ee4cd4f4/>





## Building Resilient Societies and Peace through Social Dialogue in the Mediterranean

Good Practice 2

### Businessmed and partners (\*) - Euro-Mediterranean Region



The major political changes that occurred in 2011, and mainly concerned the Southern Neighbourhood Countries of the Mediterranean, have shown the limits of the economic and social policies followed so far and have made the need for urgent institutional reforms more obvious. Since 2008, and within the framework of the dialogue held in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the EU has embarked on a process involving governments and representatives of social partners. This process aimed to give a 'more effective' role to social dialogue in Mediterranean countries. It is within this context that the Pilot Project for the Promotion of Social Dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood, SOLiD, was launched in three countries: Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan.



Signing of the Social Dialogue Charter by the Ministers of Social Affairs.

Between 2016 and 2018, three different phases were implemented. The mobilisation phase focused on an analysis of social dialogue institutions and structures through capacity-building workshops. During the second dialogue phase, concrete bipartite, tripartite and multiparty discussions between social partners strengthened the practice of social dialogue via seminars, workshops, exchanges and study visits. The final convergence phase instead included bipartite concertation between employers and trade unions in view of strengthening community practices around social dialogue and capitalising on a multi-stakeholder, united vision on principles and good practices for social dialogue in the region.

(\*)The full list of SOLiD partners is available here: <http://medsocialdialogue.org/solid/partnership/>

The concertation process between employers' organisations, trade unions, CSOs and local authorities from Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and the EU countries, led to implementation of 80 activities and mobilisation of 1,196 representatives of social partners within the national capacity-building workshops; 176 beneficiaries involved in the dialogue with local authorities; 102 experts trained on social dialogue; eight focus groups on migration, work conditions and social rights; two exchange visits between Tunisian and German social partners (DGB – BDA – UGTT – UTICA);<sup>21</sup> 22 publications taking the form of diagnostic studies on social partner attitudes and positions regarding social dialogue content and practises in the region, including an in-depth analysis of the economic, political, social and institutional conditions for social dialogue in Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan, along with the creation of a database as a learning and working tool for social partners in sharing experiences in the region.

The whole process led to the drafting of a unique document, the Charter for the Promotion of Social Dialogue between employers' organisations, trade unions and CSOs. The programme-oriented document is based on twelve principles that consolidate a social dialogue culture between social parties with the aim of institutionalising this dialogue by improving work conditions and providing a suitable environment for economic development.

The Charter for the Promotion of Social Dialogue was signed by the Ministers of Social Affairs of the target countries as well as the trade unions, employers' organisations and CSOs involved along with the project's coalition, during SOLiD's closing conference in Brussels on 14 March 2019. It was followed by the official adoption of SOLiD's charter in the sidelines of the UfM Ministerial Meeting on 2 April 2019, in Cascais, Portugal.

SOLiD has been an intelligent, collective response to a complex and difficult situation, politically, economically and socially. Moreover, SOLiD has served as a 'relational platform' between social actors, guided by a balanced rational approach on social and civil dialogue. SOLiD

**“ I am confident that [the] SOLiD programme will have a concrete impact. SOLiD has responded to the urgent need for a system of dialogue that contributes to social stability. There is no sustainable development without the inclusion of all social actors through a constructive and permanent dialogue. ”**

*Mustapha Tlili,  
Project Director, SOLiD*

<sup>21</sup> Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB), Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände (BDA), Union générale tunisienne du travail (UGTT) and Union tunisienne de l'industrie, du commerce et de l'artisanat (UTICA).





addressed the long-standing mistrustful relationships among social partners. The active role played, and impetus provided, by social partners and regional organisations in mobilising and steering partners and beneficiaries, is a lesson to be taken into account in the implementation of forthcoming projects.

Future recommended steps are the establishment of a regional Social Dialogue Centre for research studies and promotion of training and Social Dialogue workshops among social partners that could target leaders in trade unions, employers' organisations and civil society and government officials, to reinforce social dialogue concepts and sustainable development.

Finally, vulgarisation of social dialogue in the region is still very important. Continued exchanges of north-south and cross-regional experiences and exploration of all potential synergies with other EU initiatives or other donors must be investigated.



Official Adoption of SOLiD charter (Cascais, April 2019)

## The Freedom Bus of Families for Freedom

Good Practice 3

### The Syria Campaign – Syria



In March 2011, hundreds of thousands of peaceful demonstrators took to the streets in Syria to demand freedom and democracy. Today, more than half of Syria's people have been driven from their homes and more than five million pushed across the borders into neighbouring countries and further afield. Upwards of 500,000 people have been killed and more than ten million need urgent humanitarian assistance. Over 100,000<sup>22</sup> women, men and children have been arbitrarily detained and have forcibly disappeared because of the Syrian regime, armed opposition and extremist groups. Most Syrian detainees have been imprisoned for political reasons, often pushed into buses by the Syrian regime and taken to prison for years of abuse, torture and starvation.



Freedom Bus standing in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.

With these political challenges in mind, a women-led campaigning organisation called Families for Freedom (FFF) working for the rights of Syria's disappeared and detained, travelled to Europe with a red double-decker London "Freedom Bus" covered with portraits of their beloved ones

<sup>22</sup> In the absence of official statistics, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has documented more than 100,000 cases of arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances. They estimate that the number of Syrians arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared is closer to 200,000. See <https://sn4hr.org/>

to have their messages spread across the globe. Covering the bus with these images was intended to create a very potent picture that would capture media attention as well as that of the public wherever the bus went. The idea partially came from Syrian actor Yara Sabri, who had been sharing a cheerful drawing of a bus every time a detainee was released from detention on social media. The bus became a symbol in the minds of Syrian people, when the members of the Assad regime used it to drive protestors to prison, or when buses became linked to the forced displacement of civilians from their cities under 'urban evacuation' agreements adopted by the Syrian regime when regaining control of areas formerly held by the Opposition.

**“Wherever people are talking about Families for Freedom and [the] Freedom Bus, they talk about them as one inseparable story of activism and resistance.”**

*Amina Khouliani,  
Families For Freedom*

FFF's theory of change is that if they can communicate the scale and severity of the forced disappearance crisis – arguably one of the greatest crimes against humanity happening right now – they will get warring sides and governments negotiating the future of Syria to make the release of detainees a priority.

Families for Freedom mobilises the public to pressure all sides to comply with their demands. It raises the voice of the families of detainees and missing persons and calls for prompt action by local and international organisations and bodies to support the detainees file. The “Freedom Bus” visited key capitals as a rallying cry to Europe's leaders to act for Syria's detainees. On each occasion, it was extremely effective in attracting media attention and helping raise the profile of the campaign.

In London, the “Freedom Bus” stopped under the famous Big Ben clock and FFF sang Syrian folk songs among the gathered crowds. The campaigning women decided to remain there to remind British citizens that their clock which, at that time, was scheduled to stop working for four years due to maintenance work, causing a fuss among the public for the 200,000 ticks of

the clock that London would be losing during those years, could not be equated with the fate of 200,000 detainees, whose families knew nothing about them.

In Paris, they gathered at *Place de la République* to tell their stories, sing and stand in solidarity with all those in detention. They urged President Emmanuel Macron to use all his influence to push for their husbands, siblings and sons' releases from detention in Syria's brutal prisons. They worked with local and international human rights organisations to mobilise support so that the file of detainees and forcibly disappeared people would remain outside the framework of any political negotiation process. Over the past year, there is significant evidence that international policymakers are listening more closely. The increased profile of FFF has been essential to opening doors with policymakers. In fact, they have addressed the UN Security Council on two occasions.

Currently, FFF is considering how the bus can be used as a long-term symbol of the struggle for justice in Syria. Clearly the use of a bus as a visual symbol is an extremely specific tactic that would not work for any campaign. But it does show the power of ambitious visual actions. These can indeed be a great tool to engage the public and the media about a cause. Creating a strong visual symbol for a group or movement can help mobilise people. Most importantly, though, the bus has become a beloved symbol to many Syrian families in exile who have loved ones in detention. While most of the campaign's members have not been on the bus itself, it has been important for cultivating a sense of collective identity. Detainees do not suffer alone; their families suffer too.





## UNIMED Petition for a Mediterranean Erasmus Generation

Good Practice 4

### UNIMED – Euro-Mediterranean Region



The Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED) was founded in October 1991 by Professor Franco Rizzi. It is an association of 130 universities from 22 countries along the Mediterranean basin, which have united their efforts for almost 30 years in order to develop research and education in the Euro-Mediterranean area and, more broadly, to contribute to scientific, cultural, social and economic cooperation. The image that best represents UNIMED is a “university without walls”.

“ [The] Mediterranean  
is our destiny. ”

*Prof. Franco Rizzi,  
founder and former Secretary General,  
UNIMED*

To achieve the ambitious goal of integration in the Mediterranean, it is easy to understand the importance of exchanges between universities and hence the value of the Erasmus+ programme<sup>23</sup> as a catalyst for international cooperation. More and more often we talk about how the push for mobility in Europe has favoured the emergence of a real transnational generation, the so-called Erasmus Generation. In light of the already evident results of this boost in exchanges, UNIMED is firmly committed to expanding this experience with the universities of the southern shore of the Mediterranean; now a strong priority on UNIMED’s agenda.

In 2011, five members of the European Parliament urged the European Commission to encourage the birth of a “Mediterranean Erasmus”. UNIMED joined the efforts of this appeal by launching an on-line petition to the EU Commission, on the occasion of its 2011 General Assembly, aimed at promoting the international dimension of the Erasmus programme and broadening the initiative to include southern Mediterranean universities. The petition delivered to the EU Commissioner for Education and Culture in January 2012, was taken into account at the launch of the Erasmus+ 2014-2020 programme, with an average of 8,000 Euro-Mediterranean scholarships granted per year. After the funding of those scholarships, which have brought North African students abroad, UNIMED now has the goal of granting 30,000 scholarships. The petition was, therefore, re-launched in 2017 in view of the new Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme, with the aim of obtaining an average of 300,000 scholarships per year.

<sup>23</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en)

The petition launched by UNIMED to request a greater number of mobility grants has brought the requests of the academic world of the Mediterranean region to the forums where funding for community programming is discussed and will be soon delivered to EU Commissioner Mariya Gabriel and to the European Parliament.

“The interest and the need to have a Euro-Mediterranean Erasmus programme are strong,” explains UNIMED Director Marcello Scalisi. He continues:

“The EU had openly admitted that the petition launched in 2011, with over 6,000 signatures collected in 55 countries, had been fundamental in deciding the fund allocations. Since community programming is based on participatory public consultations, we want to give our contribution again and underline the importance of our action.”

UNIMED’s commitment is not only limited to the request for a numerical increase in the allocated funds and consequently in the number of mobility grants. It pays specific attention as well to the issue of south-south mobility, with a view to a more integrated neighbourhood policy. Scalisi concludes:

“One of our key points is south-south mobility. The universities of Egypt or Morocco have more contacts with those in Europe than they have with each other, while for the integration and development of the area, sub-regional dialogue as well as south-south dialogue is also fundamental. Bringing university systems closer to citizens where education is controlled by governments, often applying censorship, is essential to help young people believe in their country’s future and rely more on accountable governance.”



Design of the UNIMED petition for a Mediterranean Erasmus Generation.



# 03

## ENVIRONMENTAL ENGAGEMENT

“ *The ecological crisis cannot be solved by partial adjustments: we need to move from a short-term to a long-term economy and civilisation.* ”

*Alexander Langer, politician and green activist, 1946 - 1995*



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# Environmental Activism along a Warming Mediterranean: Forging Regional Engagement at a Time of Climate Crises

Peter Schwartzstein

*An Athens-based environmental journalist, he works on water, food security and conflict-climate issues across the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Mediterranean: most of his work appears in National Geographic. He is also a non-resident fellow at the Center for Climate and Security, an American non-partisan think tank, and regularly consults on environmental issues for UNEP, UNICEF and Amnesty International.*

## ABSTRACT

Crippled by inattention and insufficient cash, the environment has traditionally been the poor relation of Mediterranean civil society. But as climate change and pollution cut an increasingly grim swathe across the region, that's starting to change. Around the sea, environmental groups are enjoying newfound popularity, even as they face new and old challenges. Given that the Mediterranean littoral encompasses a wide array of economic and political systems, ranging from authoritarian states to advanced democracies, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Environmental civil society shares considerable common threads, though. For instance, they tend to be among the most poorly resourced and among the most dependent on volunteers of all CSOs. This is a questionnaire-based analysis of their prospects in generating superior future environmental action.

## Introduction

The Mediterranean region is reeling from a wide array of ecological challenges, but you wouldn't necessarily know it to see the state of much of its civil society. Environmental organisations are even more strapped for cash than many of their NGO peers.<sup>1</sup> Their capacity to cooperate across borders can be severely limited, despite the largely shared nature of the Mediterranean's environmental problems. And with mounting pressure from repressive governments, hostile domestic actors, demanding donors, among others, many organisations face more obstacles than ever before. In other words, conservationists and campaigners are struggling to perform their jobs during the environment's time of greatest need.

In its mapping of roughly 30 environment-related civil society organisations (CSOs), the Med Dialogue Programme paints a picture of an environmental scene that's under attack and struggling to gain traction, yet simultaneously unprecedentedly energised and popular. Budgets are low and, in many instances, shrinking due to the pandemic, but volunteer numbers are up. The volume of environmental NGOs appears to be at a record high, but so too is the degree of environmental destruction. "We have more friends, but also more enemies," (Anonymous, personal communication, September 2020) as one Lebanese activist put it.<sup>2</sup> Across the sea, campaigners and conservationists tell a consistent tale of fear and hope for the future.

The nature of the Mediterranean – and its periphery – is such that it requires more cross-border and interdisciplinary collaboration than most ecosystems. As a semi-enclosed sea with a large littoral population and waters that are thought to take up to a century to renew themselves, it's acutely vulnerable to pollution. So it has proven in recent decades. Microplastic concentrations are among the worst in the world, with the equivalent of 33,800 plastic bottles entering the sea every *minute*, according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (Dalberg Associates, 2019). Toxic waste from one country frequently ends up in another (Shira et al., 2018). Inland, too, most states are wrestling with climate stresses, resource scarcity and crumbling biodiversity that can't help but reverberate with neighbours near and far. The environment knows no borders, as the saying goes. The Mediterranean states are a powerful exemplar.

