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MAJ

Brussels Civil Society Forum Report 2018

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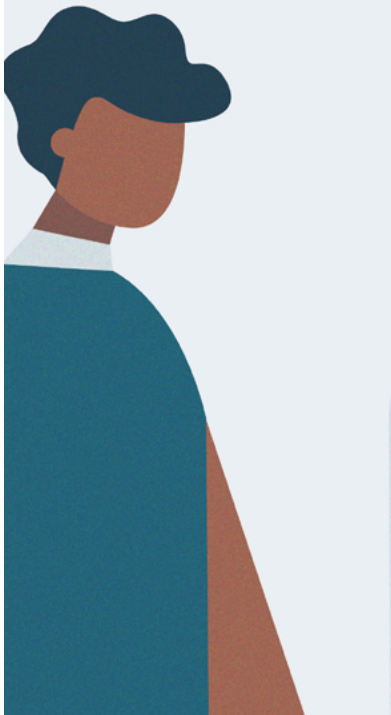


Introduction and Background

The Brussels Civil Society Forum is part of an ongoing process of exchange and dialogue between civil society in both south of the Mediterranean and the European Union. The process of holding structural dialogues between the EU and civil society from the south of the Mediterranean started in Brussels in 2014, first organised under the name "Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum". For four years, the dialogue was organised by the European Commission (DG NEAR).

This 2018 edition marks a change in perspective as it is the first year that the Forum is organised by civil society itself through the Majalat initiative. Civil society actors are now in the driving seat of organising and framing the dialogue with the EU.

Majalat is a civil society-run process launched in February 2018 for three years and financially supported by the European Commission (DG NEAR). The consortium organising the 2018 Civil Society Forum and managing the project is composed of six regional civil society networks: Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Arab Trade Union Confederation (ATUC), REF – Réseau Euromed France, EuroMed Rights, Forum for Alternatives Morocco (FMAS), and SOLIDAR. Six other network organisations are part of the project's advisory committee: Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), Transparency International (TI), Disabled People's International (DPI), the Arab Campaign for Education for All, The Maghreb Observatory on Migration, and the Syrian League for Citizenship.

The word Majalat stands for 'spaces, opportunities, fields and domains' in Arabic. In a context of multiple political, social, economic and environmental challenges in the region, this initiative aims at creating spaces for a constructive dialogue between the European Union and civil society organisations (CSOs), trade unions, social movements and academics from both shores of the Mediterranean, with a view to influencing the vision and policies related to the region. Majalat also seeks to become an impetus for the development of safe spaces for the work of civil society actors and activists and an opportunity for strengthening inclusive exchanges in the region between civil society networks, platforms and organisations notably through its digital platform (www.majalat.org).

A self-assessment questionnaire was addressed to representatives from civil society organizations and other social actors from the Neighbourhood South who participated to the Amman South Seminar as well as the Brussels forum. This questionnaire will allow the project to establish a monitoring and evaluation system across the implementation period of the project.

Methodology

The Brussels Civil Society Forum follows a South Policy Seminar and a Youth Workshop held in Amman on 20-21-22 September 2018. These two events which gathered together around 100 participants provided key inputs for the preparation and the sessions of the Forum (policy papers, discussion papers). The years 2019 and 2020 will include a full cycle of activities with thematic workshops, national workshops and a youth workshop, leading to the 2019 South Seminar and Brussels Civil Society Forum.

During 2 days of intensive exchanges, four themes were discussed with high-level EU representatives (Commissioner Johannes Hahn and Christian Danielsson, Director-General of DG NEAR) and with a wide panel of EU experts representing relevant Directorates General of the Commission and other EU bodies.

- Good Governance and Rule of Law
- Human Rights and Countering Violencez
- Migration
- Economic development and social dialogue

Selection of Participants and Participants' Profiles

The forum gathered together more than 150 participants. It also included key regional and international stakeholders (Union for the Mediterranean, UNESCO, European Endowment for Democracy, Anna Lindh Foundation, etc.) and EU representatives.
Participants were selected by the Majalat consortium based on general criteria and taking into account a geographical and gender balance as well as the inclusion of young people and vulnerable groups.
Organisations which attended the Forum should:

- Subscribe to international human rights values in their universality, indivisibility and interdependence as well as international humanitarian law;
- Be recognised as being independent from government authorities and political parties;
- Be non-profit, non-governmental/civil society organisations (registered or not) or networks;
- Be active in at least one of themes covered by the project (migration, good governance, economic and social development, security and countering violence);
- Have demonstrated their ability to organise and support activities with a regional bearing;
- Have a track record of at least 2 years of relevant activities.

Half of the participants present at the Brussels forum attended the South Seminar in Amman on 20-21 September 2018 when the priorities and "entry points" highlighted in the discussions papers were formulated.

The participants' average age was around 42 years old with 32% of participants between 25 and 35 years old and 30 % between 35 and 45. In the preparation process, a strong emphasis was put on youth participation (below 35 years old). Young participants were also given prominent roles during the event ("rapporteur", "resource person", facilitators, etc.) A dedicated training on EU advocacy was organised prior to the event for a group of young participants to increase their knowledge of EU institutions and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

In terms of geographical balance, participants came from the 10 countries of the south Mediterranean region (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Egypt). Three participants did not obtain their visa on time to attend the forum, with this low number nevertheless representing a big achievement of the MAJALAT initiative in terms of ensuring a safe space for discussions.

Format

The format of the Forum was designed to put the participants at the heart of the discussions and ensure, as much as possible, fruitful exchanges (including informally) with EU representatives.

During past editions of the Forum, a strong set of key recommendations have been identified and formulated by the participants (see previous reports[1]). Taking into consideration this large corpus of information, this year's edition intended to move away from another set of recommendations and rather focus on a direct exchange with EU representatives on collectively identified "entry points", "windows of opportunities" for operational implementation avenues for collaboration between civil society actors and the EU which will be further developed in Majalat's upcoming cycle of activities (thematic workshops, national activities, a youth workshop, etc.) to prepare next year's dialogue.

In this context, participants were invited to choose between four thematic focus groups and were expected to attend three consecutive sessions in the same focus group. The sessions were designed and structured to create a sense of group feeling and start the exchange on already identified avenues for discussion circulated prior to the meeting.

◇ **Session 1:** The participants in the Focus Group started by re-familiarising themselves with the topics discussed at the September 2018 South Seminar in Amman. Two resources persons presented the context of the discussion and the "entry points" identified for discussion. EU representatives were present as observers.

◇ **Session 2:** Civil society participants and EU representatives explored and exchanged on priorities in small groups. The proposals made in Amman were revisited and further elaborated. Discussions were intended to provide a global overview of the currently available tools and relevant policies.

