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### 1. A consultation on the future of the neighbourhood policy

The European Union (EU) has opened a consultation designed to agree on *a new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)*. The decision seems appropriate because it meets a need after over ten years of neighbourhood policy, and also a demand from numerous stakeholders who believe we have to take stock of the ENP in order to give it fresh momentum.

The starting point of the consultation is a joint paper from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and vicepresident of the European Commission which puts forward suggestions to tailor the ENP to the new context and asks a number of questions to foster a substantive debate.

The consultation, which is to last until the end of June, affects Member States and neighbouring countries, as well as national parliaments and the European Parliament, civil society, business and the academic community. In order to start a wide-ranging debate, the paper is also addressed to other organisations such as the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and major international financial institutions.

Even though the involvement of regions and cities is not mentioned in the consultation, the Government of Catalonia is entitled to give its view as a leader in the involvement of sub-national authorities in drawing up and implementing EU foreign policy.

This view is further justified with regard to the southern dimension of the ENP given Catalonia's Mediterranean vocation and its political, economic and human relationships with North Africa. The paper mentions multilateral cooperation, in which the Catalan Government has been very active in the framework of the Barcelona Process – which turns twenty in November – and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), which was established in 2008 with a Secretariat based in Pedralbes Palace in Barcelona.

Below we give our verdict on ten years of neighbourhood policy and put forward some suggestions about its future, in response to the questions in the EU paper that we have found most relevant. We do this by sharing the opinions of experts and institutions and based on our experience in Euro-Mediterranean policy, particularly in North Africa.



### 2. Ten years of the ENP. Meagre results and new needs

The ENP has been criticised from a number of viewpoints which have gained force in recent years as a result of the challenges that have emerged both to the east and to the south of the EU. When taking stock, however, we need to distinguish between the exogenous causes of errors or failures and endogenous ones. Only then will it be possible to draw a distinction between adjustment difficulties and flaws inherent in its nature, architecture and financial instruments.

The ENP has been put in place in a context of increasing instability; to the east as a result of Russia's attitude in the Ukraine and Georgia crises, and above all to the south, where a half-century-old status quo has been rocked by the awakening of civil societies and transition processes which have brought with them uncertainty and fuelled civil conflict and extremism.

Moreover, it should also be remembered that the implementation of the ENP has coincided with far-reaching institutional reforms (the Lisbon Treaty 2007/2009) and the financial crisis of 2008 that led to the longest-lasting recession Europe has known since the Second World War.

Many observers agree that attempts to tailor the ENP to these changes have been late and inadequate. We share this view. It is true that the scope of these changes was difficult to foresee, yet it is surprising that a strategic initiative with geopolitical implications such as this one (1) should have failed to appreciate earlier on the emergence of new scenarios, new players and new attitudes among our neighbouring countries and the neighbours of the neighbours. This shortcoming shows that the ENP monitoring system – designed to keep track of its action plans – lacked political sensitivity.

Most analysts believe that the ENP has not come up to the expectations that had been raised. How has this come about? This is the core of the debate, and getting the right answer will be crucial to enable the new ENP to tackle the external challenges that the EU will face in the coming years (2).

The High Representative and Commission Communication recognise that "the ENP has not always been able to offer adequate responses to these recent developments, nor to the changing aspirations of our partners." As the main cause of this failure it underscores the increasing differences of engagement between



partners. Indeed, while some aspire to a closer association with the EU, others have chosen different paths, either because the latter provide alternative strategies, or because they do not want to undertake reforms that the association agreements entail or at the pace they set.

This finding – which reveals a complex and competitive regional environment – leads the EU to suggest an ENP with more variable geometry that is better able to respond to the needs of each neighbour.

This is something we support. Differentiation, flexibility and diversification can help to better meet the needs of each neighbour and EU countries. We also share the need for more joint accountability since as the paper rightly says, "the lack of a sense of shared ownership with partners prevents the policy from achieving its full potential".

The difficulties in adaptation have led the EU to examine the application of an approach introduced in 2011, 'more for more', which sought to encourage reforms in the Arab countries with a positive conditionality principle. The paper states that this policy "has not always contributed to an atmosphere of equal partnership, and has not always been successful in providing incentives for further reforms in the partner countries."

We agree with this assessment. It is a fact that some of the countries concerned have viewed the conditionality measures with suspicion. It is also true that the latter have sometimes been difficult to put into practice and arbitrary. However, this should not make us forget the reformist horizon that gives perspective and meaning to the Neighbourhood Policy.