Yet, history and geopolitics have just as often conspired to complicate cooperation as they have to propel it. With twenty-two coastal states, along with several other interested parties, the Mediterranean has an awful lot of stakeholders, many of whom are at loggerheads or seldom

<sup>1</sup> Assessment resulting both from the Med Dialogue Programme's mapping survey research and from meeting many environmental NGOs over the years.

<sup>2</sup> All the personal interview subjects in this chapter requested anonymity.



engage with one another, which means CSOs can't or won't either. And with wildly divergent political systems, levels of prosperity and attitudes towards the environment around the sea, building consensus and sparking collective action can be difficult to the extreme. Amid myriad other challenges – conflict, economic and governance crises, and now COVID-19 many environmental CSOs say it can be a struggle to make any headway, no matter how bleak the Mediterranean's prognosis might be.

## Assessment

The disparate nature of the region ensures that environmental CSOs operate in a wide variety of socio-political climates that range from conflict zones in which work is all but impossible (e.g. Syria and Libya) to authoritarian states (e.g. Egypt and Turkey), right through to European and some other democracies. However, despite these considerable differences, there are a number of common threads across the regional environmental scene.

Environmental CSO finances are consistently weak compared to other CSOs, many of which aren't exactly well-endowed themselves. The median operating budget among environmental respondents is 150,000 euros, as opposed to an overall median figure of 277,500 euros. Some must make do with as little as 20,000 euros annually, in the case of one Tunisian NGO. But the real figure might actually be even lower given that ten of 28 mapped organisations declined to divulge their finances on the questionnaire and many of those appear to be among the most poorly resourced of all.

Naturally, this cash crunch bodes ill for NGO operations. Hamstrung by a lack of funding, many environmental CSOs are severely limited in the number of paid staff they can take on – a median of 11 – and the number of projects they can initiate – a median of seven; both of which also fall considerably below the CSO average. Organisation heads report considerable difficulties in hiring expert conservationists and/or getting expensive and often years-long environmental studies and clean-up operations off the ground. Though there are frequently other mitigating factors in both cases. That shortfall in paid staff is partially offset by volunteers, who appear to make up a larger share of the environmental CSO workforce than in other fields, while environmental projects can require inordinate time and money to yield results. As ever, quantity isn't necessarily a reflection of impact.

And despite explicit efforts to diversify income streams, the funding that many environmental CSOs do receive is especially likely to come from a small and sometimes unreliable coterie of donors. Twenty-three of 28 respondents receive funds from philanthropic foundations or small private donors, whose support can quickly drop off at times of financial stress or waver if civil society doesn't subscribe to a donor's own occasionally conflicting priorities. Twenty of these twenty-eight environment-related organisations receive assistance from the European Union, a greater percentage than the roughly 56 percent of all NGOs mapped by the Med Dialogue

Programme and a source of occasional consternation. Though EU funding is considered vital, some organisations feel Brussels can have insufficient understanding of their challenges and hence unrealistic expectations of their ability to effect change (Anonymous, personal communication, September 2020). Notably, only eight polled organisations receive state aid, a reflection, perhaps, of the environment's lowly stature in many North African and eastern Mediterranean countries.

There is some evidence, however, that cross-border CSO collaboration has increased in recent years as environmental concerns have proliferated. Sixteen of the twenty-eight polled respondents work on both sides of the Mediterranean, a little more than the 49 percent among all CSOs; a clear improvement on past levels of cooperation.

In other bright spots, a host of new environmental organisations have sprung up in the last decade, particularly on the south side of the sea. A number of more established environmental CSOs also report fewer difficulties in collaborating with foreign partners. From Morocco to Tunisia, the political climate appears to have eased in some states, as they look to polish their green credentials, and as others loosen their restrictions on local CSOs across the board.

Transnational environmental organisations and sea-wide campaigns have, however, struggled to gain ground across the region. Among southern Mediterranean countries, Greenpeace has few operations – and no offices – beyond Israel, Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco, while WWF has made few in-roads, despite a number of attempts to expand its work in the Arab world.

But despite notable success stories,<sup>3</sup> environmental NGOs have, by and large, suffered the same kinds of setbacks as much of the southern Mediterranean's civil society since the aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings; with all the curtailed or stifled cross-border collaborations that have come with that. Almost half of respondents declined to identify their sources of pressure for fear, in some instances, of renewed or escalated trouble, according to several polled organisations. Among those who did answer, just under half said they faced government pressure and about the same number reported repercussions from powerful domestic players, such as political parties or religious institutions. Many of their counterparts in Europe suffered a serious drop in funding during the last recession from which they've yet to fully recover. Few campaigners harbour much hope that this will let up anytime soon; particularly as COVID-19 fuelled economic crises eat into funding streams.

<sup>3</sup> The "Mediterranean Education Initiative on Environment and Sustainability", a longstanding initiative of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) on Education for Sustainable Development (described as a Good Practice below), and the yearly campaign "Clean Up the Med", promoted by Legambiente which, in 2020, involved one hundred organisations or groups from seventeen countries in beach clean-up operations, are two examples of transnational initiatives trying to connect environmental groups beyond borders.



Future Trends

The environmental movement is currently at something of a crossroads around the Mediterranean. On the one hand, popular interest is on an upward spiral and is only likely to grow as awareness of the region’s ecological crises mounts. Many of the polled organisations have been founded relatively recently, particularly in North Africa, and as these NGOs expand, mature and develop wider international networks, the potential for superior pan-Mediterranean cooperation will increase with them. Anecdotally, the average age of environmental CSO employees appears to be significantly below the CSO average. There is perhaps no field that’s in greater need of generational change than the environment, which often lacks champions among those in positions of authority.

Even more importantly perhaps, some environmental CSOs anticipate that that heightened concern will translate into improved – and potentially game-changing – financial opportunities. With more money, campaigners feel they’ll soon be in a position to help communities who’ve never had much to do with the environmental movement and thereby reel in demographics that might otherwise have been repelled by what’s often considered an elitist component of civil society. More money might also enable the smallest of organisations to recruit personnel and devote the time required to work further afield.

At the same time, greater domestic giving might loosen the financial stranglehold that some authoritarian states have been able to exert over environmentalists precisely because of their dependence on foreign assistance. Egypt is a grim case in point. Largely beholden to EU and international foundation grants, environmental CSOs there have been paralysed by recent laws, which make it exceptionally tricky for them to accept funds from abroad.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast, rising interest likely will fuel, and in many instances already is fuelling, a fiercer crackdown. Authoritarian states such as Turkey had, until relatively recently, seen environmental groups as largely harmless and treated them accordingly. An increasing understanding of the environment’s capacity to mobilise popular action, which has been reinforced by water-related protests across the Middle East, is changing that (Schwartzstein, 2019). Many of these groups have been recast as sources of potential instability, not least due to their habit of engaging in the kinds of activities that often incite security state attention, like information and data sharing across borders. (It’s notable that many Egyptian groups and a number of others who operate in hostile political climates did not respond to the mapping questionnaire.) As climate change continues to gnaw away and environmental degradation worsens, campaigners say that unwanted attention will only intensify.

<sup>4</sup> See the September 2019 POMED “Fact Sheet – Egypt’s “New” NGO Law: As Draconian as the Old One”. Available at <https://pomed.org/fact-sheet-egypts-new-ngo-law-as-draconian-as-the-old-one/>



Many organisations are guardedly optimistic about the future. In conversations conducted over the past decade, environmentalists suggest that deteriorating conditions will ultimately force repressive states to bring them in from the cold and force democratic states to accord them the support and funding they need. But almost all feel that the environment’s prospects hinge much more on improvements in governance than in addressing specific environmental challenges. The questionnaire bears out that analysis. Very few polled CSOs list ‘tackling ecological challenges’ as an absolute priority; and many of those who did appear to work elsewhere in civil society. Environmental CSOs, for their part, prioritise consolidating democratic spaces, influencing institutions and tackling socio-economic inequalities. The story of environmental failure is the story of state failure in general.

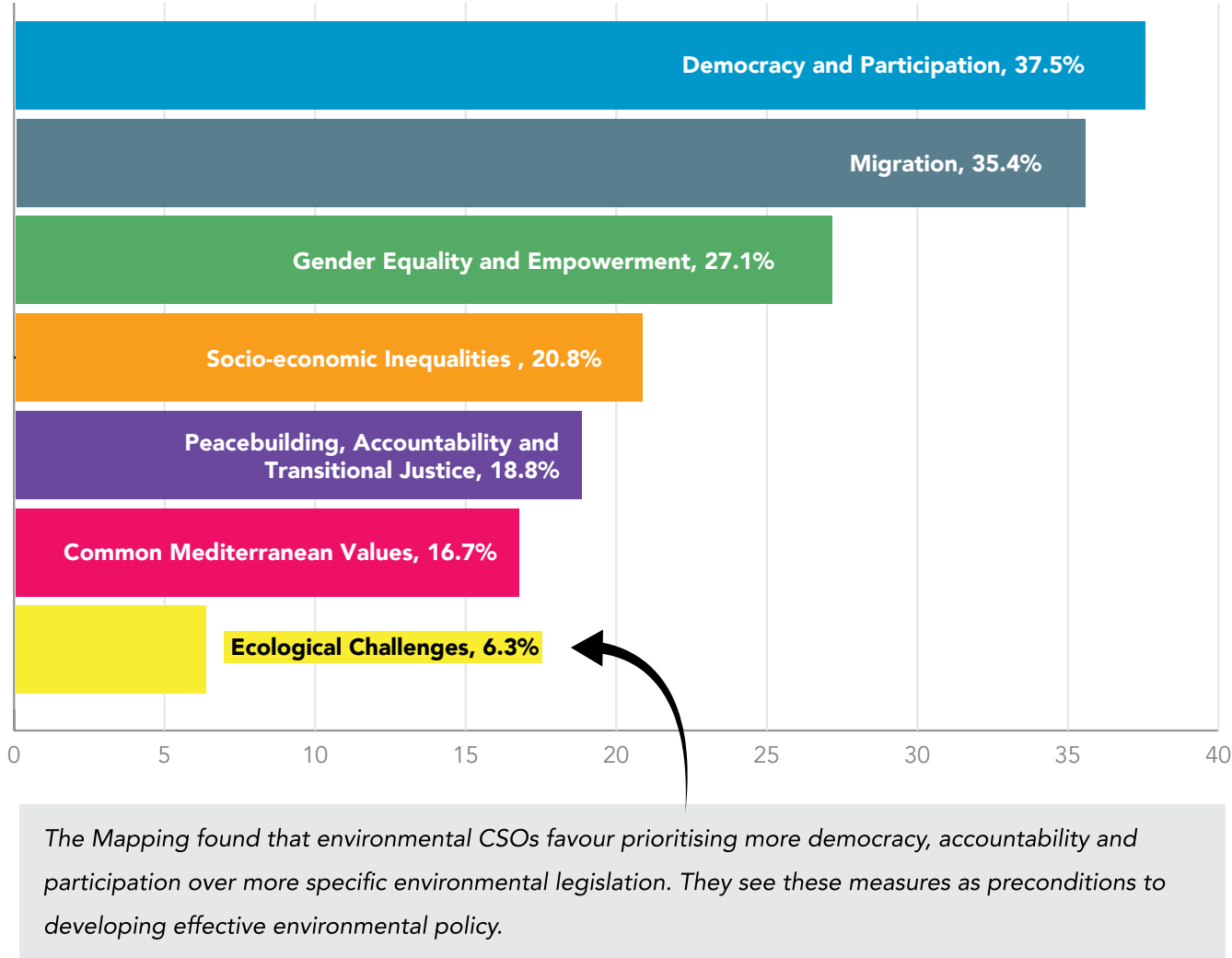


Table 4: Suggested Thematic Areas for Advocacy Campaigns





## Recommendations

- ◆ Amid the pandemic and ensuing economic crisis, funding for civil society organisations is at a premium. Environmental groups around the Mediterranean are no different. Many are suffering severe cuts in domestic, foundation and state giving, which is compounding existing financial woes. It is incumbent on the international community, and particularly the EU and other European institutions, to maintain and ideally escalate their support for these organisations at their time of great need. This isn't purely a matter of altruism, of course. What flows into the Mediterranean or seeps across its borders ultimately affects the entire coastline;
- ◆ In some southern Mediterranean countries, environmental CSOs have yet to solicit as much corporate or private sector funding as they might. This is a mistake. Many companies appear to have expanded their corporate social responsibility (CSR) giving in recent years. The environmental scene would do well to mimic the success that some humanitarian organisations have had in tapping into this;
- ◆ It's also vital that international donors display a greater understanding of the obstacles that aid recipients face on the south side of the sea. Some questionnaire respondents identify the European Union as a very welcome, but frequently overbearing donor. There's a limit to how effectively the EU can distribute aid and provide guidance unless it better appreciates the nature of their challenges, organisations say;
- ◆ Despite improved cross-border collaboration in recent years, many organisations, and indeed many countries, remain largely frozen out of trans-Mediterranean environmental discourse because of their small stature and/or meagre finances. If the peoples of the Mediterranean are to feel the full benefit of cross-border engagement, then the international community will need to help facilitate more thorough cooperation. This could take the form of regular environmental summits, as suggested by a number of southern Mediterranean environmentalists, or 'twinning' schemes, whereby CSOs from one country are paired with like-minded groups in another;
- ◆ In places where environmentalists are experiencing repression, European institutions can and must apply greater pressure to alleviate their plight. In cracking down on these organisations, authoritarian states are fuelling environmental degradation in their own countries, while also contributing to the Mediterranean's increasingly parlous state. Given that the EU and member states are among the biggest donors to culpable governments, they have the leverage and the responsibility to intervene. For all the difficulty of stifling human rights abuses, the fact that the environment is still seen as a slightly 'softer' field may ease policymakers' task; and
- ◆ More importantly, European stakeholders must impress upon their Mediterranean counterparts – and, indeed, many within their own institutions – that the environment is a priority. The less governments do, the more NGOs must, and even with more funding and support, as most organisations concede, there's a limit to how much can fall on their shoulders. A fully functioning civil society requires willing and able government partners. From elevating environmental issues within pan-Mediterranean political discourse to assisting in climate adaptation and mitigation measures along the south side of the sea, the international community must give environment the stature that its severity warrants.

## The Path to Sustainability is Through Education

Good Practice 1

### MIO-ECSDE – Euro-Mediterranean Region



As the saying goes: "Teachers plant the seeds of knowledge that will grow forever"; and no phrase sums up better what the Mediterranean Information Office for the Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) had in mind when it launched the "Mediterranean Education Initiative on Environment and Sustainability" (MEDIES), the e-network of educators and NGOs working on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), aiming to involve and mobilise people of all ages towards sustainability.