◇ **Session 3:** During the last session, exchanges between civil society participants and EU representatives took place on the identified entry points and on situations of interest, both at regional and national levels. Discussions aimed to potentially agree on operational implementation avenues for CSO-EU collaboration per priority.

Parallel sessions were also organised on three cross-cutting issues (inclusivity, the Right Based Approach and protection) relevant for all four thematic groups. Finally, the closing session intended to foster exchanges on a political vision regarding the way forward for this dialogue.

1 https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-governance-civilsociety/minisite/civil-society-forum-neighbourhood-south

Preliminary Remarks and Political Objectives

The participants were welcomed by a panel of stakeholders during an opening plenary session chaired by Wadih Al Asmar, President of EuroMed Rights. Panellists included: Christian Danielsson (Director-General of DG NEAR), Dilyana Slavova (President of the Section for External Relations of the European Economic and Social Committee), Mustapha Tlili (Secretary General of the Arab Trade Union Confederation), Marion Isvi (Executive Director of Réseau Euromed France), and Ahmed Berkia (Secretary General of Disabled People International for the Arab Region). The panel expressed their hopes for the outcomes of this ambitious project and presented the general activities and objectives of the Majalat initiative for the following years, as well as the Digital Platform created in the framework of the project.

During their introductory speeches and exchanges with the audience the panel emphasised interesting political concerns pertaining to:

◇ Inclusion and empowerment of CSOs to successfully tackle the crucial challenges in the region, particularly regarding the rule of law, respect of fundamental rights, economic development and security;

◇ Promotion of an inclusive and safe environment for CSOs to operate, involving civil society in consultations on key policies and instruments, promoting exchanges of civil society across the region, building capacity, and reaching out to new actors in civil society, especially the youth;

◇ Protection of the most vulnerable groups in Southern Mediterranean countries, particularly migrants and LGBTIQ+ groups;

◇ The degree of EU policies' coherence with universal Human Rights and democratic values and degree of CSOs' involvement in the present negotiation processes (Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Libya) and in the management of humanitarian and development aid instruments.

The Speakers Voiced Concerns Regarding:

◇ Strategies on the "root-causes" of migration with respect to human rights and human dignity;

◇ Strategies to tackle the root causes of poverty and multifaceted inequalities through a set of social and economic policies that aims to ensure human development with a dedicated focus on youth and gender, foster socio-economic development, creating jobs, fighting unemployment and sustaining entrepreneurship, with a dedicated focus on youth and gender;

◇ Strategies to promote security and counter violence at community level.

Concluding, the panel recognised that engagement with civil society and building synergies between international institutions and CSOs are essential for the development of democratic values and shared wellbeing and that this Forum is part of a long-term engagement in this regard. The hope is that it will become a recognised reference framework for a regular and genuine dialogue with civil society in the region, building on the achievements of the past.

Thematic Focus for The Discussions

Migration

Migration, mobility and asylum are among the most debated topics of the ENP. Several instruments, policies, and frameworks have been elaborated at EU level to address migration issues. The Focus Group on migration gathered civil society representatives from the Southern Mediterranean region and Europe-based organisations, as well as EU officials.

"From Border Protection to People Protection"

PRIORITY THEMES

The participants in the Focus Group started by re-familiarising themselves with the topics discussed at the September 2018 South Seminar in Amman:

◇ Protection and empowerment of the people working on migration; fight against criminalisation of those supporting migrants, providing relief and rescuing migrants at sea (14,000 deaths since 2014);

◇ Promotion of partnerships between the receiving communities in the North and South of the Mediterranean;

◇ The theme of migration as a priority not only for European countries, but also for the Southern Mediterranean countries as they are the most concerned: 80% of migrants, refugees and displaced persons are in the South. Some countries have not adopted migration/asylum laws, like Morocco where regularisation has not led to increased access to rights for the migrants;

◇ The security approach developed in EU policies that does not respect the human rights of the refugees and migrants , but rather focuses on irregular migration, accelerated procedures (concept of 'safe countries') and selective mobility.

Civil society participants, in the presence of EU representatives, explored and exchanged on priorities in small groups. The proposals made in Amman were revisited: (1) more spaces and funds for hosting refugees and displaced persons in Southern Mediterranean countries; (2) a joint EU-civil society observatory to monitor urgency situations; (3) plans to fight against human smuggling:

◇ Mobility and migration are natural and millennial phenomena; currently, there is limited, unequal freedom of movement between the two shores of the Mediterranean;

◇ Hosting refugees in the South does not exclude the need for support in the North; the EU returns the ball to the Member States and vice-versa;

◇ Externalising border control is confronted with the high level of corruption and lack of transparency on how the funds are used;

◇ EU aid, especially development aid, should not be conditional on the recipient countries adopting European migration management policy; for example, this instrumentalisation was observed in the case of the Trust Fund for Africa: originally, this fund was aimed at fighting poverty; now the cursor has shifted to prioritising countries that are on migration routes; transparency on the Trust Fund indicators is required;

◇ Support to local civil society at local level is key and partnerships with authorities should be developed where feasible; in some countries, e.g. Libya, the money does not go to CSOs supporting migrants;
◇ Focus is needed on the conditions prevailing in the countries of origin, i.e. socio-economic and political reasons behind migration; yet, setting up an observatory is not a priority; the priority is the establishment of legal, secure pathways for migration; there is however a risk of brain drain; it depends on labour market supply-demand, but it needs to be balanced effectively;
◇ Human smuggling should be treated as a consequence of the lack of legal migratory routes, not as a cause of irregular migration; any plan to fight against organised smuggling should therefore not be associated with migration management, and should not be used to criminalise solidarity;
◇ Legal and safe roads are the first solutions to fight against human smuggling, and to limit the number of deaths at sea; however, these legal and safe routes should not be used as an instrument to feed the interests of the EU and its Member States, i.e. selective migration.

ENTRY POINTS FOR DIALOGUE

Starting from the discussions of the previous session, the participants, both civil society and EU representatives, tried to identify the most adequate entry points through EU policies, programmes and instruments available to implement and move forward the aforementioned priorities:

◇ Knowing the EU migration policies and instruments better: the opacity of the EU's functioning mechanisms, the difficulty of accessing documents and the complexity of migration-related programs make the effective participation of CSOs difficult. An EU Internet portal providing access to relevant documents on EU migration policies and programs could be relevant as an entry point for CSOs.
◇ Structuring the CSO involvement in Trust Funds management and Mobility Partnerships: involvement of civil society in a structured way in the governance mechanisms of the funds; increased role of civil society in the follow-up process of the Valletta Summit, and in the meetings regularly organised within the framework of Mobility Partnerships.
◇ Improving direct support to CSOs working on migration: there is a lack of direct support to local CSOs, and some of these cannot be legally registered. The EU prefers to go through international NGOs and UN agencies, which means reduced opportunities for local CSOs. In addition, the documents are not available in Arabic.
◇ Analysing the feasibility of tripartite dialogue in the region, bringing together EU, governments and civil society actors – including migrants - on migration and mobility issues. The format must be developed with proper safeguards due to the potential risks for CSOs in most countries.