We therefore share the EU's view that the review of the ENP calls for more realism, more diversity and more engagement of partners, but we also believe that this is not enough.

Many observers are wondering whether it is sufficient simply to highlight the shortcomings in ENP implementation, and they are right to do so. So we have seen that in order to meet the expectations of the consultation, the EU has called for an out-of-the-box discussion without bypassing the substantive issues even though they may impact the founding principles of its Neighbourhood Policy.

Some of the questions asked in the Communication may seem bold, but we think they are relevant if the intention is that the debate should move beyond



established circles and trigger the interest of the major stakeholders and the public:

- We believe, for example, that the ENP should be maintained as a key factor in Europe's foreign policy, but it is good to ask about this as the paper does ('Should the ENP be maintained?')
- We have always believed that the southern and eastern aspects of the ENP concern different situations, and we therefore think it useful to ask whether the same institutional framework should be kept for both ('Should a single framework continue to cover both East and South?')
- We think that the question asked about the possibility of including the *neighbours* of the neighbours in the ENP is intriguing and of great interest with respect to the increasingly complex relations between the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa ('Should the current geographical scope be maintained? Should the ENP allow for more flexible ways of working with the neighbours of the neighbours?')
- Based on our experience, we believe it would be useful to begin a debate on relationship formats that go beyond those currently offered by the ENP ('Should the EU gradually explore new relationship formats to satisfy the aspirations and choices of those who do not consider the Association Agreements as the final stage of political association and economic integration?')

Questions like these, and others, are essential as they give voice to doubts among EU institutions and European countries and embrace criticisms expressed by many partner countries. They also respond to those posed by many analysts about the ENP's meagre results.

The views of the leading think tanks are indeed harsh. Most analysts broach the need for a substantial and not just tactical review, and argue that adaptation to change has been carried out through stumbling policies rather than with a strategic vision. The criticism refers mainly to the ENP's timid response to the Arab Spring, but has spread to its eastern dimension as a result of the Ukraine conflict. We have collated some expert opinions that seem to us to be significant:

"The ENP has manifestly failed and needs to be radically rethought." Bertelsman Stiftung (3)

"The EU's approach to its neighbours is not working. Launching a fundamentally renewed ENP should be a top priority for the EU's leaders." Carnegie Europe (4)

"The ENP has failed to generate progress among its neighbours and we have seen the inadequacy of its instruments for promoting political, social and institutional reforms." Cidob (5)

"After the Arab Spring, the ENP, which includes eastern and southern neighbours with no distinction, is no longer appropriate or effective to address the specific problems of the southern and eastern Mediterranean." IPEMED (6)

"There seems to be a growing disconnect between the 'more for more approach' currently propagated by the Commission and the neighbours' less than lukewarm response to this complex matrix of opportunities" Global Europe Centre (7)

"Since the launch of the Eastern Partnership in 2009, democracy in the eastern neighbourhood has further deteriorated, media freedom has worsened, and corruption has grown in most countries of the region. There is no quick fix or silver bullet to solve this situation [...] but given its interdependence with its neighbours, the EU has nothing else but to keep trying." CIES (8)

The opinion of most European countries is more nuanced and closer to the views of EU institutions, as is ours. We accept the need for greater flexibility to tailor ENP instruments to new requirements. We also advocate more realism and share the need to engage neighbouring countries more effectively in the design of policies and their implementation.

As for the debate that has always existed about conditionality, in our view the current position calls for caution in forms and schedules. We need to avoid the language of imposition, which is not appropriate for the times, but principles also have to be maintained as we know that the stability of the region and its countries requires long-term inclusive processes, participation mechanisms and rules that guarantee equality before the law.

Most Arab countries are calling for more resources and less conditionality. However, apart from this their strategies are increasingly divergent and range from negotiating privileged association options to being wary of policies that they believe are being imposed. These are critiques that we need to listen to in order to better understand their concerns. For example, ones about the trade deficit of some countries which do not see bilateral agreements with the EU as a win-win game. (9)

However, the EU's partners also need to decide whether they want to share the same destination, or if they have other options that they may legitimately think are more advantageous. They must understand that the rationale for the ENP and the regional partnerships that accompany it is to provide a shared future outlook which we have to map out together, and calls on all of us to make efforts and sacrifices. In the case of the south, this means on both sides of the Mediterranean.



We share the opinion of the Spanish Government that: 'We need to maintain the unity of the ENP, with the same instruments and offerings for all partners of the two Neighbourhoods, albeit open to the different needs and levels of ambition of each of the neighbours in terms of their relations with the EU.' Furthermore, we agree about calling for more attention and resources for the southern dimension of the Neighbourhood Policy, as well as the need to bolster the UfM.

