

EPLO MENA Ad Hoc Group

Contribution to the Consultation on the 2015 Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy

The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)¹ believes that the ongoing stocktaking of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) provides a timely opportunity to strengthen its contribution to the EU's efforts to build peace and prevent violent conflict in its neighbouring countries and beyond.

It is now widely accepted that peacebuilding and conflict prevention should be better integrated into the EU's co-operation with its neighbours. Conflict prevention has been a priority for EU external action since the Lisbon Treaty, as set out in Article 3.1 ('promote peace, its values and the well-being of its people') and Article 21.4 (c) ('preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security'). Moreover, the ENP is now recognised as being part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), as stated in the Council conclusions of 20 April 2015².

This contribution provides recommendations on incentivising peace and enhancing civil society participation in a revived ENP. It focuses on the questions related to "stability" listed in the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission (EC)'s Joint Consultation Paper entitled 'Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy'³.

Recommendations:

How should the ENP address conflicts and crises in the neighbourhood? Should CFSP and CSDP activities be better integrated in the ENP framework?

EPLO believes that in order to address conflict and crises in the neighbourhood and integrate ENP in the CFSP and the CSDP, the EU should:

➤ **Make the ENP part of a comprehensive, coherent EU foreign policy**

Like all other EU mechanisms, the ENP should serve the overall objectives of EU external action. It is imperative that the review of the ENP is linked to other EU processes to ensure coherence and effective conflict prevention, including:

- The follow-up to the June 2015 Summit on the CSDP: there are currently five CSDP missions in conflict-affected ENP countries and the CSDP is an EU tool which can contribute to supporting stability and state-building;
- The potential review of the European Security Strategy (ESS);
- The review of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

¹ The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office is the independent Brussels-based civil society platform of European NGOs, networks of NGOs and think tanks which are committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict

² See: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/04/20-council-conclusions-review-european-neighbourhood-policy/>

³ See: <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/consultation/consultation.pdf>

Based on its commitment to a Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises⁴, the EU should:

- Ensure that ENP action plans and country strategies include specific objectives and resources to respond to the recommendations of the 2011 evaluation of the EC's support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding;
- Ensure that ENP action plans and progress reports include specific objectives and systems for monitoring progress or setback on gender equality and women's rights, including women with disabilities, LBT women and religious and ethnic minorities, as well as systems for regular monitoring and follow-up;
- Include EU accession political criteria⁵ related to democracy and the rule of law in the ENP;
- Set priorities to fund medium-term peacebuilding initiatives to complement the programming of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) for flexible, short-term peacebuilding and crisis response;
- Create a Peacebuilding Partnership under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)⁶;
- Consult and mobilise EU Member States systematically in the design of programmes to ensure inclusivity, avoid tensions, encourage coordination in-country and give more political weight to the ENP;
- Reinforce the capacity of European Delegations (EUDs), in particular staffing, to provide conflict analysis, consult with civil society and manage ENI-funded projects;
- Coordinate more closely with the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), in cases where activities are similar to those of the EC in ENP countries;
- Ensure that the relevant EC (Directorates-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and for Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO)) regional and thematic experts in Brussels and in EUDs working on the ENP are involved in deciding upon European Investment Bank (EIB) loans and the negotiation of free trade areas and agreements.

➤ **Reinforce the EU's stance as a political actor and ensure consistency in upholding values**

EPLO believes that the ENP should be reviewed and implemented consistently with the political engagement of the EU and the Member States with countries in its neighbourhood.

Experts have found the 'More for More' approach has not had a strong enough leverage on its own to promote democratic change. In this context, the EU should focus on acting as a credible and reliable foreign policy actor by:

- Upgrading the political importance of the ENP through the involvement of EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) and, when possible, more frequent official visits which would give more credibility to EU engagement and legitimacy to all actors involved;
- Including conflict and security issues on the agenda of political dialogue within the ENP framework;

⁴ Joint Communication on [The EU's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises](#) (December 2013)

⁵ Candidate countries to EU accession are required to have "stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities", http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/index_en.htm

⁶ cf. EPLO's proposal for a Peacebuilding Partnership in the ENPI (May 2011), http://www.eplo.org/assets/files/2.%20Activities/Working%20Groups/FfP/EPLO_Proposal_ENPI_Peacebuilding_Partnership.pdf

- Utilising the whole range of political and economic leverage of the EU, beyond financial assistance and including the Member States, to foster peace and stability in its neighbourhood (e.g. dialogue, mediation support, confidence-building measures and electoral observation);
- Encouraging regular meetings between EUDs and EU Member States' embassies to assess the impact of ENP programming in-country;
- Encouraging meetings between EUDs and civil society actors and establishing standards for dialogue and consultations (e.g. format, timing, occurrence) based on the existing EU commitments and civil society recommendations⁷.