Background information was also shared by EU officials:
◇ EU 'Madad' Trust Fund was launched in 2014 to cover Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, as a flexible, rapid instrument to deal with the situation of refugees from Syria. The implementing partners are threefold: EU agencies (1/3), UN (1/3), IGOs (1/3).
◇ The North of Africa 'window' of the EU Trust Fund for Africa, launched in 2015, funds pilot projects in line with partner countries interests in mobility. Other initiatives include the EuroMed migration management project, and a city-to-city project aimed at working with local authorities.
◇ European Commission's DG ECHO provides humanitarian support to people suffering from the consequences of crisis situations.
◇ European Commission's DG HOME deals with the negotiations of Mobility Partnerships; there is very limited funding for its external dimension.

CONCERNS AND WAYS FORWARD

During the last session, exchanges between civil society participants and EU representatives took place on the identified entry points and on situations of interest, both at regional and national levels. Discussions aimed to potentially agree on operational implementation avenues for CSO-EU collaboration per priority.

Role of Civil Society / Tripartite Dialogue

◇ According to DG NEAR, there is room for improvement as regards CSO involvement, by expanding the spaces already existing such as the city-to-city project, the Trust Funds, the European Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP), and projects aimed at supporting the most vulnerable migrants. These initiatives could be given more visibility to enhance CSO participation.

◇ Within the region, only Tunisia has a structured tripartite dialogue for now, and migration policies of countries in the region need to respect the rights of migrants. Civil society can play a role in this, said a civil society representative. The EU is ready to help these countries develop legal frameworks under the ENP, the Trust Fund or bilateral relations. Regular consultations with civil society are held, e.g. in Tunisia on the Mobility Partnership.

◇ Algerian representative expressed reserve over establishing a tripartite dialogue in Algeria, with the risk of involving governmental NGOs, a.k.a. GONGOS. The EU responded that there was no cooperation agreement with Algeria, e.g. on the Trust Fund, so nothing can be undertaken without it. Yet, the regional channel can be exploited, via the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and a programme on voluntary return to be signed soon.

◇ Small grants to civil society organisations are not possible in the field of migration according to DG NEAR. CSOs were called on to set up consortia to be able to manage larger funds.

◇ Several CSOs mentioned that human rights defenders supporting migrants were criminalised in the South Mediterranean, e.g. in Jordan, Morocco. They should be given legitimacy by participating in EU-led consultations or meetings.

Rights of Migrants

◇ Civil society representatives reported attacks against migrants by Libyan coastguards, and human rights violations at sea by Egypt. DG NEAR responded there was a need to do more about protection, while warning that this required the agreement of the Egyptian government. In its political dialogues with third countries, e.g. Egypt, the European External Action Service (EEAS) raises the issue of protection as well as that of migration regulatory frameworks. Protection is also implemented through the resettlement pledges by Member States (54,000 people, according to DG HOME).

◇ A participant reported that, in Libya, "EU-funded shelters for migrants" looked like prisons, e.g. in Benghazi. The participant also called on the EU to liaise with trade unions. The EU responded it was following in real time the situation in Libya, including the appalling detention conditions - numerous EU statements cover that issue. The EU has two options: abstain due to the messy situation or try to do something when humanitarian access is granted. "The EU does not fund detention centres in Libya, we support measures to improve the health conditions in prison and funding to Libya aims at saving lives...The focus is on voluntary return through our field partners". There were 40,000 people detained in Libya and the EU has helped this figure decrease.

◇ Circular migration exists between Morocco and Spain with Moroccan women employed in strawberry fields in Spain. They are discriminated, marginalised, and work in inhumane conditions, e.g. sexual harassment and no respect of working time. The EU representatives responded that local authorities should deal with that, making sure the labour standards are respected, i.e. no exploitation, no human rights violations, in case of circular or permanent migration.

EU Policies on Migration

◇ "EU's action does not aim at stopping migration," said DG NEAR. The benefits of migration were recognised while mentioning the need for "bringing order to migratory flows" to counter the current impression of chaos and overflow, and to fight against criminal networks. The Trust Fund for Africa aims to deal with irregular migration and forced displacement by focusing on the socioeconomic development of the Sahel region, and to avoid tragedies such as in Lampedusa.

◇ According to the EEAS, migration is embedded into a global perspective; the Member States' contribution to the Trust Fund is increasing to deal with the root causes of migration, to contribute to better management – including for saving lives – and to provide more legal pathways. There is no 'externalisation of border control' per se since it is a shared responsibility. A 'partnership philosophy' has been adopted in the framework of the Rabat/Khartoum processes.

◇ DG HOME promotes "safe, orderly migration routes to the EU" including job placement via Mobility Partnerships with Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco. There are several causes of migration, e.g. family reunification, job search, international protection. The legal pathway approach has two legs: dialogue with third countries, and internal regulation in a domain where the EU has no full delegation of power.

◇ In its migration policy, the EU wants to make sure everything is prepared on the other side before receiving migrants in the EU and avoid brain drain. The development/migration nexus is at the heart of the shift towards more partnership with third countries, e.g. Partnership Framework on Migration with Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Ethiopia.

◇ The UN Global Compact for Migration will fix the narrative for the years to come. The EU supports that non-binding text while keeping the dialogue on its implementation open.

Good Governance and Rule of Law

Governance subjects are among the most fundamental issues for EU-civil society dialogue. For civil society, questions of governance determine the space for its work. Meanwhile the EU has placed good governance as a priority for its bilateral and regional relations with the Southern Mediterranean region, emphasising its broader importance for sustainable development and stability. Given this shared prioritisation of good governance, EU-civil society dialogue on the subject can also be among the least controversial. However, in the many issues involved and the potential gaps between texts and practice, governance questions are also among the most complicated. The Focus Group on governance gathered civil society representatives from the Southern Mediterranean region and some Europe-based CSOs, as well as European Commission (DGs NEAR, DEVCO and JUST) and EEAS officials. The "resource" persons, who presented the thematic discussion paper and provided additional input to these sessions, were Marwa Fatafta (Transparency International) and Lilia Rebai (EuroMed Rights). Two facilitators trained by Med Culture guided these sessions: Yasmine Bentounes and Shatha Safi.