A similar position was expressed by the Italian Government, which clearly came out in favour of strengthening the Mediterranean dimension of the ENP during its presidency of the Council. We endorse its proposal to take on board the *neighbours* of the neighbours approach advocated following the Ukrainian crisis but which we think is also promising for North Africa.

The review of the ENP needs to respond to a failure to come up to expectations. Nevertheless, it seems that both the EU and most partner countries advocate a reform that does not call into question its architecture, as they are aware that what is needed at the moment is caution. The test is thus to find a balance between the necessary caution and the urgency of tackling new challenges.

Times are changing. The adoption of the ENP was a strategic decision aimed at creating an area of shared prosperity between the EU and its neighbours after the 2004 enlargement, the biggest carried out in terms of territory, countries (ten) and population. In a context of regional optimism, the EU offered a far-reaching proposal which Romano Prodi described as "everything but institutions".

It was an ambitious commitment involving free market access and free movement of people, goods and capital ('3M': Market, Money, Mobility)'. It was also bold to think that all the neighbours would and could carry out reforms that would enable them to share the EU's values and political and market principles. Ten years later, the ENP has to take on board the fact that we are in a different and more uncertain context. The challenge is to make provision for this context without losing the vision that inspired the 2004 proposal.



#### 3. The south is no longer a single neighbourhood

Our southern neighbours have ceased to be a uniform neighbourhood. Probably they never have been, but it has never been as obvious as it is now. And this has enormous implications for the future of the ENP.

Analyst Kristina Kausch argues that the concept of neighbourhood has lost much of its usefulness in defining the EU's relations with the South:

"The increasingly complex regional geopolitical environment [in the southern Mediterranean] is leading to a political and economic diversification upon which to force the hat of 'EU neighbourhood' as a common label of aspirants to strategic integration with the EU looks increasingly inappropriate." (10).

Catalan political scientist Esther Barbé says much the same in a joint book that deals with the growing differentiation in Euro-Mediterranean relations (11).

Indeed, with regard to the south, and in spite of the association agreements signed with most Arab countries (12), it has not been possible to substantially advance economic and trade integration and ensure it helps to boost the 'neighbourhood' dynamics intended for the ENP. As pointed out by Tim Behr, it has been prevented by fragmentation, lack of progress in South-South integration and the preference for bilateralism (13).

The result is the existence of clearly divergent positions, ranging from Morocco, which has an association agreement at an advanced stage and is negotiating a complete and deepened free trade agreement (14), to Syria and Libya, which are now outside all neighbourhoods. In between, there is a great variety of viewpoints. Especially significant is Egypt, a co-founder of the UfM and which is diversifying and redirecting its trade and strategic relations.

From the multilateral standpoint, and notwithstanding the importance of the UfM as a single platform for political dialogue for the 42 countries in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), there has been little progress in the strategic objectives set by the Barcelona Process in 1995 (see chapter 5).

So, after 10 years of the ENP and 20 years of the EMP, the Mediterranean remains the world's most polarised border by per capita income and the human development index. This helps to put security and illegal migration at the top of the



EU's political agenda.

This situation has been aggravated in the south by the failure of two neighbour states (Syria and Libya) and the jihadist challenge in the geographical area of the ENP and beyond (Iraq, Yemen and the Sahel). Northern European societies have reacted with fear of the terrorist threat and some countries have seen worrying manifestations of political populism fuelling Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

Crisis and fragmentation should not make us lose sight of the strategic objectives of the Barcelona Process and the ENP in the Mediterranean. In addition to responding to the challenges of security, both the ENP and the EMP seek to associate with the EU a number of countries totalling nearly 400 million people and which present outstanding demographic and trade complementarities. The intention is to form together a stable and prosperous region that can compete with other major economic areas.



#### 4. Ideas and suggestions for reviewing the ENP

4.1. <u>Ambition and realism</u>. To review the ENP, the EU must find a balance between ambition and realism that takes into account the limits of what is possible in the current context, but also its legitimate aspiration to turn its neighbouring countries into a 'circle of friends'. The task is not easy bearing in mind the proliferation of conflicts in recent years which has led "The Economist" commentator Charlemagne to talk about a 'ring of fire' rather than a circle of friends (15).

The realism comes from the EU's loss of influence. The EU Communication accepts this reality, puts forward approaches that are less totalising than those which prevailed from 1995 to 2008 and replaces them by more pragmatic proposals. We endorse this attitude since it reflects both the present and foreseeable future, as long as the original ambition is maintained.