It was in 2002, during the Johannesburg Summit for Sustainable Development, when MEDIES was created to address the long-lasting challenge of empowering learners to make informed decisions and take responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity. MEDIES committed to using formal and non-formal educational settings, as well as public awareness, to implement ESD; the most safe and effective tool for environmental protection and promotion of sustainable development. In a nutshell, ESD is a holistic type of education that equally addresses the economic, ecological and social dimensions of any given topic.

**“ Formal and non-formal Education for Sustainable Development and public awareness are the most safe and effective tools to create the necessary enabling environment to involve and mobilise people of all ages towards sustainability. ”**

*Prof. Michael J. Scoullas,  
Coordinator, MEDIES & Chair,  
MIO-ECSDE*

MEDIES has had an important impact since then, with more than 150 training sessions having been conducted, 24 publications produced in many languages, several policy papers delivered and a Mediterranean Strategy and Action Plan put into place to support education administrators applying ESD in their national contexts. In total, tens of thousands of teachers, students and citizens have been impacted by MEDIES activities around the Mediterranean. In its years of operation, the MEDIES Secretariat has systematically supported implementation of the UN Decade on ESD (2005-2014) and has been a key partner of the Global Action Programme (GAP/UNESCO) on Advancing Policy for ESD (2015-2019). It functions as the technical secretariat of the Mediterranean Committee on ESD, guiding the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on ESD (2014) and its Action Plan (2016), and developing the competences of educators and trainers to effectively apply ESD in their specific contexts.





Initiatives that demonstrate the range of work and expertise include: “ALTER AQUA”, a 10-year long project focusing on Non-Conventional Water Resources, jointly run with GWP-Med in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta, which included material development, training sessions, and school visits ([www.ncwr-edu.net](http://www.ncwr-edu.net)); “DIVE-IN”, a project on ESD & Inclusive Pedagogy that was run in Greece, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine with peer-training sessions, national actions and a guidebook; the “ESD in Biosphere Reserves & Other Designated Areas” joint initiative with UNESCO, that included a resource book and a series of summer universities; and “Know, Feel, Act! to stop Marine Litter”, an educational handbook, produced in 16 languages and an exhibition that travelled across Europe.

In an ever-changing world, MEDIES has learned and adapted. As the format of educational resources is gradually shifting to online versions (web apps, etc.), printed copies are only produced for educators and for promotional purposes. More and more of its training sessions, will be developed for online or hybrid delivery in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. MEDIES also looks toward reversing the prevailing trend of insufficient funds being invested in ESD and in sustaining and scaling up impactful educational activities.

Over the 18 years of its operation, MEDIES has worked tirelessly in the field of ESD and will continue to do so, faithful to its goal of shaping environmentally literate and responsible citizens.



*Outdoor activities in a school festival (Greece, 2013).*

## Regional Master Plan for Sustainable Development in the Jordan Valley

*Good Practice 2*



### EcoPeace ME – Middle East

The publication of the first Regional Master Plan for Sustainable Development in the Jordan Valley, in 2015, was a culmination of more than 20 years of accumulating knowledge and experience by EcoPeace Middle East. It began in 1994, in the shadow of the promised peace, after the Oslo Accords and the Peace Treaty, when a group of passionate Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian environmentalists agreed to join forces and establish a regional organisation, with the aim of promoting cooperative efforts to protect the shared environmental heritage from anticipated economic activities and promote the integration of environmental considerations into the regional development agenda. The dynamic nature of environmental activism necessitates a change of course based on changes on the ground.

The failure of peace treaties in materialising into cooperative efforts between nations for the protection of the shared water resources made reliance on decision-makers to address urgent environmental needs less fruitful. This is when EcoPeace began promoting a new mindset – “Water cannot wait” – aimed at advocating for solving water issues among decision-makers and not holding it hostage to final status issues. EcoPeace accompanied it by working directly with local communities, educating them about their water and environmental realities. EcoPeace’s flagship programme “The Good Water Neighbour” (GWN) went into stages of development and expansion.

“Only by working together on implementing projects identified in our regional master plan, will we be able to bring peace, sustainable development and prosperity to people living in our region.”

*Yana Abu Taleb,  
Jordanian Director,  
EcoPeace Middle East*

GWN started working on a community level in the Jordan Valley in 2001. Five years later, it expanded to river basin-wide educational and community involvement. It eventually scaled up to today’s nationwide approach, applied in the three countries. Since the outset, the fate of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea were the focus. GWN allowed for the integration of up-to-date challenges and focuses of a global nature, such as climate change, which contributes to the water scarcity in the region. Working with local governments allowed for the gradual identification of the main sources of pollution and water divergence.



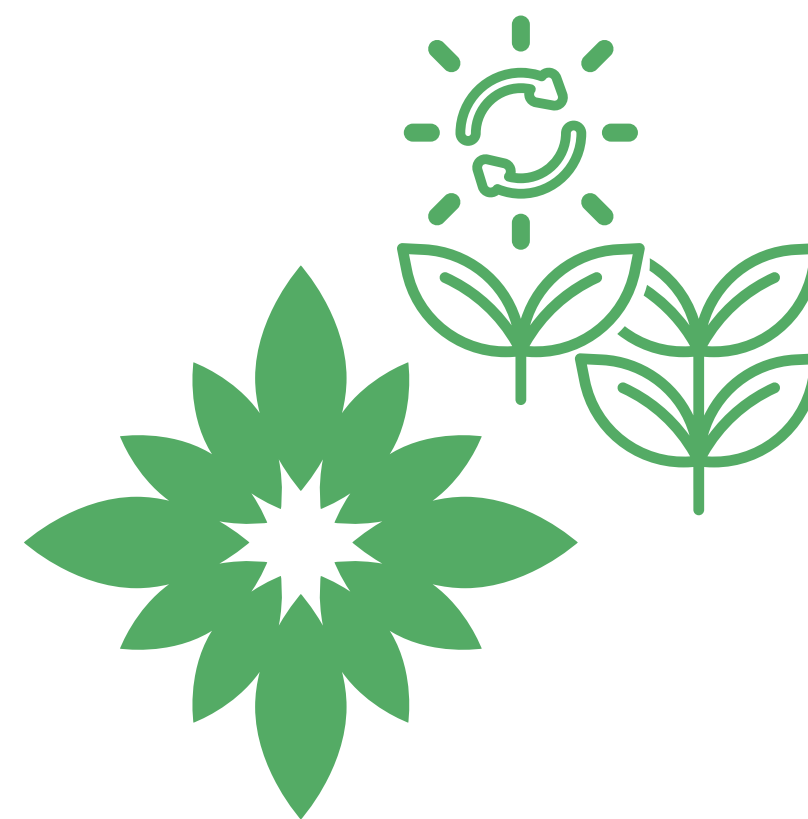


By 2015, EcoPeace had accumulated enough support to initiate its most ambitious project of producing the Jordan Valley (JV) Master Plan. Reputable institutions have collaborated with EcoPeace over the years in this broad-scale and unprecedented achievement. These include: the Global Nature Fund (GNF), the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), the European Union's Sustainable Water Integrated Management (SWIM) and businesses such as MASAR Jordan, and Royal Haskoning DHV. The JV Master Plan identified problems and proposed solutions in the form of 127 projects that, if implemented, would increase the GDP of the Jordan Valley from around 4\$ billion to 70\$ billion by 2050. The rigorous scientific research put into it made it a vantage point for regional governance and development. The Jordan Valley Authority in Jordan adopted it and helped obtain approval by the Jordanian cabinet. In cooperation with the World Bank and other international organisations, EcoPeace is currently working to establish a Jordan Valley Trust Fund. The Regional Master Plan is used as an advocacy tool for Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian decision-makers as well for raising awareness on water realities to press forward for the rehabilitation of the Jordan River.



*EcoPeace regional youth camp (July 2019).*

The main obstacles for rehabilitating the Jordan River and the Dead Sea are the natural water scarcity in the region, climate change, population growth, political conflicts and unsustainable economic development. However, the Master Plan provides a road map to overcome these challenges; if combined with other regional solutions, saving the Jordan River and the Dead Sea could become an easier and more realistic task. EcoPeace's Regional Master Plan offers the basis for a brighter future for the region and its residents. Opting for cooperative efforts over hostility would benefit all parties involved; it would constitute a victory of human reason and ethics over more partisan interests and would shape the conditions for a lasting peace in the region.



# 04

## RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABILITY

“ *Criticism is a meticulous hard work requiring a lot of time; it needs extensive knowledge, a taste of politeness, open mindedness, and a living sense of understanding of what justice, beauty, and the systems we live in are.* ”

May Ziadeh, poetess, 1886 - 1941



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# Sustainability of Regional Networks in the Euro-Med Space: Challenges and Opportunities

Marie Camberlin

Marie Camberlin has fifteen years experience working with civil society organisations in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. She has been in charge of the Southern Neighbourhood programmes of a grant-giving organisation for five years. Prior to that, she was the director of the MENA department of a global human rights movement.

## ABSTRACT

This article explores elements that impact the functioning of regional networks and the regional activities of civil society organisations (CSOs) operating in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The research addresses both internal and external factors, however the latter, namely the political and security context, external pressures and access to funding, have been further examined given their predominant influence on the operations of these organisations. The following analysis has been developed based on the results of the networks mapping process conducted by the Med Dialogue programme, information publicly shared by the mapped networks and interviews of representatives of nine of these networks. The interviews took place in September 2020, then six months after the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, the article also gives a first insight into the consequences of this global crisis on the interviewed organisations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These represent about 10 percent of the entire sample of surveyed CSOs. The selection was done based on the strong regional focus of the selected networks. The sample also reflects diversity in terms of location, longevity, size, status/type, objectives and areas of work.

## Introduction

The features of the mapped CSOs and other structures active in the Euro-Med region are very diverse; particularly in terms of size, mandate, legal status and operational model, forming a heterogeneous whole. The sample includes NGOs, institutions, think tanks, foundations and many other types of entities.

Some are solid organisations with a significant annual budget<sup>2</sup> while others are mid-size structures or smaller associations. In addition, organisations are working on thematic priorities as diverse as environmental issues, economic development, educational and cultural cooperation or human rights.

Budget in EURO	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Up to 100,000	31.6%	31.6%
From 100,001 to 300,00	26.5%	57.5%
From 300,01 to 500,000	12.0%	69.5%
From 500,001 to 1,000,000	11.0%	80.5%
From 1,000,001 to 2,000,000	8.3%	88.8%
More than 2,000,000 to 3,000,000	11.2%	100.0%
Total	100.0%	

Table 5: Networks Yearly Budget

The majority of respondents claim having a regional ambition. Some indeed cover the whole region or several countries. However, there is as well a significant part whose main scope of interest lies in a single country. Despite this diversity, these regional networks face common challenges, primarily the high level of instability that prevails in the European Southern neighbourhood shaken by political and economic crises.

## Multifaceted Obstacles Limiting CSO Operations Locally and Regionally

The Southern Mediterranean shore has been particularly volatile. The political instability that affects several countries of the region often results in repressive acts against independent CSOs and activists.<sup>3</sup> The 2019 Civicus Monitor categorises civic spaces in the MENA as obstructed, repressed and closed.<sup>4</sup> The situation is particularly critical in repressive and war-torn national

<sup>2</sup> Up to several million euros in some cases.  
<sup>3</sup> Restrictions of public freedoms, notably freedom of assembly, have been increasingly recorded in European countries as well, but no clear impact of these restrictions on regional network operations has been identified during this research process.  
<sup>4</sup> See <https://monitor.civicus.org/>





environments. The pressures exerted by local authorities on civil society actors are multifaceted with judicial harassment, legal restrictions, travel bans, prohibition of foreign funding and bank account closures being among the most common.<sup>5</sup>

This situation limits the capacity of these CSOs to operate locally. Consequently, several have decided to relocate within the MENA region or to Europe as a mitigation strategy. It is, however, extremely difficult for regional networks based elsewhere to hold activities in repressive and war-torn environments because of the local security context and/or operational restrictions. At the same time, the participation of these activists in regional initiatives taking place abroad has been made difficult due to travel restrictions they face.

These challenges also tend to affect the consolidation of the organisational capacities of these groups (number of employees, access to capacity building, internal governance, etc.). Unsurprisingly, these civil societies rank particularly low in USAID's CSO Sustainability Index<sup>6</sup> reflecting an overall vulnerability. This is particularly noticeable for Algerian and Libyan organisations.

The political turmoil in the region also seems to affect the establishment of networks, in particular big ones, within the region. With the notable exceptions of Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon,<sup>7</sup> only a few networks active in more than one country have their headquarters in the Southern neighbourhood. Many are, therefore, based in Europe. Operating from Europe eases some administrative processes. However, it makes it difficult for partners from the Southern shore to participate in activities in person. All categories of networks have experienced problems related to visa restrictions targeting in particular young people and partners from war-affected countries.

### How Does Civil Society Finance Its Regional Work?

The capacity to implement regional activities doesn't only depend on an enabling legal and political environment; it also requires having access to the necessary resources.

The majority of regional networks rely on donor funding. Being the instigator of the Euro-Med partnership, the EU plays a leading role in this regard with 56 percent of respondents having declared to have received EU support (Carlini & Heggi, 2019, p.13).

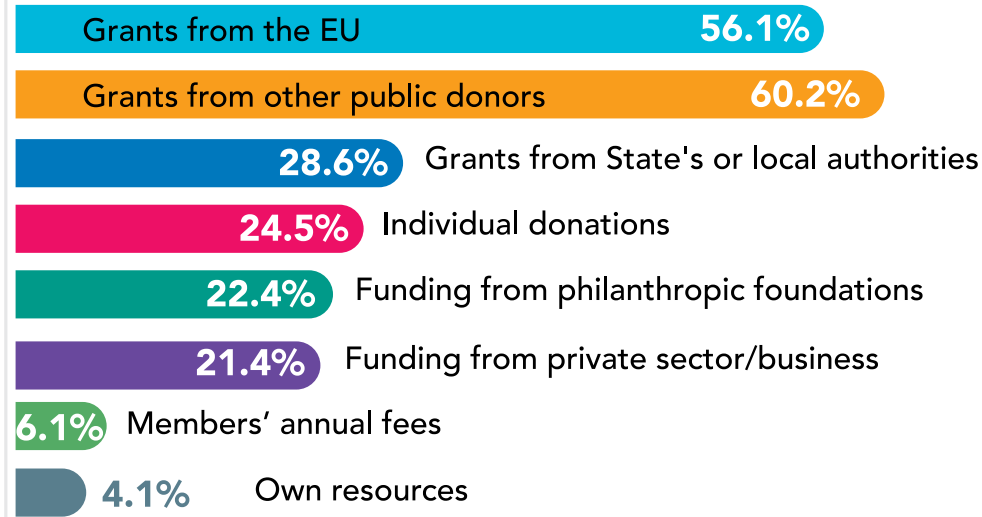
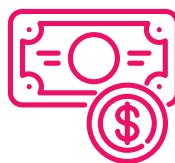
5 Civil society actors from countries in conflict are not only at high risk in their own countries. Restriction and pressure have also been increasingly exerted by authorities of neighbouring countries where they have relocated. This is particularly noticeable for Syrian CSOs. International sanctions are also negatively impacting their inclusion in regional programmes.