"Guarantee space for civil society as a governance actor, including its 'watchdog' role"

PRIORITY THEMES

The participants in the Focus Group started by discussing the interest of dialogue with the EU on the subject. Participants wanted to explore the relation between EU priorities on good governance and other EU interests in the region, the balance between regional and country-level engagement, the level of EU awareness of the complex local situation across the region and expectation gaps between declared policies and implementation on the ground. Participants also wanted to look at how constructive results-oriented EU engagement on governance could achieve positive results for all and how young people could be included effectively and at all levels in resolving governance issues.

The Focus Group participants then re-familiarised themselves with the topics discussed at the September 2018 South Seminar in Amman, noting the broad view of governance taken and the important role the EU plays both in its support to civil society actors and in its relations with governments in the region. From the South Seminar discussions, two principal sub-themes for EU-civil society engagement were identified:

- Support for civil society actors facing shrinking civil society space, including from a regional perspective;
- Promoting the role of civil society actors in combating corruption, as well as protecting whistleblowers.

On these sub-themes, participants emphasised their interlinked nature, in particular the need to secure space for civil society actors to fulfil their governance role, including on corruption and protecting whistleblowers. Participants also noted the complexity of EU engagement on these subjects at a regional level and the need for clear, shared definitions of what is meant by the concepts of governance, civil society, shrinking space.

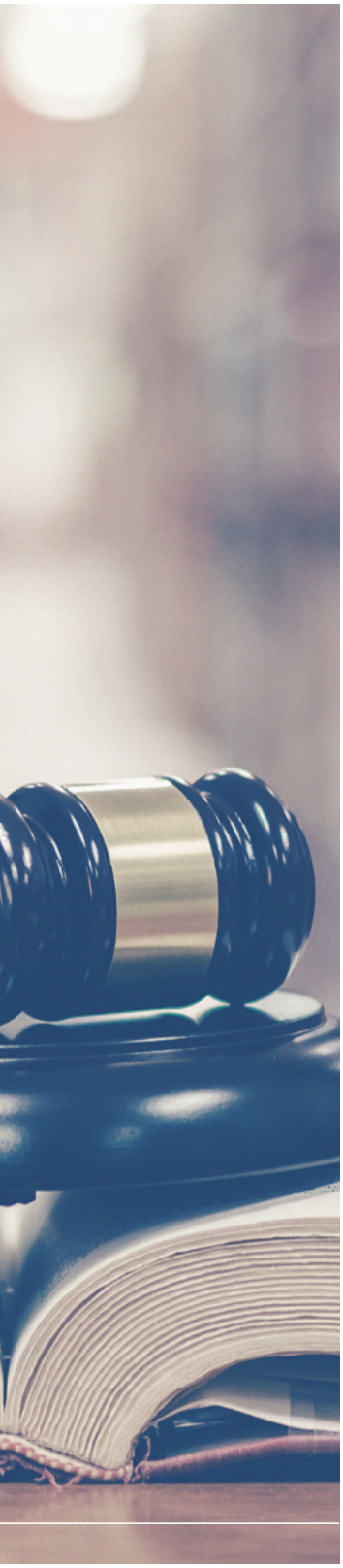
Civil society participants, in the presence of EU representatives, then exchanged in small groups on the priorities to take forward. In particular, participants highlighted:

◇ The gap between the goals declared by the EU regarding good governance and their translation into EU policy on the ground, taking account of political realities which often frustrate EU efforts;
◇ The need to ensure that direct 'external' pressure for positive reforms, notably through EU relations with governments in the region, is combined with support for actors exercising pressure from within the country;
◇ The crucial importance of ensuring inclusivity in engagement between the EU and civil society actors, including participation of young people, trade unions and CSOs facing particular crackdown from authorities;
◇ The importance of EU listening to, informing and engaging with civil society on their relations with governments in the region, at all stages and in all fields;
◇ The need to work together to foster truly independent civil society and CSOs' transparency;
◇ The necessity of ensuring that EU engagement with the region takes account of local specificities and that regional approaches are complementary with bilateral approaches;
◇ The benefit of exchange among civil society from across the region, but also between civil society from the South and from Europe, and the real intra- and inter-regional mobility this requires;
◇ The need to support civil society actors against the shrinking of civil society space, and ensure the resources they need to realise their important role, including in combatting corruption;
◇ The potential useful lessons for the region which could be learned from EU governance norms;
◇ The importance of the EU anti-corruption action regarding companies based in the EU and operating in the Southern Neighbourhood.

ENTRY POINTS FOR DIALOGUE

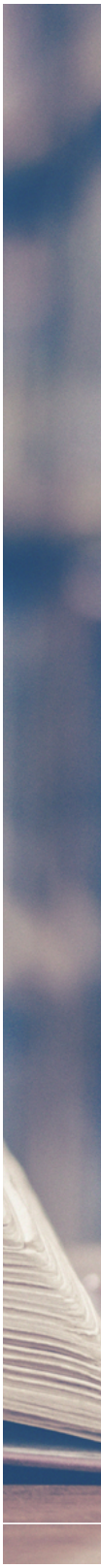
From the discussions at the South Seminar, two potential entry points had been identified for advancing jointly on the two sub-themes at regional level – a regional roadmap for EU engagement with civil society and a regional code of conduct for tackling corruption and protecting whistleblowers. The three principal priorities identified with respect to the first sub-theme notably correspond to the three axes of the 2012 Communication on EU engagement with civil society[2] – conducive environment, meaningful and structured participation and CSO capacities – with a fourth broad priority identified regarding the second sub-theme:

2 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations, COM(2012) 492 final, Brussels, 12/9/2012.



◇ **Enabling environment for civil society actors:** EU commitments in this area are very welcome, but concerns exist regarding their implementation. A regional roadmap could be useful, but existing Country Roadmaps should be implemented effectively first and consideration of the local context should be improved. The EU should more consistently and readily make use of public diplomacy, conditionality and other means of pressuring governments, particularly on: involvement of civil society actors domestically; crackdowns on civil society space; and attacks on journalists and others. The EU should also better tailor support for CSOs and other civil society actors facing particular attacks and improve direct lines of communication with EU Delegations, especially in crises.
◇ **Participation of civil society actors:** in line with EU commitments to promote meaningful and structured participation, effective participation of civil society actors should be guaranteed at all stages of bilateral and regional relations, across elaboration, implementation, monitoring and follow-up. The EU should also press for meaningful participation in local and national governance. The establishment of tripartite dialogues should be explored wherever the national context allows and with effective safeguards. Across this, a special effort must be made to ensure inclusivity, including broad, diverse and local consultations and provision of all-important information in local languages.
◇ **Capacity building for civil society actors:** to foster independent civil society in the context of shrinking space, the EU should provide more direct funding. Networking and exchange among activists in the region and between these and European CSOs are also effective in this context but impeded by restrictions on human mobility. Civil society actors also need support to be able to convey their messages directly to the EU.
◇ **The fight against corruption:** if their space, independence and capacities are supported, civil society actors could play a key role in the fight against corruption, for example in the elaboration, monitoring and follow-up of national/regional anti-corruption strategies. The EU should also promote the judicial independence and support governments in the region to follow EU anti-corruption standards.