Ambition is resources. The EU has allocated €15,4 billion for the period 2014-2020, representing a 35% increase over the budget for the previous seven-year period. Given the economic situation, we think this is a reasonable effort. However, we would advocate a redistribution of spending that takes into account the historical significance of the challenges presented by the Mediterranean. It makes no sense for ENP per capita expenditure in some Eastern European countries to be ten times higher than in the most populous countries in the South.

There is no ambition without a narrative, without a vision. So we believe that the essential pragmatism that inspires the review of the ENP should not give up what has been the soul of this policy, especially in the Mediterranean where as we noted above it forms part of a shared project.

4.2. <u>Diversification versus fragmentation</u>. We believe that the main challenge for the EU is to accentuate the diversification of the ENP without calling into question its regional dimension. To ensure that diversification does not lead to fragmentation, neighbourhood policy has to take into account the existence of the different interests of partners and build them into the global solution with a shared calendar. This is needed to convince many countries that the long-term benefits justify the short-term costs the ENP may entail.

As Kausch notes, diversification and a multilateral dimension can be compatible: "Rather than fostering fragmentation, differentiation and flexible alliances could help create positive new dynamics in the short term, and develop new momentum for



deeper multilateral EU-Mediterranean cooperation in the future." (10). At any event, diversification will only be effective if the priorities are decided by mutual agreement.

4.3. **Neighbourhood policy and foreign policy**. In order to promote a shared area of stability, security and prosperity on its borders, the EU needs to coordinate the ENP with its foreign policy and the foreign policy of its Member States.

The High Representative and Commission paper recognises that the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) "have until now been conducted outside of the ENP framework". Greater synergy between the different expressions of the EU's foreign policy is therefore required to gain efficiency and to prevent and combat the new forms of radicalisation, terrorism and organised crime to be found inside and outside the EU.

This coordination should also move forward with the three partnerships that have been established: the UfM, the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy. It has to do this in a differentiated way that respects the uniqueness of each neighbourhood.

Notwithstanding the multilateral initiatives to the east and south-east of Europe, we believe that the UfM has an institutional track record and reality that call for more political and attention appropriate resources (see chap. 5).

4.4. The neighbours also have neighbours. More effective integration of the ENP in EU foreign policy should make it possible, in certain circumstances, to associate the neighbours of the neighbours with some of its aspects. The questions posed by the Communication in this area suggest greater integration of policies for the Maghreb with those devised for sub-Saharan Africa with respect to the market and human movements and security.

The Ukraine crisis has highlighted the need for greater consistency between the ENP and the EU's relations with Russia. Furthermore, the crisis in the Middle East means we need to look for new neighbourhood policy approaches to the east of the Mediterranean that take into consideration the Gulf states and Turkey, which are not part of the neighbourhood but are key players for the region's future.

4.5. **Proximity and ownership.** In all public policy, effective mobilisation of resources and their ownership by public opinion requires participation. In other



words, participation by civil society in mapping out and implementing programmes. This principle becomes even more necessary in foreign policy that people often seen as far removed from their everyday lives.

We believe that the Communication overly focuses lack of ownership on shortcomings in communication. Better explanation of the ENP's aims and achievements is certainly necessary, but the best way to change existing perceptions is to ensure more and better engagement of all stakeholders. We think the process that has been opened up is an opportunity, as long as it is more than just a top-down debate and mobilises all stakeholders.

The Government of Catalonia believes that the current review should give more prominence to the parliaments and sub-national and local authorities that are playing an increasing role in establishing regional ties and are at the forefront of issues related to the neighbourhood (see point 6).

Given these considerations, we share the idea of a variable geometry ENP which makes it possible to undertake bespoke programmes targeted at areas with more shared interests (trade, connectivity, security, governance, migration and mobility). This is a sensible proposal but raises the challenge of consistency. If the ENP seeks to give hope to a region that needs it, it cannot be reduced to an untidy toolbox or a menu which features everything but does not show us what kind of restaurant we are having lunch in.



#### 5. More coordination between the ENP and the UfM

Although the UfM has its own field and institutional architecture, the EU Communication also briefly refers to it when discussing the regional dimension of the ENP. It asks whether the multilateral dimension is able to deliver further added value and whether its current formats are fit for purpose with respect to the UfM, the EaP and the Black Sea Synergy.

The paper also introduces the issue of possible diversification of multilateral policy – *Can we more effectively use other, more flexible frameworks?* – without specifying whether these would be complementary to or substitutes for the current ones.