6 See <https://csosi.org/?region=MENA>

7 The financial crisis currently faced by Lebanon may not affect the presence of the networks already established there, but may do so in the establishment of new structures.



### HOW DO CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORKS IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN FINANCE THEIR ACTIVITIES?



Infographic 7

Support from States or local authorities (primarily from EU Member States, the United States and Canada) ranked third (almost 30 percent of respondents). In comparison, funding from Southern Mediterranean States or local institutions seems limited even for organisations registered there.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, networks with a Euro-Mediterranean scope of action and based in a European country seem to have privileged access to domestic funding, including from local and regional governments.<sup>9</sup>

Overall, the investment of public donors (including international organizations) and other stakeholders (foundations, the private sector, philanthropy, etc.) in civil society support in the region is rather significant.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the funds and programmes exclusively dedicated to transnational activities, exchanges or networking, are rather scarce. Consequently, the competition is high. They also often consist of large programmes that only solid structures can manage. This trend has been reinforced after institutional donors put the establishment of consortiums as a condition to access such grants. Respondents have highlighted the administrative burden created by the coordination of consortiums making overall grant governance and management difficult.

8 Online data show only four regional organisations have had access to funding from local authorities from the countries where they are registered (Jordan, Lebanon and, to a lesser extent, Tunisia).

9 Support from administrative regions, and similar structures, is particularly noticeable in France, Italy and, to a lesser extent, Belgium and Spain.

10 The level of support significantly differs according to the target country as will be discussed below.



The scarcity of available regional programmes in the Mediterranean is interpreted by interviewees as a decreased interest of donors in networking initiatives beyond borders. Some groups have started suffering from this situation. Three out of nine interviewees are facing funding shortfalls that are weakening their operations. This does not only concern newly established or small groups but also initiatives that have had access to decent funding previously. Changes in donor priorities also seem to be reflected in the themes that are covered. The number and, even more, the size of regional programmes addressing global hot topics like the environment or economic development, appear to be higher than, for example, programmes and funding opportunities for policy research and cultural exchanges that have apparently decreased.<sup>11</sup> Donors would also favour some operational models, such as ‘capitalisation’<sup>12</sup> efforts, to the detriment of dialogue and experience sharing in calls for application.

Interviewees explained donor fatigue, vis à vis regional networking, may be due to the lack of tangible, immediate and visible impact of such work that many benefactors look for to justify their engagement.

The lack of regionally-oriented programmes has been often compensated by securing country-focused grants. While some organisations manage to include a regional dimension in such grants, it is not always possible. Comparatively, opportunities for country-related support are higher but that significantly differs from one country to another according to donor geographical priorities or restrictions, which are often dictated by political considerations. Opportunities for CSOs operating in ‘sensitive’ countries<sup>13</sup> are then lower, generating discrepancies in the overall geographical coverage.

In addition, civil society support funding mechanisms that focus on the Euro-Med region pay far more attention to beneficiaries from the Southern side of the Mediterranean. Many networks struggle to cover the participation costs of their European members in their activities.

Another challenge faced, in particular by mid-size organisations, is the multiplication of relatively small grants to cover part of their activities. In general, these grants only pay for a tiny percentage of operating costs but require significant human resource mobilisation to administer them.

Short-term action grants – including big ones (particularly those of a humanitarian nature) that some organisations run mainly in countries in conflict – may also distort the funding situation and international functioning of these groups. The overall budget of such organisations is inflated when in parallel, operating costs are insufficiently covered and don’t allow for consolidating staff.

<sup>11</sup> Interviewees report on decreased funding opportunities for policy research and think tanks, as well as for cultural exchanges.

<sup>12</sup> Capitalisation is a process that aims to improve the design and implementation of policies or actions, identifying the lessons learned from previous interventions, making information accessible, and creating frames of reference.

<sup>13</sup> War-torn countries are particularly concerned because of the security context and the risks of political interference. Similarly, some States are especially active in putting pressure on donors, particularly institutional ones, to prevent them from supporting local NGOs from these countries.

## Securing Core Funding and Donor Diversification: A Core Element of Network Sustainability

Given the challenges described above, access to core funding may be instrumental for overall network operations, particularly their institutional life, which necessitates ongoing interaction with members. To do so, networks need to mobilise human resources and cover core operating costs, including communication and advocacy costs that are not systematically covered under action grants.

The increased digitalisation of their work following the COVID-19 outbreak has had further impact on the balance between operational and activity costs. While a minority of respondents benefits from memberships fees (only 6.1 percent of the mapped networks) or other ‘own’ resources (only 4.1 percent, see Infographic 7, above), donor core funding is the privileged option. However, organisations are not on an equal footing when it comes to access to core funding, which often results after a rather long, trust-building relationship has developed between the donor and the grantee, thus de facto excluding fledgling organisations. Indeed, private donors and philanthropy associations are usually more inclined to provide core funding than mainstream donors. However, some State institutions do so as well.

At the same time, diversifying donors is also considered as a form of protection against financial instability. It may also limit the risk of interference in grantees’ affairs. It is worth noting that the 20 percent wealthier networks of the entire sample of surveyed CSOs<sup>14</sup> (see Table 5, above) distinguish themselves by a large diversity of sources of funding, both in the number of donors and their profile (UN institutions, private sector and donors, philanthropy, etc.). The capacity to secure decent funding from diverse sources appears to be impacted by the nature and the mandate of the applicant. Networks that have governmental institutions in their governance, or have formal partnerships with public institutions, seem to have easier access to institutional and private sector funding.<sup>15</sup> A network’s areas of work also seem to influence access to funding. More than half of these ‘solid’ networks address non-politically sensitive topics (academic, scientific and cultural cooperation) and in particular, areas considered as priorities by institutional donors like economic cooperation, development and environment.

The capacity to rely on several donors, ideally through a mix of action and core grants, is a milestone in the sustainability strategy of many organisations. Support from the private sector is indeed limited to specific structures and themes, while income generating activities are almost non-existent for such actors.

<sup>14</sup> It represents 19 networks with a yearly budget of over one million euros. The annual budget value for six of them was missing in the survey and was collected during the author’s research.

<sup>15</sup> This represents 13 out of the 19 with a yearly budget above one million euros.

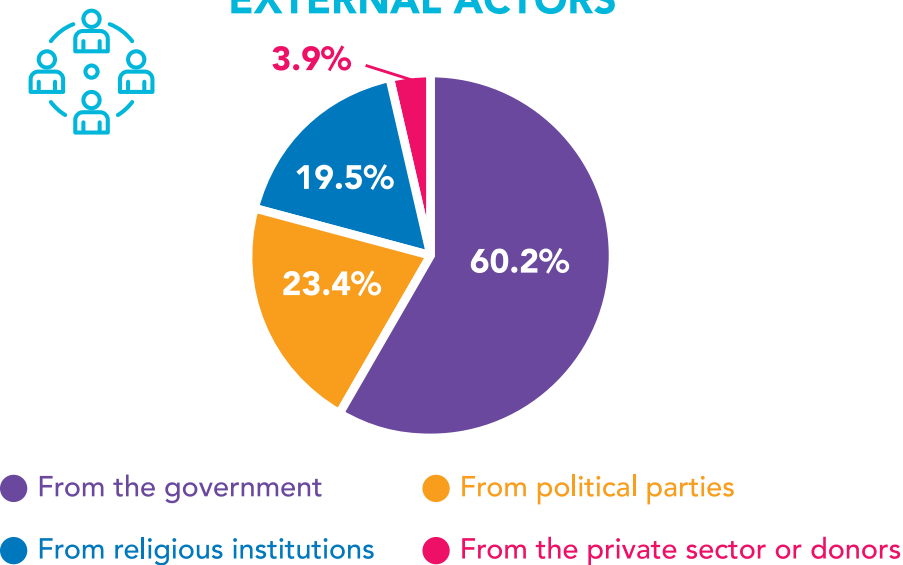


Donor diversification also mitigates the impact of unexpected developments like budgetary cuts or a change of priorities. Such developments are expected to occur more often in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (and potentially other crises).

### Keeping Independence and Countering Growing Attempts at Interference

Donor diversification (along with internal governance mechanisms) ranks very high in terms of measures adopted by networks to guarantee their independence. While 75 percent of mapped networks seem to have a fair degree of autonomy and declare that they receive no or limited pressure from external actors, more than 23 percent declare facing difficulties in working independently and perceive an external attempt to influence or limit their work often or even always. Governments, political parties and religious institutions are among the main identified sources of external pressures.

NETWORKS' PERCEIVED PRESSURE FROM EXTERNAL ACTORS



Infographic 8

These pressures can take many forms. The most visible ones are the threats and restrictive measures mentioned above. But interference by public authorities may also be less visible. One of the interviewees reported about governmental institutions that interfered in the scope of activities of CSOs by rejecting grants allocated to initiatives that the authorities don't consider a priority. In such cases, the donor or the CSO was invited to redirect their funding and activities to the supposed 'country immediate needs'.

Many interviewees also complained about increased donor attempts to interfere in their work through seeking to intervene in the activities' agenda or content, expecting systematic

participation in the activities or by requesting systematic recordings of activities.<sup>16</sup> While none of the interviewees deny the importance of proper reporting, they insist on the importance of guaranteeing a certain level of confidentiality to their members and participants, as well as their independence. In most of the reported cases, the disagreement was resolved through dialogue between both parties.

Likewise, while reporting on an increased attempt of interference in their daily work, interviewees highlight by contrast, the apparent lack of consideration of institutional donors for recommendations regarding their programming and political strategy and other outputs emerging from regional civil society activities that they support.

For all these reasons, organisations that don't depend on a limited number of donors, and which have a solid internal governance structure and a clear strategy, are better positioned to reject interference attempts without jeopardising their work.

### Members' Ownership: A Path to Sustainability?

Financial viability is not the only condition for network sustainability. The essence of a network is to connect members, make them interact and mobilise to achieve a common goal. Being part of a network can go beyond simple participation and imply some forms of ownership by the members. There are interesting examples of organisations that seek or even manage to further engage their members in the internal life of the network by involving them in the design of a strategy and the governance of an initiative, for example. In this horizontal approach, members are not only perceived as beneficiaries, they are active members and even decision makers. Further involvement of members creates dynamics that may contribute to the sustainability of an initiative.

### Potential Consequences of COVID-19 Pandemic for Network Functioning

As demonstrated above, the sustainability of civil society organisations depends on many factors, including some that can be anticipated. However, there are also unexpected developments that can significantly affect this sector (like many others). The COVID-19 pandemic that has been disrupting the global order for several months, will undoubtedly affect the overall sustainability of CSOs.

Both institutional donors and private foundations have already had to cut some of their programme funding in 2020 to answer needs resulting from the pandemic. The global crisis

<sup>16</sup> More extreme cases include donors' request to exclude some specific locations from project implementation because of religious or political affiliations. This led to the cancellation of the partnership as such a request was considered unacceptable by many networks.





resulting from the outbreak may severely affect the availability of donors' financial resources in the short and long-term.

At the same time, networks' main operating modalities traditionally consist of in-person meetings. The pandemic brought such activities to a grinding halt. The majority have moved to digital work, a transition that some had already initiated. On a positive note, many see this case of *force majeure* as an opportunity to revise their strategy by boosting their online presence and digital work. Some donors have provided ad hoc support in this regard.

No one anticipates that in-person meetings will ever resume at the same rhythm. The virtue of increased use of digital tools is unanimously considered as a positive development in terms of environmental impact and cost-effectiveness, particularly if one estimates that travel has represented up to 30 percent of networks' overall budget.

However, all interviewees insist on the importance of finding a balance between online and in-person exchanges in the future, arguing that virtual exchanges cannot fully replace direct interactions and discovery of other contexts. Moreover, a transition to full online operations implies digital security challenges that cannot always be totally addressed and may endanger some participants.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

At a time of growing instability and uncertainty, dialogue and cooperation are even more crucial, particularly in a region that is interconnected and shares common challenges but also interests and ambitions. Maintaining and even enhancing civil society cooperation throughout the Mediterranean region is not an easy ride and regional networks may face growing challenges due to both long-lasting and emerging crises that will further affect regional stability, possibly leading to a volatile environment in terms of civil society capacities. Regional networks have to continuously adapt and innovate. For that, they also need continuous engagement of the main stakeholders, including the EU and its member States, towards an enabling civil society environment through strong political and financial support. The Euro-Mediterranean space is at the core of EU external policy, notably through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).<sup>17</sup> Strong EU commitment to the region is regularly reiterated including in times of crisis.<sup>18</sup> Support to civil society<sup>19</sup> has been an essential element of the ENP and the funding mechanisms in place.

Based on the feedback provided by the mapped organisations, all actors involved in supporting civil society in the Euro-Med region should incorporate some decisive elements

<sup>17</sup> See [https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp_en)

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions, 8 October, 2020 <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/opinion/better-future-for-the-euro-mediterranean-region-continues-to-inspire/>

<sup>19</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/european-neighbourhood-policy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/european-neighbourhood-policy_en)

while developing their regional programming. Offering more funding opportunities for smaller-scale regional initiatives, as well as thematic priorities which are currently considered less, would help to secure a wider diversity of actors active in Mediterranean cooperation and dialogue. Civil society partners operating in restrictive environments should not be excluded from such exchanges and specific attention should be paid to enabling regional networks to keep engaging with such partners.