Background information was also shared by EU officials:
◇ The EU has a broad definition of CSOs, covering a range of non-governmental, non-profit structures through which people organise to pursue shared objectives, at all levels and across varied themes. The EU views an enabling environment as the space to associate, speak and participate freely.
◇ The 2012 Communication remains the guiding document for EU engagement with civil society externally. The fundamental development with this Communication was to start considering CSOs themselves as governance actors in a broad sense.
◇ The priorities identified in the 2012 Communication have been translated into Country Roadmaps. These are in the process of being revised, on which civil society actors should be involved. The EU has no regional roadmaps, but it is true that the same priorities are relevant at the level of the Southern Mediterranean region and a regional roadmap could be considered if civil society called for it.
◇ The fight against corruption is a major priority of EU external action and the norms guiding EU action are based on international standards and the EU acquis. The EU deals with two broad categories of corruption: systemic, institutional corruption and state capture by private interests.
◇ There are EU programmes to support public administrations of partner countries that could prove useful entry points on the fight against corruption, in particular the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX) and Twinning projects. The Council of Europe is also an important actor on anti-corruption efforts, notably through the Group of States against Corruption.



CONCERNS AND WAYS FORWARD

The final session was an opportunity for exchanges between the participating civil society and EU representatives on the priorities and entry points, in order to move forward towards CSO-EU collaboration.

General Considerations

◇ The EU has committed itself to supporting civil society actors in effectively fulfilling their roles on governance, as a matter both of principal and of effectiveness, and to combatting corruption in the region. The EU sees itself "as a normative power when it comes to issues of good governance".

◇ Dialogue between civil society actors and the EU on the range of issues discussed by the Governance Focus Group can include both political and technical aspects and should be structured and prepared to allow for genuine advancement on both dimensions.

◇ EU representatives noted the challenges the EU faces in promoting good governance. It was suggested however that soft law standards can be effective when combined with conditionality. Civil Society representatives called on the EU to make better use of conditionality on governance issues, notably on civil society space, including ex-ante conditionality on agreements and negative conditionality for breaches, as well as public declarations or other tools at its disposal.

◇ It was suggested that the EU is weak at the regional level, with most activities in the Southern Mediterranean taking place at bilateral level. Several potential avenues for regional engagement were suggested under the two sub-themes below, however it was recognised that any regional approach must be grounded in strong awareness of local considerations and strictly coherent with and complementary to actives at local and national level.

Empowering Civil Society Actors as Governance Actors:

◇ While EU representatives said EU engagement with CSOs improved since the 2012 Communication, civil society representatives raised several concerns, notably the need for coherence between the EU's relations with governments which attack civil society space and EU support to independent CSOs.

◇ Among the diverse issues of concern, the particular case of anti-money laundering measures being used to crackdown on CSOs was raised.

◇ Dialogue between civil society actors and the EU at regional level could be useful and facilitated by the selection of reference persons for particular themes or countries to serve as key interlocutors for the EU and who would report to and consult wider civil society.

◇ EU representatives said the EU wants a situation where local CSOs have direct, effective access to their governments, including that governments would have to consult local CSOs in relation to the EU's External Investment Plan and EU budget support funding and CSOs would be equipped to effectively play a monitoring and follow-up role. Participants insisted on the need to ensure such processes are not captured by governmental "NGOs" (a.k.a. GONGOs).

◇ The importance of engaging inclusively with civil society actors was heavily stressed by participants. Emphasis was placed on the need for effective strategies to involve young people, as well as the need to reach civil society outside major urban centres, including by ensuring means of participation adapted to their capacities and realities (lack of funds, voluntary staff, languages, etc.)

◇ Civil society representatives stressed that barriers to mobility (visas, financial barriers...) are also barriers to participation, as well as hindering capacity building through exchange and networking, and called for genuine mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean region for activists.

◇ On funding, civil society representatives regretted that reduced EU funding towards countries not pursuing positive reforms often results in less funding for civil society actors in countries like Algeria. Civil society representatives also called for dedicated funding streams for civil society actors facing particular attacks by governments. CSOs and other civil society actors were encouraged to take the negotiations on the next EU multiannual financial framework as an entry point and present their case to the European Parliament and Member States.

The Fight Against Corruption

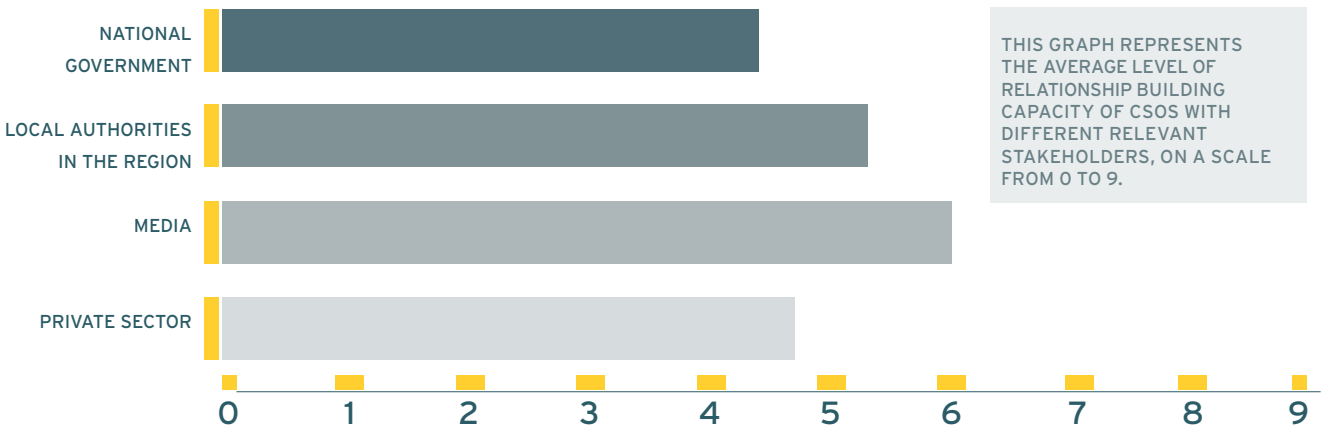
◇ Regarding the idea of a regional anti-corruption code of conduct, questions were raised as to whom it would apply and whether it would be followed in a region where corruption laws are ignored.