More imagination and flexibility is also needed multilaterally. In particular, we think that the EU should cooperate more actively with other stakeholders involved in the region, such as the Arab League (which only has observer status in the UfM and has low profile bilateral relations with the EU), the OSCE, the OIC, the G8, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the African Union.

As for the UfM, in spite of its political and budgetary constraints, it is the most advanced expression of a multilateral policy in the Mediterranean. The fact that it encompasses all EU countries, ten Arab countries, Israel, Turkey and three European countries outside the EU makes it into a unique and shared political forum.

Moreover, we believe that the approach taken by the UfM Secretariat over the past two years coincides with the strategy of customised programmes which the ENP is geared towards. The UfM's challenge is, in any case, to prove that its activities, its political dimension and inclusive work culture can bring value to the regional dimension of the new ENP.

Given the overlap between many of the UfM's work areas and the ENP's action areas, what needs to be done is to avoid duplication, join forces and seek out synergies that give more credibility and visibility to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. In addition, the UfM can help in ownership of Euro-Mediterranean policy by public opinion in Arab countries, which is one of the main shortcomings of the ENP.

The consolidation of the UfM Secretariat should enhance its political centrality in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. We believe this should be a commitment of the EU and its member states which corresponds to the situation in the region. A more



central role for the Secretariat is not incompatible with the guidelines of the new ENP; in fact, quite the reverse. The more the ENP ramps up its bilateral aspect and diversifies its programmes, the more necessary it becomes to strengthen an institution like the UfM which articulates a multilateral Euro-Mediterranean perspective. Equally essential is supporting the Anna Lindh Foundation's work with civil society on intercultural dialogue and citizenship.

Giving the UfM Secretariat a more global dimension is the best way to carry out the abovementioned ENP reforms without losing the perspective that guided the Barcelona Declaration and the European Neighbourhood Policy. We think that the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference on 20 November this year is a good opportunity to place the UfM at the centre of relations between Europe and southern and eastern Mediterranean countries.

To perform this role the UfM needs to be able to take more and better advantage of ENP resources. The aim should be to achieve greater operational capacity and not have to rely so heavily on projects funded by other institutions. In any case, developments over the last three years, including several ministerial meetings, dozens of "labelled" projects and a stabilised professional team headed by a unanimously elected general secretary, are an important guarantee of continuity in a context like the present.



#### 6. Greater involvement of sub-national and local authorities

Most multilateral institutions that have been put in place in the Mediterranean have been intergovernmental and have not given cities and regions the role that corresponds to them. This shortcoming is due to the view prevailing in some European countries and others along the southern Mediterranean, which are reluctant to give sub-national authorities a part to play.

Even though the paper mentions the role of regional and local authorities in the Barcelona Declaration, the EMP had not given it institutional legitimacy until the founding of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) in 2010 sponsored by the EU Committee of Regions and the UCLG, and after lengthy lobbying by cities and regions.

We believe that ARLEM should have a much more prominent place in the EMP's institutional presence which would enable it to play a role similar to the Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly.

From the beginning the ENP attributed some significance to sub-national authorities and raised funds to promote cooperation across borders. It is therefore somewhat surprising that the EU paper makes no reference to the contribution of regions and cities to the neighbourhood policy. In fact, it does not mention ARLEM and merely tersely asks: 'What can be done to promote links between scientific communities, universities, local authorities, women, youth, the media?'

We believe that the new ENP cannot do without the regions and cities, especially those that are most exposed to the challenges of the neighbourhood. Regional and local authorities can help spell out priorities and objectives, specify projects and mobilise the best stakeholders. They can also be active players in the implementation of many programmes. In addition they can help to increase the visibility of the ENP and deliver its ownership by public opinion.

Since the restoration of democracy and the institutions of the Catalan Government, Catalonia has built up significant experience in the Mediterranean based on an important business presence, significant human exchanges and a long tradition of cooperation. The Catalan Government and many local councils in Catalonia have a presence in the main Euro-Mediterranean networks. Moreover, research centres such as the IEMed or CIDOB, which are among the best in Europe in the

Mediterranean area, are another example of the interest of Catalan society and its institutions in relations with our neighbours to the south.

This is the outcome of a historical vocation and a broad consensus on this issue among Catalan political forces. It reflects a track record that led to Barcelona's nomination as the seat of the UfM Secretariat. We believe that all this justifies our aspiration to participate actively in the debate about a new neighbourhood policy which will affect the future of Catalonia and in its implementation.

#### Notes

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