In particular, Member States should:

- Establish a common understanding of long term objectives with ENP countries;
- Avoid undermining the ENP by coordinating with EUDs on programming and political messages.

Conditionality should be used insofar as it aims to achieve the objective of ensuring human security. However, while recognising the importance for the EU to use its leverage to promote peace and democracy, experts have found the 'More for More' approach to be ultimately not useful because it has not been implemented consistently. Many have criticised the EU's inconsistency when it comes to upholding its principles in the cases of Syria, Libya and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The review of the ENP is an opportunity for the EU to fully act upon its values and commitments for peace, and work on regaining credibility among ENP countries. The EU should:

- Focus on making the EU an effective peacebuilding supporter rather than an 'intervener' based on lessons learned and evidence from recent EU experiences (Libya, Central African Republic);
- Be prepared to suspend ENP projects and other agreements with government actors who violate human rights or fuel violent conflict (e.g. through scenarios);
- Provide support and guidance to EUDs to ensure that a dialogue is held with ENP partner governments on upholding international human rights and governance standards, and that commitments on gender equality and UNSCR 1325 are implemented, including within EU Member States and the EU institutions⁸.

Should the ENP have a greater role in developing confidence-building measures and post-conflict actions as well as related state- and institution-building activities?

EPLO believes that the ENP should aim to support confidence-building measures, post-conflict actions and state-building. However, it should develop a cross-cutting, holistic peacebuilding approach that is inclusive of actors outside of government based on a solid understanding of context. The EU should:

➤ **Focus on supporting human security**

Measures related to stability and security should focus on protecting civilians and preserving the fundamental freedoms. By focusing on **human security**, the EU minimises the risk of indirectly

⁷ A more detailed set of recommendations on improving engagement between EUDs and civil society organisations is available in the study [Mutual engagement between EU Delegations and civil society organisations](#) published by CONCORD in January 2015.

⁸ [Where are the EU's women leaders in foreign affairs?](#), EPLO Statement, October 2014. For more information on the Implementation of UNSC 1325 in Europe, please see EPLO's dedicated webpage: <http://www.eplo.org/implementation-of-unscr-1325-in-europe>

supporting governments which hinder democracy and prevents deeper grievances from civilians from generating conflicts in the long term.

➤ **Systematise the use of conflict analysis in implementing the ENP**

The EU was not prepared to respond to the upheaval in its Southern neighbourhood beginning in 2011. In order to make the future ENP more conflict-sensitive, and effective at supporting conflict prevention, the EU should:

- Ensure continued participation of the Unit for Fragility and Resilience in DG DEVCO and the Directorate for Conflict Prevention and Security Policy in the EEAS in the review and implementation of the ENP;
- Ensure that ongoing programming of all development assistance is conflict-sensitive by systematically relying on guidance and conflict analysis from the EEAS, the EC and relevant external expertise, including civil society; the EU should also make sure that its conflict analysis includes an assessment of how women are involved in and affected by the conflict;
- Utilise the EU's and Member States' early warning capabilities and guidance;
- Continue efforts to develop expertise and guidance on conflict and peace issues among DG DEVCO and EEAS staff in EU delegations through training and the inclusion in job descriptions of relevant skills (e.g. expertise on gender, peace and security, mediation and dialogue).

➤ **Enhance civil society involvement in the implementation and monitoring of the ENP**

The EU is regularly praised for its engagement with civil society. While it has certainly made progress in consulting civil society for progress reports overall, the consultation practice of EUDs observed by civil society organisations (CSOs) is not the same from one ENP country to another. Moreover, CSOs feel that they have not been meaningfully involved in setting priorities for the ENP and monitoring the overall impact of the policy.

In order to strengthen existing peace and security mechanisms and other EU external policies in the region, civil society in ENP countries should be given the opportunity to formally contribute to the monitoring of ENP-related activities through regular, inclusive, participatory consultation meetings in Brussels and with EUDs.⁹ Furthermore, reports from civil society organisations in ENP countries have continuously recommended that the EU:

- shares the agenda of the meeting ahead of consultations;
- considers suggestions of non-financial, creative ways to support civil society;
- simplifies the ENI funding application processes and continues to develop sub-granting and other flexible funding mechanisms;
- finds practical ways to engage a broader set of CSOs, beyond capital-based organisations and intellectual and economic elite;
- continues efforts to identify legitimate actors to engage with outside of government, including non-formal, less organised groups or individuals who may not resemble European NGOs;
- recognises and utilises the existing expertise in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, governance, rule of law that civil society in ENP countries can provide.

⁹ More recommendations regarding CSO-EUD engagement in project support and dialogue can be found in *Mutual engagement between EU Delegations and civil society organisations*, CONCORD, January 2015