◇ Civil society representatives called on the EU to combat corruption in a mainstreamed way across all relations with governments. A high-level political forum was suggested to discuss illicit financial flows, money laundering and asset recovery.

◇ Another suggestion was to establish a regional anti-corruption platform/network for monitoring and knowledge exchange.

◇ Participants also called for a push in favour of effective cross-border police cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region for transnational corruption cases.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING CAPACITY



THIS GRAPH REPRESENTS THE AVERAGE LEVEL OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING CAPACITY OF CSOS WITH DIFFERENT RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS, ON A SCALE FROM 0 TO 9.

Economic Development and Social Dialogue

Economic policies and social dialogue are issues at the heart of the ENP. Several policies, instruments have been elaborated at EU level to address economic and social dialogue priorities and their implications for the Southern Neighbourhood and on cooperation for development. The Focus Group gathered civil society representatives from the Southern Mediterranean region and Europe-based organisations, as well as EU officials. The "resource" persons, who presented the thematic discussion papers and provided additional input to these sessions, were Ziad Abdel Samad (ANND),Adib Nehme (ANND) and Anas El Hasnaoui (Espace Associatif). Moderation of the sessions by Leila Jourane (Action jeunesse FMAS) ....

"Investment and redistribution in the framework of the ENP"

PRIORITY THEMES

The participants in the Focus Group started by re-familiarising themselves with the topics discussed at the September 2018 South Seminar in Amman. The priorities focused on four main themes: trade relations; the role of the private sector; social security schemes; and education, in particular vocational training.

◇ **Trade:** as trade, investment and finance should be considered as vehicles for inclusive and sustainable development and redistribution, not only for growth, trade agreements (particularly Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements) should work on reinforcing productive sectors in countries of the Southern Neighbourhood and push for the creation of decent work, while being subject to monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure full transparency and the respect of core labour standards and human rights.

◇ **Private sector:** the increasingly important role given to the private sector as a development agent and the incentives presented should not come at the expense of fiscal redistribution and social, labour and environmental rights. Economic growth through these actors needs to be accompanied by a differentiation between big/multinational corporations and SMEs that have different impact on the economy and should be treated differently.

◇ **Social Protection:** there is a need for an alternative approach to the implementation of social protection policies, shifting from a fragmented vision to an inclusive and universal one. The role given by the EU and other major countries in the post-war/-conflict phase in the Southern Neighbourhood region and the increased role given to the private sector requires transparency and accountability mechanisms and ex-ante impact studies.

◇ **Education and vocational training:** addressing youth issues shouldn't be limited to specific policies as all public policies have an effect on them. The main issues concern high rates of unemployment, employment in the informal sector and the inadequacy of vocational and technical training with respect to the needs of the market, also taking into consideration the effects of digitalisation and automation. These factors contribute to a higher rate of discrimination and selective migration leading to higher levels of social inequalities.

Civil society participants, in the presence of representatives from several EU divisions, explored and exchanged on priorities related to the above themes in an open discussion. The main exchanges revolved around: (1) impact assessments of trade agreements and accountability of multinational corporations; (2) transparency and Association Agreements; (3) the impact EU policies have on the civil society environment and policy coherence; (4) education policies. Discussions covered several points:

◇ The EEAS representative in charge of business and human rights portfolio presented their work and the work of the members states on the promotion of national action plans on business and human rights;

◇ The EU accompanies the implementation of the Association Agreement in the southern Neighbourhood region through different tools such as budget support, blending facilities and development cooperation programmes.

◇ Trade agreements with countries in the region and their negotiation processes are evaluated by ex-post trade studies which will feed into negotiations with other countries . DG Trade has launched 6 SIA (Sustainable Impact Assessments) on on-going Association Agreements in the MENA region. The process will involve different stakeholders that will include; NSAs, CSOs, BSOs, business associations, etc. At regional level the Agadir Agreement, covering Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan will welcome the accession of two new countries (Lebanon and Palestine) in 2019. The Agadir Technical Unit is also in the process of launching an Impact Assessment to measure the agreements' performance in its Member States. These evaluations feed into the FTA implementation factsheets produced by the EU, which contain new chapters on labour rights and the promotion of fair supply chains and trade schemes;

◇ The EU works and promotes an active and visible participation of civil society in DCFTA negotiations in the countries of the region, with particular reference to the Tunisian example, and the sharing of information as a form of transparency; participants discussed the mechanisms by which civil society representatives are selected;

◇ The EU is working on the protection of CSOs in the region, including threats of closure, and the protection of human rights defenders;

◇ The EU is also working on alternative business models, which include the topic of social economy and social business.

ENTRY POINTS FOR DIALOGUE

Starting from the discussions of the previous session, the participants, both civil society and EU representatives, tried to identify the most adequate entry points through EU policies, programmes and instruments available to implement and move forward the above priorities:

◇ **The work of the EEAS and the European Commission on Business and Human Rights in the Southern Mediterranean region:** In the light of the promotion of national action plans on business and human rights in various regions, best practices should be shared and civil society actors' participation in the process should be structured, with full access to information assured;

◇ **Monitoring of European Banks respect of human rights** particularly at the level of investments affecting the Neighbourhood South;

◇ **Assuring involvement of civil society actors in the negotiation, implementation and evaluation (ex-ante and ex-post) of Free Trade Agreements in the Southern Mediterranean region** in the two negotiation processes already launched (Morocco, Tunisia) and those ongoing or potentially foreseen (Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, etc); in addition to **structuring civil society's involvement in the elaboration of intra-regional trade policies within the Southern Neighbourhood;** a structured platform of dialogue at national and regional level could be useful in this respect, including civil society from both shores of the Mediterranean, the EU and governments of Southern Neighbourhood countries;

◇ **Supporting civil society actors in the Southern Neighbourhood in their engagement in international mechanisms of human rights monitoring,** particularly United Nations mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review and the Agenda 2030 implementation mechanisms such as the Voluntary National Report, in order to promote the respect of human rights in countries of the region and improve the enabling environment of CSOs in these countries.

CONCERNS AND WAYS FORWARD

During the last session, exchanges between civil society participants and EU representatives took place on the identified entry points and on situations of interest, both at regional and national levels. Discussions aimed to potentially agree on operational implementation avenues for collaboration between civil society actors and the EU per priority.