Networking by nature implies enhancing and fuelling dialogue, experience sharing and cooperation among members. This is not exclusively translated into fixed activities. Maintaining a network's institutional life requires the constant mobilisation of human resources and financial support. Increasing the percentage for operating or administrative costs in action grants, as well as core funding, are the best ways to address such needs. Core funding also allows for the development and implementation of a strategic vision. Moreover, it contributes to greater sustainability. Similarly, access to pluri-annual action grants that many well-established networks benefit from, also provides some stability by decreasing the fundraising pressure.

Civil society organisations do not only expect financial support from institutional donors. They also strongly value the political dimension of their backing. More concretely, institutional donors are expected to further link financial and political commitment, vis à vis civil society, particularly when it comes to enabling civil society space. At the same time, civil society in the region calls for further inclusion of the outcomes (recommendations) of supported regional initiatives by donors in their programming and strategy. Meanwhile, many voices request that donors maintain a healthy distance with grantees based on trust building with regular and pre-agreed times for reporting, donor participation in activities, etc.

Concurrently, regional networks and CSOs are encouraged to reflect on some shortcomings in order to consolidate their action. Given the specific difficulties faced for groups and activists operating in restrictive contexts, regional networks are encouraged to identify alternative ways to engage and cooperate with these actors. The recent move to more online activities offers some opportunities in this regard; on the condition that digital security, and in some instances anonymity, can be guaranteed. Regional networks should also continue to encourage donors not to exclude these actors from grant schemes.

More generally, it would be relevant for some networks to seek ways to consolidate their institutional sustainability. Some good practices have been identified such as through increased ownership by beneficiaries and members in the design and implementation of strategy and/or activities. Finally, as some donors request a more result-oriented approach, it would be essential to identify and implement tools to better demonstrate regional initiatives' results and impact.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Qualitative assessments in the form of interviews (of beneficiaries/members and targets), or short visual reportages done throughout the initiative could, for example, contribute to fleshing out and making results and impact more concrete and tangible.



## The Experience of “Mediterranean Youth”: A Network by and for Youth

Good Practice 1



### Réseau Euromed France – France

For many years now, young people in the Euro-Med region have tended to face many difficulties, mainly with regards to social and economic integration. They are in the front line, and often quite alone, in the face of numerous challenges such as: mobility, unemployment, access to culture, artistic creation and the impact of climate change. Although it is recognised that young people are agents of change, spaces where young Mediterranean activists can meet, share their observations, and pool their practices are scarce (even in this ever-more-open world). Youth has increasingly been demanding in-person connection channels, since intra-Mediterranean exchanges are relatively rare, despite the shared stakes. Even though cooperation programmes targeting youth exist, they very often focus on capacity building of young people in the Southern Mediterranean only and mainly impact urban youth with a high socio-economic status. Moreover, young people are rarely involved in the governance of these programmes.

In light of these observations, [REF – Réseau Euromed France](#), a platform of 33 civil society organisations, decided to move toward a system that would allow for: exchanging practices and experiences, networking and social valorisation of youth initiatives and creating sustainable paths for young actors of social change. REF has, therefore, set up the [“Mediterranean Youth” programme](#), which started in 2015 at a [meeting in Paris](#). Each year, it brings together about one hundred young CSO representatives from both shores of the Mediterranean, covering a large geographical area (18 countries<sup>21</sup>), to discuss issues that are of utmost importance for youth: migration and mobility, employment and training, art and culture, citizen participation, climate and social justice.

“A programme with very different actors, which all have in common youth and commitment on diverse themes ... It makes it possible to discover a great deal and to weave a network you can rely on.”

Grégoire Vincent,  
REF, France

<sup>21</sup> France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, Turkey, Morocco, Western Sahara, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Jordan.

The motto of “Mediterranean Youth” is at the heart of the programme: “A network by and for youth”. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it’s piloted by a core group of young people involved in civil society (REF members and external participants), which is responsible for selecting meeting participants, preparing the contents and animating the workshops. Thanks to this participative dimension, REF has noted a true appropriation of the programme by the participants; an indispensable condition for its sustainability. The way the activities were created particularly allowed the emergence of a common voice on issues shared by young people from both shores of the Mediterranean, allowing them to set up activities to raise public awareness of these issues and, last but not least, to build a community that could implement common initiatives at the Euro-Mediterranean level.



Participants at the Mediterranean Youth meeting (Tunis, April 2019).

This community,<sup>22</sup> which shares common values and interests, is now made up of 252 young people from many countries. The dynamic is maintained by a [Facebook page](#) that currently has 2,055 subscribers.

Why does this programme interest many young people and keep them mobilised over the years? The participatory approach is key. The involvement of young people as actors of the

<sup>22</sup> A directory of the participants will be launched soon.





programme, and not just as beneficiaries, seems essential. The organisation of activities by the participants themselves allows them to concretely consolidate their capacities in terms of workshop facilitation and public speaking. The participatory aspect reinforces the feeling of activity ownership by young people and thus their involvement in the project cycle, therefore also promoting the sustainability of the network. It has a strong pedagogical aim, since it has allowed the local knowledge and practices of the young participants to be valued and reinforced on a regional scale while encouraging them to express themselves publicly, thus contributing to building their self-confidence. This has ensured the sustainability of the initiative.

After a year on hold, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to reorganise the cycle of activities, the programme was re-launched in October 2020 with some changes made. The programme now includes: a “Mediterranean Youth” meeting (annual high-point of the network), intermediate thematic workshops in small-groups and different outputs.



Mediterranean Youth meeting: Ice-breaking moment outside (Tunis, April 2019).

## Network for Change

Good Practice 2

**Biennale des jeunes créateurs de l'Europe  
et de la Méditerranée – Euro-Med Region**



Based on the firm belief that art and young people are essential keys for encouraging the rise of peaceful relations and sustainable development in the Euro-Mediterranean area, the aim of *Biennale des jeunes créateurs de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée* (BJCEM) is to promote youth contemporary creation and creativity by offering young artists different opportunities to produce and showcase their works in every artistic and creative field. In addition, it creates opportunities to enhance their competence and professionalism, such as through meetings and workshops with professionals in the art field.

A 'good practice', developed by BJCEM, since 1985, is the Biennale of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean, a multi-disciplinary itinerant event where young artists from different countries are invited to showcase their works and gather together, sharing their cultural experiences, thus giving added value to the cultural, artistic and linguistic diversity in Europe and the Mediterranean. It has been a creative journey involving over 10,300 artists and more than 750,000 visitors over the course of its eighteen editions. Over the years, the Biennale has been considered the most important showcase for young artists (aged 18 to 35) in the Euro-Mediterranean space. One of its strengths has always been its multidisciplinary nature: visual arts, applied arts, moving images, literature, gastronomy, music and performance are just some of the disciplines included in the various editions. The event's recent editions have been entrusted to high-profile curators to guarantee a broad selection and a high-quality set up.

Opportunities for collaboration have been built into the Biennale in various forms, especially in recent editions: from residency projects to training and research moments, from presentations of the results of European projects to workshops involving local communities and members of the BJCEM Network. Today, the Biennale can, therefore, be considered the culmination of a research project that accompanies young artists in their all-round growth path; no longer simply offering them an exhibition showcase, but also the tools to become actors and protagonists in the Euro-Mediterranean space.

Thanks to the support of its members, BJCEM has been able to ensure and sustain the participation of artists coming from the Southern shore of the Mediterranean in all 18 past editions of the Biennale of Young Artists. BJCEM is firmly convinced of the critical role played by art and culture in Euro-Mediterranean societies, in order to foster respect and understanding





for diversity and to discover and learn the values of different cultures while enriching one's own. BJCEM is particularly investing in the new generation of Euro-Mediterranean artists, considering them the bearers of peaceful cross-cultural languages, able to encourage new narratives and create meeting spaces to favour mutual knowledge and overcome the fear of the 'other' that characterises our society.



XVIII Young Artists Biennale – Mediterranea 18 – (Tirana and Dures, 2017)

In this context, a crucial element is mobility. Whether for work, study, research, co-production or participation in an exchange programme or residence, mobility is increasingly part of the regular practice and the career of artists and cultural professionals. Along with fundraising activities for the Biennale event, BJCEM provides structural assistance to artists including direct support to individual artists in the drafting of projects targeting mobility grants, in order to make their participation at the Biennale more sustainable.

The next edition of the Biennale – Mediterranea 19 Young Artists Biennale – will be held in San Marino, promoted by BJCEM, the State Secretariat for Education and Culture, the Cultural Institutes of the Republic of San Marino and the University of the Republic of San Marino. BJCEM had planned to organise it in October 2020, but due to the situation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic it has been postponed to May 2021. In order to provide a positive alternative to the current difficulties and mobility limitations that all the world is facing, and thanks to the efforts of the curatorial team, an [editorial platform](#) has been created by the curators, functioning as a digital 'wetland': a breeding ground wherein ideas are fostered, processes collected and multiplied, generating syncretisms that will gradually build the ecosystem of Mediterranea 19.

## Towards Effective Networking and Advocacy in Egypt and Europe

Good Practice 3

### Egyptian Front for Human Rights – Egypt/Czech Republic



Since its inception in July 2017, the Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR) has sought to improve the human rights situation in Egypt in the field of criminal justice, worked to raise awareness among young people and to enhance the capabilities of civil society practitioners and human rights defenders in the country. Additionally, it has used several coping strategies in the face of the economic downturn and its results: from social burdens to political challenges.

The establishment of an EFHR office in Europe played an important role in overcoming a large part of the obstacles that hinder the activity of civil society in Egypt and ensured work continuity and the safety of its employees. It helped enable several international advocacy campaigns to be carried out in European capitals and the adoption of international mechanisms in the United Nations and the European Parliament, as well as engagement with civil society in the Central European region.

The organised campaigns were based on an effort to research, monitor, document and analyse the evolution of patterns of violations, leading to recommendations for alternative policies, through the EFHR's focus on justice, as well as the situation of activists and human rights defenders. This effort was carried out by 14 individuals, including activists, lawyers, and researchers who, for three years, provided legal support to victims and their families, and produced at least 115 papers ranging from studies, data, comments and position papers to monitoring and analytical reports, as well as following up on cases and trials.<sup>23</sup>

Since its inception, EFHR's activities have targeted new generations of people who are interested as well as willing to work on public issues, including students and graduates of schools and colleges, in both Egypt and Central European countries, with the aim of increasing their awareness of human rights issues and the challenges of civil society in Egypt, in addition to developing training tools in the field of human rights defence as well as the use of new methodologies, including documentation of official case papers. It is a methodology developed in 2018 with the aim of giving documentation processes greater credibility in the face of scepticism vis-à-vis the authorities, covering a wider range of violations and relying on evidence in advocacy efforts. It especially focuses on complaints directed at international bodies, including working groups appointed at the United Nations, as well as at finding viable alternatives for the documentation of cases, to ensure continuity and even expansion of investigations. Within this framework, the organisation has trained at least 20 advocates, including lawyers and researchers, on this

<sup>23</sup> See <https://egyptianfront.org/>



methodology to develop their work in documentation and come up with research projects on analysing numerous cases.



*Debate about minorities rights and human rights in Egypt at a Secondary School in Ostrava, Czech Republic.*

Furthermore, within the framework of its activities, EFHR organised seminars and discussion groups on human rights in order to raise and strengthen awareness among civil society practitioners and the new generation of students coming from schools and universities of European countries, such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Germany. These activities also aimed at increasing the knowledge of and networking capacities for human rights and civil society work in the Arab world, on the one hand, and for respect of diversity and minorities in Europe, on the other. In addition, initiatives aim at opening discussions on how to involve these students in these issues and what role they could play as citizens to contribute to improving the situation. These initiatives were met with a remarkable response, and they resulted in activities such as students writing letters addressed to the Egyptian authorities, collecting signatures on petitions<sup>24</sup> aimed at Egyptian embassies and networking with Egyptian and European activists to demand an end to police surveillance on civil society work. This is a model of sustained support bridging between European and Arab civil society that could serve civil society work in other Southern Mediterranean countries.

<sup>24</sup> See [https://m.facebook.com/egyptianfront.org/videos/371810036558967/?refsrc=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fwatch%2F%2F\\_rdr](https://m.facebook.com/egyptianfront.org/videos/371810036558967/?refsrc=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fwatch%2F%2F_rdr)

The EFHR considers that challenging the obstacles facing civil society is an exercise of responsible citizenship, whereby one can constantly think of ways to overcome them, by focusing on mechanisms, such as preparing a new generation of activists and defenders and empowering them by providing them with tools for work and engagement, thus ensuring the formulation of new ideas and initiatives as well as the continual development of networking methodologies within the public domain. The EFHR also believes in the importance of engaging in international advocacy efforts within the framework of international and regional mechanisms; this area of action should be preserved and strengthened, since it counterbalances the restrictions imposed on civil society at home and on the ability to reform policies.

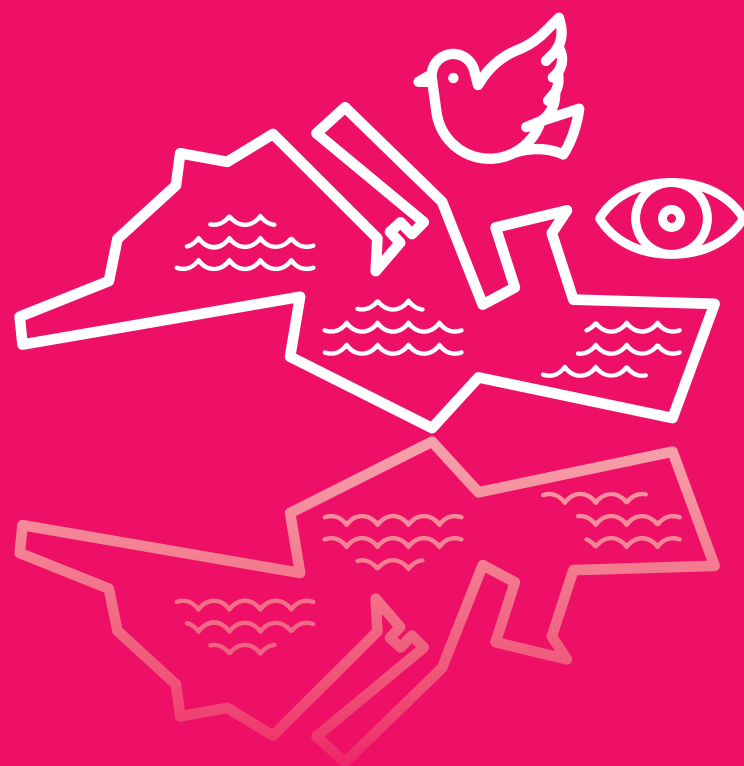


# 05

## COMMON DESTINY

“ At the heart of it all, lies the need not to abandon the Mediterranean to itself and its demons. This sea, it is even trite to repeat it, is still the ancient cradle of Europe, and the place where other neighbouring and close civilisations have grown. ”

*Predrag Matvejević, writer and academic, 1932 - 2017*



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# Our Common Vision: The Role and Prospects for Mediterranean Integration through Citizens

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## ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the status of Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, looking particularly at the outcomes of the Barcelona Declaration, signed in 1995, and the ensuing Process, as well as the possible role of citizens in fostering integration. It highlights how the findings of the Med Dialogue mapping survey link with the aim of a common Euro-Mediterranean institutional and civil society space. In addition, it calls for a comprehensive project of economic, social and cultural convergence that would increase the opportunities for exchange, with citizen engagement – including by those with dual north-south citizenship – and direct dialogue. Indeed, a new Euro-Mediterranean dialogue framework is proposed that would include, among other factors, a consultative assembly of civil society organisations, with youth serving as the driving force.