Private Sector

There is EU legislation in place to hold multinationals accountable but they are not binding and repercussions are not related to due diligence for multinationals; additionally, more active promotion of the adoption of national action plans on business and human right is needed in the Southern Neighbourhood; this could be improved by creating a mechanism of civil society actors' work on a national and regional level to implement the action plans in countries of the Neighbourhood South.

Trade Agreements

In the context of the implementation assessments, civil society representatives raised the following issues: to which extent could these impact assessments reshape the negotiations and the content of the agreements? How are they being conducted? And how are the outcomes analysed? The figures should be analysed while taking into consideration overall indicators to evaluate the outcomes of the agreements on development: trade flow has increased in both directions, but the Southern Neighbourhood countries concerned had a negative balance of payments at the time, with the difference increasing since; this could be improved and clarified by creating a mechanism for involvement of civil society actors in the assessments.

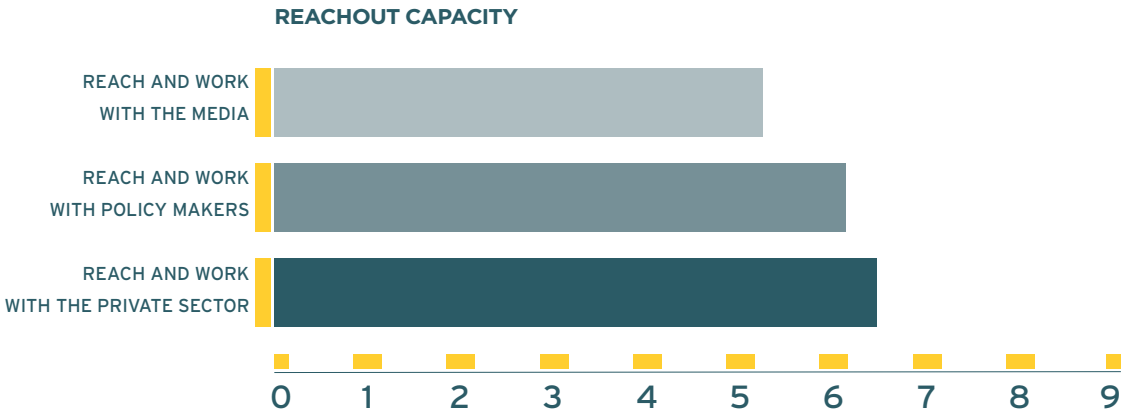
Enabling Environment/Policy Space

Despite EU efforts on the involvement of civil society in DCFTA negotiations with, for example, Tunisia, and on transparent information sharing, there is no mention of the role and space given to civil society in monitoring the implementation of these agreements and their evaluation; more clarity is needed on the selection mechanisms for the civil society representatives included. Additionally, the EU is working on cases of protection of CSOs in the countries of the region, there is no mention of the work on promoting other factors affecting the enabling environment of the civil society and its policy space. This could be solved by work on supporting civil society actors in the countries of the region to enhance their conditions by following Human rights mechanisms and improving their policy space.

Education and Vocational Training

The EU must continue its commitment to improve access to and supply of technical and vocational training. Existing programmes, such as Erasmus+, must be able to reach young people from the southern neighbourhood from different backgrounds. In general, EU youth programmes should be more inclusive and benefit primarily young people with fewer opportunities. The EU must also promote the right of fair mobility for people in the Euro-Mediterranean area by making visa procedures more flexible, especially for young people.

THIS GRAPH REPRESENTS THE SELF-ASSESSMENT OF CSOS TOWARDS THEIR REACH OUT CAPACITY WITH DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS, ON A SCALE FROM 0 TO 9.



Human Rights and Counter Violence[z]

This first working session recalled the need to find a common language between the European Union and civil society to set up a framework for fruitful discussions. For the EU, the promotion of security-related policies is a top priority in its bilateral relations and its neighbourhood policy. For civil society actors, a bottom-up approach would favour a broader understanding of all sorts of violence that target first and foremost individuals and organisations. Such divergences make this topic among the most controversial and hard to tackle for EU-civil society dialogue, yet both parties remain committed to identify a language, spaces and tools that allow them to meet their respective expectations. The Focus Group on Human Rights and Counter Violence gathered civil society representatives from the Southern Mediterranean region and some Europe-based organizations, as well as EU officials from different Directorates General of the European Commission (DGs NEAR and DEVCO) and from the EEAS. The "resource" persons, who presented the thematic discussion paper and provided additional input to these sessions, were Xavier Guignard (independent expert) and an Egyptian expert. Two facilitators trained by Med Culture guided these sessions: Rawane Chamseddine and Lina Barghouthi.

"From security to counter violence: towards a renewed and rights-based approach"

PRIORITY THEMES

The participants started by reviewing together the topics discussed in September to re-familiarise themselves, for those present at the Amman Seminar, or introduce the topics for those who joined the focus group at the Brussels Forum:

- How to promote human security by addressing root causes of violence?
- How to reform the security sector in consultation with civil society actors?
- How to ensure mechanisms for prevention, warning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of violence in collaboration with civil society?
- How could the EU pursue its commitment against gender-based violence?

Civil society participants, in the presence of EU representatives, explored and exchanged on priorities in small groups. The proposals made in Amman were revisited: (1) going beyond the scope of the Security Sector Reform (SSR); (2) fighting all form of violence (3) stressing on the inclusion of young people at all stages of a counter-violence policy.

Participants first raised the risks of limiting their discussion to SSR. Such an approach offers a very limited role to civil society and implies a belief that SSR is possible in partner countries where fundamental rights are systematically violated, which is a mistake. Participants proposed enlarging the scope of SSR, embracing not only a review of the police curriculum but also education reform. An educational program would target children and raise their awareness on violence in parallel with an introduction to their fundamental rights.

They then discussed the need to identify all forms of violence in order not to limit the question of security to terrorism. State violence in Palestine, forced disappearances in Algeria or Egypt, exclusion, marginalisation and threats against ethnic or religious minorities (Libya, Syria), gender-based and domestic violence and child abuse are all forms of violence that people encounter on a daily basis. Most of the violent acts are committed by state agents or members of the dominant social, political, ethnic or religious groups, which calls into question the relevance of exclusively associating state institutions to SSR discussions. In contrast, preliminary meetings with civil

3 The decision to replace the title of the focus group, initially "Security" came out of the two-day discussions between the participants.

society actors where EU representatives would be able to identify key issues and fragilities would certainly help to empower and protect them.