## Introduction

The development of relations between the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean still depends, to a large extent, on the support of citizens – particularly civil society actors, be they organised in associations or not – and on the idea that there is an urgent need to give new momentum to Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and to shift it to a higher level in order to overcome the challenges that stand in the way of attaining the long-awaited goals of this dialogue.

The objectives stated in the Barcelona Declaration, a Declaration that gave rise to the acclaimed Barcelona Process – whose twenty-fifth anniversary we celebrated in 2020 – aim to turn “the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity [which] requires a strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights, sustainable and balanced economic and social development, measures to combat poverty and promotion of greater understanding between cultures” (Barcelona Declaration, 1995, p. 2). However, these objectives of the Declaration, as well as those of all the Association Agreements concluded between the EU and the member states of the Barcelona Process, have not been attained.<sup>1</sup>

There is a broad consensus within Euro-Mediterranean civil society on the view that the institution in charge of Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, the Union for the Mediterranean, is experiencing a deadlock despite the many projects it has helped to implement.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Barcelona Declaration and the Association Agreements based on human rights principles, such as freedoms and democracy, assume that economic liberalisation necessarily leads to political liberalisation.

However, this is not the case and the region is facing genuine economic and social difficulties despite the liberalisation of economic relations between the two shores: a state of affairs that the services of the European Commission have recognised within the framework of migration management<sup>3</sup> and on the occasion of an interview with a EU official on the Tunisian monopoly situation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “We must also note that the failure of this process in achieving all the desired results stems more from facts and issues outside the process - and here I am thinking of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - than from the weaknesses of the process itself,” according to Bernard Abrignani, Deputy General Delegate of AFPEJA, coordinator of SALTO-Youth EuroMed and CATSAM. See [www.cairn.info](http://www.cairn.info), Abrignani, B. (2013). Cahiers de l'action, 2, 33.

<sup>2</sup> “The Barcelona Process is moribund. Previous attempts to breathe a new life into it have failed to achieve the ambitious objectives of the initial declaration and the results are negative overall. Faced with the deterioration of the international situation and the definition of a new European Neighbourhood Policy, the 10th anniversary of Barcelona actually signals the abandonment of the process”. See Moisseron, J-Y. (2005). Vers la fin du processus de Barcelone?. *Confluences Méditerranée*, 1(55), 165-178.

<sup>3</sup> The Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF) is an exceptional crisis instrument put in place by the EU, which also provides for measures concerning readmission, and return and reintegration procedures, as well as the financing of resettlement programmes in neighboring countries that are experiencing serious balance of payments difficulties (European Commission's Fact Sheet, dated 10/05/2017).

<sup>4</sup> In an interview in *Le Monde* newspaper on 9 July, 2019, Mr. Patrice Bergamini, former EU Ambassador to Tunisia, stated: “When we talk about the need for free, fair and transparent competition, we are referring first and foremost to Tunisian operators. If we are to support, encourage and boost the economic transition, it is because there are positions of agreement, of monopolies. Some family groups have no interest in young Tunisian operators expressing themselves and breaking through”.



The case of Tunisia, the forerunner of the Arab Spring which, before January 2011, had been hailed by Europe as the good student of the Partnership, clearly illustrates that the indispensable social and economic reforms have not yet been implemented.

It should be noted that the problems facing the countries of the South, namely democratisation, the modernisation of economies and the resolution of regional tensions, are not impacted by the Euro-Mediterranean project. There is a risk that the Partnership will be a continuation of the 'reforms without changes' that have been typical of the region's contemporary history.

In fact, the history of the construction of Europe shows us that the Union is not only an economic construction. It is also a political construction, based on democratic institutions, which ensures the sustainability of this Union notwithstanding tensions. The same must apply to Euro-Mediterranean relations, which are subjected to a twofold constraint. On the one hand, it is difficult to overcome the historical cleavages linked to the colonial heritage, as well as the desire to appease a European public opinion often perceived as introverted and subject to unprecedented media pressure that often portrays Islam in a caricatured manner – leading to a defensive policy, mainly premised on a demographic and 'security' vision.

On the other, the EU's involvement in the Mediterranean region is blocked by differences of opinion among member states regarding the geopolitical situation in the Mediterranean and the role that Europe could play there. Ongoing terrorist threats and the migratory crisis are strongly destabilising the southern shore of the Mediterranean and causing mistrust in many European countries, especially in the East. This contradiction can only be resolved through a stable and well-constructed institutional framework.

## Building on the Barcelona Process

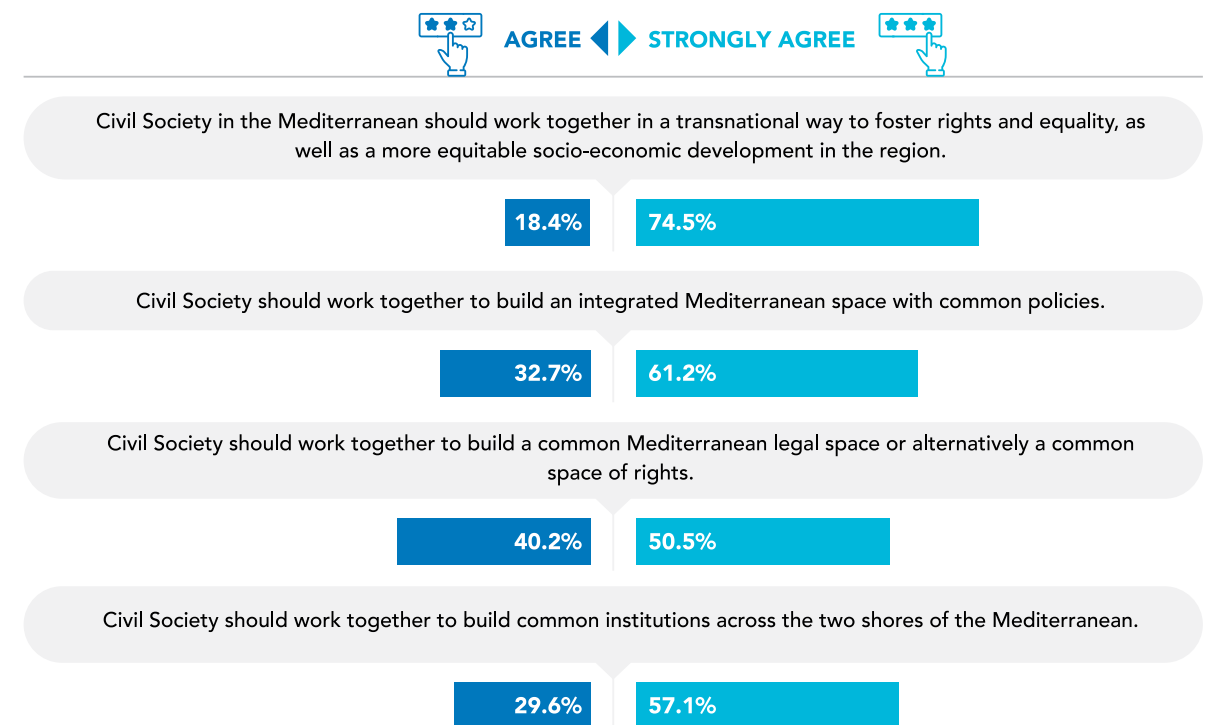
Since the inception of the Barcelona Process, civil society has constantly insisted on the need to make Euro-Mediterranean dialogue sustainable. This long-term vision can only be achieved through sustainable institutions. This had been constantly reasserted since the final declaration of the Euromed Civil Forum organised by the EuroMed Non-Governmental Platform in Marrakech on 6 November, 2006, where it was stated: "We note that the European Neighbourhood Policy can play a very sensitive role in the engagement of civil society. In this respect, a dialogue with the different components of civil society must be entrenched within the institutional framework of the Association Agreements...";<sup>5</sup> until the south-south workshops held as part of Vision Med 2030 (Vision Med 2030 workshops, 2019 & 2020)<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> See [https://unfccc.int/cop7/documents/accords\\_draft.pdf](https://unfccc.int/cop7/documents/accords_draft.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Extract from the Declaration of the representatives of civil society organisations meeting in Tunis from 18 to 21 July 2019 and in Amman from 2 to 4 March 2020, in the Vision Med 2030 South-South Consultation Workshops: "We need to establish a common and sustainable Mediterranean 'space', whereby all stakeholders in the Mediterranean are represented in a balanced, effective, and constructive manner". At these workshops, 55 percent of the participants also stated that they "strongly agreed" with the workshop statement, while the rest of the participants expressed "agreement".

A commitment on the part of Mediterranean civil society, especially in the South, was recently clearly measured during the mapping exercise conducted by the Med Dialogue Programme, where surveyed civil society network organisations in the region strongly agree (57.1%) and agree (29.6%), i.e. a total of 86.7 percent, with the idea of creating a new common Mediterranean institutional space.

## CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORKS ENVISION THE MEDITERRANEAN TO COME



Infographic 9

Another datum of the survey also confirms that these organisations strongly agree (61.2%) and agree (32.7%), with the idea of working together for promoting an integrated space with common policies, which represents a total of 93.9 percent.

Only a sustainable institutionalised dialogue attended by elected actors and representatives of civil society can bring overly prudent and insufficient approaches to an end in order to build an aspirational and comprehensive project of economic, social and cultural convergence that would increase the opportunities for exchange.

The exacerbation of inequalities, poverty and discrimination compels us to remove the barriers of misunderstanding and mistrust that have been erected between the peoples of the North and the South, especially to the benefit of the youth of both shores, who wish to tear down

this frontier. These young people share the same ambition: that of building fairer and more supportive societies, based on the rule of law, respect for diversity and shared progress.

They have been subjected to the rise of various extremisms that preach the exacerbation of difference and contempt for the other. The cultures of Mediterranean countries are mixed and the hundreds of thousands of Mediterranean citizens with dual nationality from the south and the north stand out as clear evidence of this state of affairs.

Both shores of the Mediterranean have been suffering as a result of the dislocation and disconnection that have taken place between North and South in the past decades. A new alliance is possible between the different peoples of the Mediterranean and the younger generations can be the driving force behind it. Indeed, a new solidarity and cooperation forum can emerge, provided that civil societies work together to bring the two shores closer to each other and to gain new rights.

## The Struggle of Our Generation

The establishment of a true Euro-Mediterranean community is not a dream. It can be the struggle of our generation. For this dream to come true, it must take root in an institutional project that would link the countries of the European Union and the Southern Mediterranean ones where civil society has an important role to play. Civil society, by its very nature, exerts a counter-power that checks the State's excesses; it is diverse and representative; it enables the emergence of new elites; it monitors and exposes authoritarian excesses, scandals, as well as ecological and other risks; and it appeases the debate and encourages citizens to participate in public life and defend the public interest, thereby restoring their confidence in democracy.

The new Euro-Mediterranean institution would have to include a consultative assembly of civil society organisations, which would be renewable in the same way as the other components. It should also be able to take initiatives, both to stimulate debates and to propose topics on the agenda of deliberative bodies. Its establishment would make it possible to rethink current classic cooperation and aid policies and would give a new meaning to the term 'partnership' that is closer to the expectations of the peoples of the Mediterranean. Finally, the new institution would revive European commitment in the Mediterranean; it would offer new arbitration tools to ease migratory tensions and serious crises that threaten peace in the region.

The Union for the Mediterranean has had little weight in resolving the problems besetting the region; its role has often remained limited and, beyond that, the entire EU has been sidelined when it comes to managing regional crises.<sup>7</sup> A new institution would give back the necessary weight to the EU so that the Mediterranean can revive its history as an area of security,

<sup>7</sup> As demonstrated, for example, by the protracted migration crisis, or the failure to commit to finding a solution to regional conflicts

development and solidarity. If the EU is unable to play this role, it is possible that the United States or China could become the new ideal partners of the Mediterranean. The relevance of the Mediterranean region for the entire EU must, therefore, be recognised. Economic stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean region can only be conducive to European development as well.

The serious difficulties shaking the region, such as the migration crisis, the ongoing influx of migrants on the Italian coasts, the civil war in Libya and the tensions between Turkey and Greece, can be addressed under this new institutional framework in order to find sustainable solutions. Indeed, the issue of the framework for resolving conflicts and outstanding concerns is crucial. Civil society is expressing a new will, namely that the Euro-Mediterranean region goes beyond the narrow vision of strictly economic exchanges and addresses the challenges as a whole.

Establishing a new institutional framework that meets the standards of international public law for Mediterranean countries, and those of the EU, is a difficult but not insurmountable task. It is certainly not in Europe's interest to abandon its southern border. The establishment of a new Euro-Mediterranean institution including all EU countries and the southern shore countries is – I believe – the surest and most sustainable answer to the dangers that lie ahead. This seems a far-fetched idea, but it is objectively supported by the vast majority of civil society actors, by young people and by the millions of Mediterranean people with dual citizenship who are aspiring to new relations that are more balanced, more supportive and more generous.

People with dual citizenship, who can be considered the largest population group born of the relations between the two shores, could become an important vector for the integration of the two shores, because they carry within them this cultural duality that sheds light on the problems from two perspectives: that of the country of origin and that of the country of residence.

This duality factor helps put problems into perspective and enriches them with twofold (or even multiple-level) understanding. It is, therefore, a vector of tolerance and strength toward the notion of living together that can be put to the service of a common political will, based on a far more balanced and better shared form of North-South cooperation.

The new Euro-Mediterranean institution we are so keen on could have a wide impact if it were based on the desire of these dual citizens to experience their dual nationality as a way of coexistence that shuns division and seeks appeasement by revisiting the borders of the nation-state. Furthermore, many civil society actors believe that the new institution should go beyond the current inter-state links and incorporate assemblies of democratically elected representatives of the Euro-Mediterranean countries, as well as an assembly of civil society

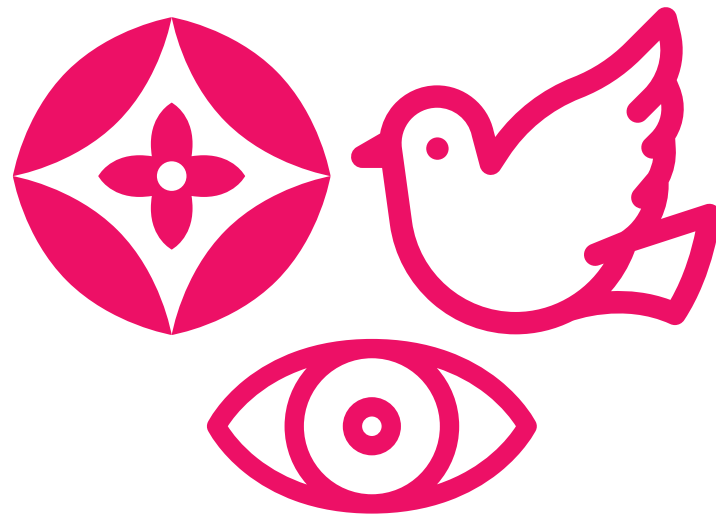
(Israeli-Palestinian, Saharan, Syrian), or to the challenge of eliminating regional terrorism.





organisations that could play the role of watchdog.

This idea of a sustainable Euro-Mediterranean institution fits perfectly with the current trend towards the creation of new integrated regional spaces. With boldness and new ideas, Euro-Mediterranean cooperation could undergo a revival commensurate with the challenges facing the region.



## Taadudiya Online Media Platform: Fostering the Culture of Accepting Difference and Valuing Diversity

Good Practice 1

Adyan Foundation - Lebanon



In the village of Hijaza in Egypt, Sameh, a young Coptic man, and Hanaa, a young Muslim woman, worked together to bridge the distance between Christian and Muslim children. Growing up with religious and sectarian conflicts around them, Sameh and Hanaa were concerned about the children of the village and wanted to protect them from developing sectarian attitudes of hatred and fear of the other. With educational and peace-building activities – in the church’s square – the two young heroes were able to create a space for children from different religions to interact with each other. From this small remote village in Egypt, [Sameh and Hanaa’s story](#) transcended borders and cultural differences to inspire millions of individuals in the MENA region and beyond.

Sameh and Hanaa’s story was told as part of the “What’s Your Story?” media campaign, launched by the Taadudiya platform. Via this platform, their story inspired hope, courage and peace in the world against hate speech and extremism. The campaign also contributed to recognition and awareness of the efforts of the protagonists, with Sameh and Hanaa receiving the “Best Local Initiative Prize” in Egypt.

While advocates of hate and violence are using social media to reach more people, propagating so-called religiously legitimised violence at an unprecedented speed, Taadudiya comes, with Sameh and Hanaa’s story and many others, as a strong existential narrative that fosters resilience towards extremist messaging. As an advocacy strategy, the emphasis is on allowing people to tell their own story and to highlight the positive impact that each individual can make. This in turn inspires others to feel that they too can make a difference.

**“The regional dimension of Taadudiya website will allow Lebanon and the Arab world to spread a positive understanding of cultural and religious diversity and promote critical thought, values of tolerance and mutual respect between different nations and people.”**

*Hugo Shorter,  
British Ambassador,  
on the launch day of Taadudiya*



[Taadudiya](#) – the Arabic word for ‘pluralism’ – is an Arabic-language media platform launched by the [Adyan Foundation](#) in 2017. Since its launch, Taadudiya has been contributing to the formation of a conscious and mature public opinion on religion in the public sphere, religious and cultural diversity, democracy, human rights and education. The aim is to inspire and promote common values across the Arabic-speaking world.

In its “Public Opinion” section, the platform provides critical contributions from female and male journalists, academics, researchers, young thinkers and activists from the MENA region – 45 percent of whom are women. Another section entitled “Unity and Diversity” sheds light on common and cross-cutting themes amongst religions and cultures of the world. Taadudiya is also known for its “Interfaith Calendar” section, which is the first interfaith online calendar in Arabic that combines both the Gregorian and Islamic calendars. It displays religious, spiritual and civic holidays from various nations with an explanation of their meanings.

To raise the voice of young change-makers, Taadudiya launched the “What’s Your Story?” campaign to promote best practices from young professionals and experts working on pluralism and peace. It aims to change the stereotypical image of the ‘hero’ by promoting the hero as an ordinary person who lives and serves peace and coexistence in her/his daily life. In 2017, the campaign was selected as the most impactful campaign in the MENA by the Hedayah Center for Combating Violent Extremism (CVE). A second media campaign on Taadudiya is [“We Can Talk About Religion”](#) which creates a space for discussing religious topics with openness and sincerity, bravely asking important questions and exposing problems.

To date, Taadudiya has produced a real shift in the perception of the ‘other’, while ‘awakening the hero’ of peace-building and change-making inside youth, women and men in the region. It is leading to positive changes in behaviour and attitudes away from extremism and towards pluralism, religious social responsibility and living together in peace. The platform has, to date, a record reach of 86.6 million, 30.4 million video views, and 111,118 followers. This includes readership in the Mediterranean area, as well as the wider MENA region.



Pictures from episodes titled: “Can we talk about religion?” Produced by Taadudiya.com

## Embracing the Mediterranean Means Saving Europe: The Maydan Appeal Experience

Good Practice 2

Maydan Association - Italy



In spring 2019, as a renewed civil war was erupting in Libya and the Syrian leadership’s repressive model inspired other emerging dictatorships in the region, Algerians brought regime change without violence, reawakening the hopes of the Arab Spring. While Britons proceeded on their rocky road toward Brexit, thousands of French citizens took to the streets protesting against growing social inequalities, much like Tunisian citizens to the south. At the same time, anti-immigration rhetoric was on the rise in countries like Italy, Hungary and the Balkans, while solidarity work and human mobility was being criminalised at, and within, European borders and on the Mediterranean Sea.

With these and other challenges in mind, a group of citizens from across the Mediterranean launched an [Appeal](#): “Embracing the Mediterranean Means Saving Europe” that was disseminated in ten languages in May 2019. On the eve of the European parliamentary elections, it promoted a counter-narrative that embodied the positive values we have inherited from the Mediterranean crossroad: without creating a common space with Mediterranean nations, Europe’s dream of unity and integration will implode.

The Appeal was spear-headed by [Maydan Association](#), which is made up of citizens, including activists, intellectuals, artists and others, engaged in building a Mediterranean citizenship and common destiny among peoples of the region. It was endorsed by over [80 key figures](#) from the worlds of culture, politics, science and activism and is unique because it involved people beyond EU borders, e.g. Egyptian author Alaa Al-Aswany, Palestinian novelist and architect Suad Amiry, Albanian former foreign minister Besnik Mustafaj and Columbia University professor Nadia Urbinati.

**“I signed the Maydan Appeal for a Europe that integrates with the Mediterranean and recognises in the Mediterranean a geographic, symbolic, ethical and also concrete matrix ... the idea of Europe was born in the Mediterranean area, the great cultures and spirituality of the Mediterranean not only formed the idea of Europe but also the roots of western civilisation as a whole.”**

*Moni Ovadia, Actor, Author and Musician in a video message at the opening of an Appeal-related event at the University of Turin on 21 May 2021*



With the assistance of WeMove.EU, a related [petition](#), asking candidates and political forces to support a vision toward integration between the European continent and the Mediterranean space, was launched. Calling on all citizens to support the Appeal, it collected 5,142 signatures.

Both the Appeal and petition were supported and promoted by partners in Albania, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Netherlands, Serbia/Croatia, Spain and Sweden. The Appeal was published in the Greek newspaper Efsyn and events were held in Egypt, Italy, Morocco and Netherlands around the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, which included debates between political candidates, academics and activists. In July 2019, the Appeal was emailed to all newly elected Members of the European Parliament before their inaugural session.



*Floating Voices Creative Arts Contest Award ceremony, October 2019.*

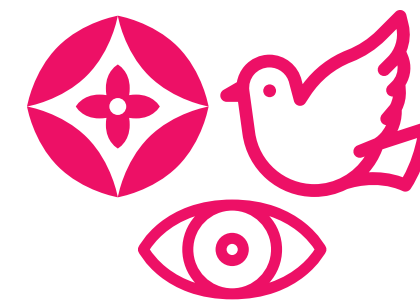
To ensure the voices of young people were also heard, a parallel initiative was launched: the [Floating Voices](#) Creative Arts Contest for Euro-Med youth aged 16 to 30. With the theme: "Narratives about our Common Destiny in the Mediterranean", it aimed to promote knowledge of the socio-political, cultural and economic complexities of the Mediterranean region while strengthening relationships and sharing dreams of young citizens.

The contest received submissions from 12 Euro-Mediterranean countries. The Awards Ceremony took place in Genoa in October 2019 with partner Progetto Mediterranea. Multilingual readings were conducted by winners from Egypt, Morocco and Spain aboard the sailboat Mediterranea. Winners received certificates of recognition from the Minister Plenipotentiary for Euro-Mediterranean Affairs, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Individual relationships, and those with related organisations, were pivotal in formulating the Appeal. Technology was essential when embarking on an initiative involving such a broad geographical area and finalising and translating the text would have been extremely onerous without internet. Websites and social media were also important in the dissemination of the Appeal and petition, as well as for promoting the creative arts contest.

However, the concrete publication of the Appeal in Greece, the face-to-face related events and awards ceremony where young people met and presented their work, were emotionally and politically critical. A clear challenge is finding the funds to unite people from such a broad geographical area. Maydan relied on its own resources as grant applications were unsuccessful; with additional funding the regional promotion and debate activities would surely have been more far-reaching.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated how interconnected humanity truly is and the intricate relationship between health, climate and migration. Projects that challenge narratives and build bridges instead of walls between people, while raising the awareness of institutions and decision-makers, such as the "Embracing the Mediterranean Means Saving Europe" initiative, are critical for the future of the Euro-Mediterranean region and beyond.





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## Annex 1. Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFPEJA	Agence Française du Programme Européen Jeunesse en Action
AFTURD	Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement
AMF	Asylum and Migration Fund
ANHRI	Arab Network for Human Rights Information
ANND	Arab NGO Network on Development
ADFM	Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc
ATUC	Arab Trade Union Confederation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BDA	Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände
BJCEM	Biennale des Jeunes Créateurs de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIDEF	Centre International d'Études Françaises
CIVITAS	Civil Independent Volunteer Initiative Towards Achieving Sustainability
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
CROLD	Consortium for Rule of Law and Democracy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CVE	Combating Violent Extremism
DGB	Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund
ECESR	Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights
EFHR	Egyptian Front for Human Rights
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EU	European Union
EWRC	Equality Without Reservation Coalition
FFF	Families For Freedom
FTDES	Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux
GAP	Global Action Plan
GNF	Global Nature Fund
GWN	Good Water Neighbour
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
JV	Jordan Valley
LGBTQA	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and Asexual/Aromantic.
MEdIES	Mediterranean Education Initiative on Environment and Sustainability





MENA	Middle East North Africa
MIO-ECSDE	Mediterranean Information Office for the Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OTE	Observatoire Tunisien de l'Economie
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
POMED	Project on Middle East Democracy
REF	Réseau Euromed France
SAR	Search and Rescue
SIWI	Stockholm International Water Institute
SNHR	Syrian Network for Human Rights
SOLiD	Southern Mediterranean Social Dialogue
SWIM	Sustainable Water Integrated Management
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UGTT	Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIMED	Unione delle Università del Mediterraneo
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
UTICA	Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat
WWF	World Wildlife Fund [now World Wide Fund for Nature]

## Annex 2. Tables and Infographics

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## Annex 3.

### List of Mapped CSOs and Their Geographical Scope of Action

#### With regional links

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Arab Women Society in Jordan<br><a href="http://www.awo.org.jo/">www.awo.org.jo/</a>  | 2. Basilica Club for Debates<br><a href="https://www.facebook.com/LYbasilica">https://www.facebook.com/LYbasilica</a> |
| 3. Fighters for Peace<br><a href="http://fightersforpeace.org">http://fightersforpeace.org</a>                                   | 4. H2O<br><a href="http://www.facebook.com/H2OLY/">www.facebook.com/H2OLY/</a>  |
| 5. Hexa Community Technology Development Organization HC<br><a href="https://hc.org.ly">https://hc.org.ly</a>                    | 6. Institut Prometheus<br><a href="http://prometheus.ma">http://prometheus.ma</a>                                     |
| 7. Jouzour Loubnan<br><a href="http://www.jouzourloubnan.org/volunteer-programme">www.jouzourloubnan.org/volunteer-programme</a> | 8. Moomken Organization for Awareness and Media<br><a href="https://moomken.org">https://moomken.org</a>              |

#### Maghreb

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. AGORA pour la Formation et l'Appui aux Initiatives des Jeunes<br><a href="http://www.facebook.com/pg/Agorabejaia">www.facebook.com/pg/Agorabejaia</a>   | 2. Aswat Nissa<br><a href="http://www.aswatnissa.org/">www.aswatnissa.org/</a>  |
| 3. Association AGIR / Réseau Algerian-Eco<br><a href="http://www.facebook.com/DZ.Association.AGIR">www.facebook.com/DZ.Association.AGIR</a> ; <a href="http://www.facebook.com/AlgerianEco">www.facebook.com/AlgerianEco</a> | 4. Association Santé Sidi El Houari<br><a href="http://www.facebook.com/SanteSidiElHouarisdh/">www.facebook.com/SanteSidiElHouarisdh/</a> |
| 5. Association SIDRA Algeria<br><a href="https://www.facebook.com/sidralgerie/">https://www.facebook.com/sidralgerie/</a>  | 6. Coordination Maghrébine des Organisations des Droits Humains (CMODH)<br><a href="https://cmodh.org">https://cmodh.org</a>              |
| 7. Democratic Association of Moroccan Women (ADFM)<br><a href="http://www.adfm.ma">www.adfm.ma</a><br><a href="http://www.facebook.com/adfmRabat/">www.facebook.com/adfmRabat/</a>   | 8. Dialogue & Debate Association (DDA)<br><a href="https://dda.ly">https://dda.ly</a>   |
| 9. Espace Associatif pour un développement démocratique<br><a href="http://www.espace-associatif.ma">www.espace-associatif.ma</a>  | 10. Forum de la citoyenneté<br><a href="http://forumcitoyennete.ma/">http://forumcitoyennete.ma/</a>                                      |

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 11- Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux (FTDES)<br><a href="https://ftdes.net/">https://ftdes.net/</a>                                | 12- General federation of trade unions of Libya<br><a href="https://bit.ly/36YMaap">https://bit.ly/36YMaap</a>                                     |
| 13- IRADA plateforme de la jeunesse et de la société civile en Algérie<br><a href="http://irada-dz.org/web/fr">http://irada-dz.org/web/fr</a>           | 14- International Institute of Debate<br><a href="http://iidebate.org">http://iidebate.org</a>   |
| 15- Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme (LTDH)<br><a href="http://www.facebook.com/ltah">www.facebook.com/ltah</a>                                   | 16- Mobdiun<br><a href="http://mobdiun.org">http://mobdiun.org</a>   |
| 17- Réseau Marocain de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire (REMESS)<br><a href="http://www.remess.ma/">www.remess.ma/</a>                                   | 18- Shabab Libya - Libyan Youth Movement<br><a href="http://www.facebook.com/pg/LibyanYouthMovement/">www.facebook.com/pg/LibyanYouthMovement/</a> |
| 19- SHANTI<br><a href="http://www.shanti.tn">www.shanti.tn</a><br><a href="https://facebook.com/shantitunisie/">https://facebook.com/shantitunisie/</a> |  |

#### Mashrek

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Adalah – The legal center for Arab minority rights in Israel<br><a href="http://www.adalah.org">www.adalah.org</a>  | 2. Al-Shabaka – The Palestinian Policy Network<br><a href="https://al-shabaka.org">https://al-shabaka.org</a>   |
| 3. Al-Thoria center for studies, training and consultation<br><a href="http://www.thoriacenter.org">www.thoriacenter.org</a>   | 4. Arab Network for Food Sovereignty<br><a href="https://www.apnature.org/en/arab-network-food-sovereignty-anfs">https://www.apnature.org/en/arab-network-food-sovereignty-anfs</a> |
| 5. Arab World Democracy and Electoral Monitor (Al Marsad)<br><a href="http://www.marsadarabi.org/index.php?lang=en">http://www.marsadarabi.org/index.php?lang=en</a> | 6. Asfari Foundation<br><a href="http://www.asfarifoundation.org.uk">www.asfarifoundation.org.uk</a>  |
| 7. Baytna Syria<br><a href="http://baytnasyria.org/en/home/">http://baytnasyria.org/en/home/</a>   | 8. Basma and Zaitoonah<br><a href="http://www.basmeh-zeitooneh.org">www.basmeh-zeitooneh.org</a>  |
| 9. Center for Human Rights ADALEH<br><a href="http://www.adaleh-center.org">www.adaleh-center.org</a>  | 10. Combatants for Peace<br><a href="https://cfpeace.org/">https://cfpeace.org/</a>   |
| 11. Dawlaty<br><a href="https://dawlaty.org">https://dawlaty.org</a>   | 12. EcoPeace Middle East<br><a href="http://ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/">http://ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/</a>   |
| 13. Institut français du Proche-Orient<br><a href="http://www.ifporient.org">www.ifporient.org</a>   | 14. Kayany Foundation<br><a href="http://kayany-foundation.org">http://kayany-foundation.org</a>  |



15. Lebanon Development Union (1)  
[www.facebook.com/ldulebanon](http://www.facebook.com/ldulebanon)
17. Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs  
[www.passia.org](http://www.passia.org)
19. Tadamon - The Egyptian Refugee Multicultural Council  
<https://tadamoneg.org>
21. Zochrot  
<https://zochrot.org>

16. Mossawa Center  
[www.mossawa.org/eng/?mod=articles&ID=833](http://www.mossawa.org/eng/?mod=articles&ID=833)
18. Ta'ayush  
[www.taayush.org](http://www.taayush.org)
20. Wasel for Awareness & Education  
[www.waselae.com](http://www.waselae.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/pg/Waselaengo>

15. CIVITAS Institute  
<http://civitas.ps>
17. ECESR – The Egyptian Center for Economic & Social Rights  
<https://ecesr.org>
19. El Karama Network  
[www.elkara.ma](http://www.elkara.ma)
21. General Union of Cultural Centres  
[www.guccpal.org](http://www.guccpal.org)
23. Justice without Frontiers  
<http://www.jwf.org.lb>

16. DAMJ - Association tunisienne pour la justice et l'égalité  
[www.facebook.com/damj.tunisie/](http://www.facebook.com/damj.tunisie/)
18. Ehsan organization  
<http://ehsan.org.ly/>
20. Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF)  
<http://emhrf.org>
22. Ida2at  
[www.ida2at.com/](http://www.ida2at.com/)
24. Leaders of Tomorrow  
[www.leadersot.org](http://www.leadersot.org)

## Southern Mediterranean

1. ABAAD – The Resource Center for Gender Equality  
[www.abaadmena.org/](http://www.abaadmena.org/)
3. AHEL for Community Organizing  
<http://ahel.org>
5. Arab Alternatives Forum for Social Studies  
[www.afalebanon.org/](http://www.afalebanon.org/)
7. Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)  
[www.anhri.net](http://www.anhri.net)
9. Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)  
[www.annd.org/english/](http://www.annd.org/english/)
11. Arab Trade Union Confederation (ATUC)  
<https://arabtradeunion.org>
13. Arab World for Research & Development  
[www.awrad.org](http://www.awrad.org)

2. Adyan Foundation  
<https://adyanfoundation.org/>
4. Al Balad Theatre  
[www.al-balad.org](http://www.al-balad.org)
6. Arab Association for Enlightened Muslim Educators  
<https://arabaeme.org>
8. Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)  
<http://raednetwork.org/en>
10. Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development  
<https://aradd-jo.org>
12. Arab Network for Civic Education (ANHRE)  
<http://www.anhre.org>
14. Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (ATFD)  
[www.femmesdemocrates.org.tn/](http://www.femmesdemocrates.org.tn/)  
[www.facebook.com/femmesdemocrates/](https://www.facebook.com/femmesdemocrates/)

25. Lebanon Support  
<https://lebanon-support.org>
27. Maharat Foundation (2)  
<http://www.maharatfoundation.org/en/>
29. Palestinian Human Rights Organization (PHRO)  
[www.palhumanrights.org](http://www.palhumanrights.org)
31. Sejal Foundation for Debating  
[www.facebook.com/SejalFoundation/](https://www.facebook.com/SejalFoundation/)
33. Success Network 21  
<http://www.sn21.org>
35. Tunisian Forum for Youth Empowerment  
[www.facebook.com/TunisianForum.FYE/](https://www.facebook.com/TunisianForum.FYE/)

26. Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights  
[www.maatpeace.org/old/en.htm](http://www.maatpeace.org/old/en.htm)
28. Media Association for Peace  
<https://maplebanon.org>
30. Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya  
<http://ruwwad.net/>
32. Social Justice Platform  
<https://sjplatform.org>
34. Tamkeen - The Arab network for migrant's rights  
[www.tamkeen-jo.org](http://www.tamkeen-jo.org)
36. Union of Arab Chambers  
<http://uac-org.org/en/>





## Euro-Mediterranean

1. Actions in the Mediterranean (AIM)  
[www.actinmed.org](http://www.actinmed.org)
2. Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-violence Studies (AITAS)  
<http://www.andalusitas.net>
3. Alarm Phone  
<https://alarmphone.org/en/about/>
4. Alliance de Villes Euro-méditerranéennes de Culture  
<http://www.avecnet.net/>
5. ANIMA Investment Network  
<http://www.animaweb.org/fr>
6. Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Intercultural Dialogue (ALF)  
<https://www.annalindhfoundation.org>
7. Arab Reform Initiative  
[www.arab-reform.net](http://www.arab-reform.net)
8. AREA-ED - Association de Réflexion, d'Echanges et d'Actions pour l'Environnement et le Développement  
<https://area-ed.org>
9. Association Citoyenneté, Développement et Cultures des Deux Rives (CDCMIR)  
<https://bit.ly/37eZB6v>
10. Association Nationale des Echanges entre Jeunes (ANEJ)  
[www.anej.asso.dz](http://www.anej.asso.dz)
11. Association Tanmia  
[www.tanmia.ma](http://www.tanmia.ma)
12. Businessmed - Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises  
<http://businessmed-umce.org>
13. Center for Civil Society and Democracy (CCSD) Networks  
[www.ccsd.ngo](http://www.ccsd.ngo)
14. CFJ - Committee for Justice  
[www.cfjustice.org](http://www.cfjustice.org)
15. Citizens for Syria  
<https://citizensforsyria.org/>; <https://www.impact-csrd.org/>
16. Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP)  
<http://developmentofpeoples.org/>
17. COPEAM - Permanent Conference of the Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators  
[www.copeam.org](http://www.copeam.org)
18. Cultural Innovators Network  
<https://www.facebook.com/culturalinnovators/>
19. Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR)  
<https://egyptianfront.org/>
20. Encuentro Civil Euromed (ECEM) (1)  
[www.facebook.com/encuentrocivil.euromed](https://www.facebook.com/encuentrocivil.euromed)
21. Euro-Mediterranean Forum of the Cultures (FEMEC) (1)  
<http://www.artfactories.net/Euro-Mediterranean-Forum-of.html>
22. Euro-Mediterranean Network for Economic Studies (EMNES)  
<https://emnes.org/>
23. Euro-Mediterranean Network of Social Economy  
[https://www.cep.es/principal/cepes\\_mediterranean&lng=en](https://www.cep.es/principal/cepes_mediterranean&lng=en)
24. Euro-Mediterranean Resources Network  
<https://www.facebook.com/euromernet/>
25. Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation  
[www.euromedwomen.foundation/](http://www.euromedwomen.foundation/)
26. EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
<http://www.efi-ife.org>
27. EUROMED Rights  
<https://euromedrights.org>
28. EUROMESCO – The Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission  
[www.euromesco.net](http://www.euromesco.net)
29. FEMISE - Forum Euroméditerranéen des Instituts de Sciences Économiques  
<http://www.femise.org/>
30. Fondation du Dialogue Sud-Nord Méditerranée  
[www.facebook.com/fondationdialoguehiwarmed](http://www.facebook.com/fondationdialoguehiwarmed)
31. Fonds pour les Femmes en Méditerranée  
[www.medwomensfund.org](http://www.medwomensfund.org)
32. Fundación ACM - Asamblea de Ciudadanos y Ciudadanas del Mediterráneo  
<https://www.fundacionacm.org/es/homepage-magazine/>
33. Generations for Peace  
[www.generationsforpeace.org](http://www.generationsforpeace.org)
34. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (HCA) (2)  
<https://hyd.org.tr/en>
35. Human Development Network (HDN)  
[www.hdn-algeria.org/](http://www.hdn-algeria.org/)
36. i Palestine - international platform of NGOs working for Palestine (1)  
[www.facebook.com/lpalestinengo/](https://www.facebook.com/lpalestinengo/)
37. International Association BJCEM - Biennale des jeunes créateurs de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée  
<http://www.bjcem.org/>
38. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)  
[www.fidh.org](http://www.fidh.org)
39. IREX – International Research and Exchanges  
[www.irex.org/](http://www.irex.org/)
40. Legambiente (\*)  
<https://www.legambiente.it>
41. Mashallah News  
[www.mashallahnews.com/](http://www.mashallahnews.com/)
42. Maydan association for Mediterranean citizenship  
<http://www.maydan-association.org/>



43. Mediterranean Basin and Europe Foundation for Development  
[www.medevlb.org](http://www.medevlb.org)
44. Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC) Network  
<https://www.medecc.org/>
45. Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE)  
<http://mio-ecsde.org>
46. Mediterranean Forum for Youth - Morocco (FOMEJE)  
[www.facebook.com/fomeje/](http://www.facebook.com/fomeje/)
47. Mediterranean Migration Network  
[www.migrationnetwork.org/en/](http://www.migrationnetwork.org/en/)
48. Méditerravenir (2)  
<http://mediterravenir.org/> <https://www.facebook.com/MediterravenirTunisie/>
49. Migrations Co-développement Alsace (MCDA)  
<http://mcda-asso.org/>
50. Migrations et développement  
[www.migdev.org](http://www.migdev.org)
51. MOAN - Mediterranean Organic Agriculture Network  
<https://moan.iamb.it/>
52. Network of Arab Youth Activities (NAYA)  
[www.nayajo.org](http://www.nayajo.org)
53. NOW Mayors Network  
<https://www.now-conference.org/working-groups/mayors/>
54. PONTES  
[www.pontestunisie.net](http://www.pontestunisie.net)
55. REF - Réseau Euromed France  
[www.euromed-france.org](http://www.euromed-france.org)
56. Réseau MEDITER aisbl  
<http://euromediter.eu/>
57. Réseau méditerranéen pour lutter contre les déchets marins (COMMON) (\*)  
<http://www.enicbcmmed.eu/fr/node/1014>
58. Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression  
<https://scm.bz>
59. Syrian Female Journalists Network (SFJN)  
<https://media.sfjn.org/>
60. Syrian League for Citizenship  
[www.facebook.com/CitizenshipLeague/](http://www.facebook.com/CitizenshipLeague/)
61. Syrian Network for Human Rights  
<http://sn4hr.org>
62. The Parents Circle – Bereaved Families Forum  
<https://theparentscircle.org>
63. The Syria Campaign  
<http://thesyriacampaign.org>
64. Syrian NGO Alliance  
<https://www.facebook.com/SyrianNGOAlliance/>
65. UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union  
[www.uni-med.net/en/](http://www.uni-med.net/en/)
66. WANA Institute  
<http://wanainstitute.org/en>

67. Watan Foundation  
<https://watan.foundation/>

68. We Exist!  
<https://weexist-sy.org>

## Notes

(1) These entities do not operate any longer and are not identifiable.

(2) These entities have been identified after the carrying-out of the survey.

(\*) Entities (COMMON) and (Legambiente) have been considered as the same in the statistical analysis of the survey, since Legambiente is the initiator of COMMON.





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