The UN Security Council Resolution 2250 highlights the importance of including young people in any peace process or security reform project. Youth organisations are among the most active of the civil society actors in every southern partner country, yet their role and voices are very limited, if not silenced. Youth should not be exclusively seen and dealt with in a victim-based approach. They are victims but also actors or witnesses of all sorts of violence and necessarily key actors to endorse any sustainable counter-violence reform.

Finally, the participants expressed their will to associate more closely civil society actors from the diaspora in European countries in responding to the fragility of migrant population.

ENTRY POINTS FOR DIALOGUE

From the discussions at the first session, two entry points had been identified for advancing on jointly: the EU Early Warning Systems and the need to include civil society actors in a tripartite dialogue process to reform the security sector, along with states and EU bodies. Starting from there, and after a presentation led by the EU representatives, they and the participants tried to identify available or suitable instruments or mechanisms to implement each priority theme.

◇ **Importance of youth participation:** inviting youth organisations is a first step toward their complete inclusion in the development of public policies, their follow-up mechanisms and the responsibility to implement them. The UE should more often engage with youth organisations and listen to their experiences. They should meet not only with organisations that deal with victims, but also those working on the reintegration of former perpetrators or the economic development of marginalised communities. Informal groups that emerged during social movements are a good example of valuable interlocutors that the UE should look to.

◇ **Early Warning System:** civil society actors are well aware of the restrictions imposed by the EU on its findings. However, they encouraged the EU to better inform civil society actors on the role and the importance of the EWS, through panels or workshops. More generally, civil society representatives highlighted drew EU representatives' attention to the lack of communication around the EU tools and mechanisms. They encouraged the EU to rely on their expertise for designing their guidance on conflict analysis.

◇ **Coherent and global approach:** peacekeeping and peace-building mechanisms must be included in any security-related policy. An integrated approach would encourage policy coherence on the field and better financial support to local peace initiatives.

◇ **Online tools:** civil society representatives suggested the possibility of creating an electronic platform where experts on security could share their expertise and organise e-workshops. They expressed their wish for the strengthening of existing mechanisms for the protection of human rights organisations targeted by coercive measures in their countries.

Background information was shared by the EU representatives on:

The European approach to SSR:

◇ SSR is a joint action between the EEAS, the various DG's and Member States;

◇ It is applied through an Integrated Approach through a coherent use of all policies/instruments at EU's disposal, including the European Council policies, the Commission's instruments and bilateral mechanisms implemented by the member states.

◇ SSR deals with the entire security sector (police, defence, justice, democratic control, etc.) regarding its needs and practices;

◇ It also involves a cultural approach allowing the inclusion of civil society actors in redefining the relationship between security actors and the population.

Early Warning System (EWS):

◇ The EEAS deals with, amongst other things, conflict prevention, stabilisation and migration;

◇ The EU Early Warning System is a risk management tool, using both quantitative and qualitative analyses to assess and help prioritize situations at risk of violent conflict, with a time horizon of four years.

◇ A Global conflict risk scan is run (with the help of reports from CSOs and International NGOS). There is however not (yet) a specific role for civil society.

◇ It involves grasping the structural risks and root causes that may trigger escalation of violence and develops conflict prevention/peacebuilding options to minimize risk of (re-)emergence of violence in response.

◇ With the EU Early Warning System being an EU internal system, avenues could be explored to foster or assist in the development of regional, if not local systems to be created. The EU already supports regional EWs in Africa.

Gender Equality:

◇ Human Rights are a condition for sustainable development.

◇ The Gender Action Plan II (2016-2020) approved in 2015 established three priorities: physical and psychological integrity, socio-economic equality and political participation; a horizontal priority is the need to invest in people, train them people, encourage gender analysis and promote the Gender Equality Marker system;

◇ There is a need to focus on education and on supporting governments to adopt inclusive legislation.

◇ Set up regional and bilateral campaigns for southern countries.

CONCERNS AND WAYS FORWARD

The final session was an opportunity for the participants and the EU representatives to narrow down their discussion on the identified priorities and entry points to move forward towards collaboration between civil society actors and the EU on these matters.

Gender-based Violence (GBV)

◇ This issue should be tackled in all activities, all reports or studies and all policies conducted by the EU;

◇ Culture can be used as a tool for raising awareness to combat GBV;

◇ Men are also victims of sexual violence in certain circumstances;

◇ Economic empowerment of women is crucial to combat GBV.

Early Warning System:

◇ How can we create pre-warning mechanisms in southern partner countries? Online tools could be developed and used by the EU;Expertise of local civil society partners is very valuable in this regard.

◇ There is a need for the EU to identify which civil society actors to work in close cooperation with; independent actors are needed to balance those chosen by governments;

◇ Possibility to work with civil society on EWS in the regions (e.g., Libya).

◇ Aside their own representations, the EU must rely on third-party organisations such as research NGOs or think tanks to help them collect, gather and organise data from various civil society actors.

Root Causes of Violence:

◇ There is a need to involve young people from informal and local organisations; future programs must enhance the visibility of already existing youth projects;

◇ In the region, the main source of violence is the current political regimes; the EU must urge the regimes to uphold human rights and protect civil society actors;

◇ The EU and EU Member States must ensure tools of accountability for governments that do not respect human rights;

◇ EU mechanisms and policies must be in coherence with UN human rights monitoring mechanisms (UN Universal Period Review, etc.

◇ The UN Sustainable Development Goal number 16 and its indicators should be used as a framework for planning and monitoring.

Security Sector Reform:

◇ Any SSR must be based on a human rights approach, require transparency and share general information and evaluation (as was previously done in 2010 and 2015).

◇ SSR should be a tripartite process and efforts should be made to involve civil society actors in its design and implementation.

Cross Cutting Issues

On the second day of the Forum, participants attended parallel sessions focusing on identified cross-cutting issues relevant for all four themes of the Forum (governance, economic and social development, migration, security and countering violence). Based on the questions raised in the discussion papers, the objectives of the sessions were to share experiences and discuss openly to draw conclusions that could be reflected in the upcoming activities of the project.

◇ **Rights Based Approach and coherence of EU policies:** How can the EU ensure a Rights Based Approach in the ENP implementation?

◇ **EU role in protecting civil society spaces and human rights defenders:** How can the EU and civil society actors collaborate to ensure effective protection systems (HRD, vulnerable groups, social protection, protection against different forms of violence)?

◇ **Inclusivity:** How can the EU better involve civil society actors in defining, implementing and evaluating its policies? How can the inclusion of civil society actors working in remote areas, vulnerable groups and minorities be ensured?

Rights Based Approach

The session was moderated by Nizar Hassan (Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies) and panellists were Bihter Moschini (ANND) and EU representatives Alexandre Baron (DG NEAR) and Martin Heather (EEAS).

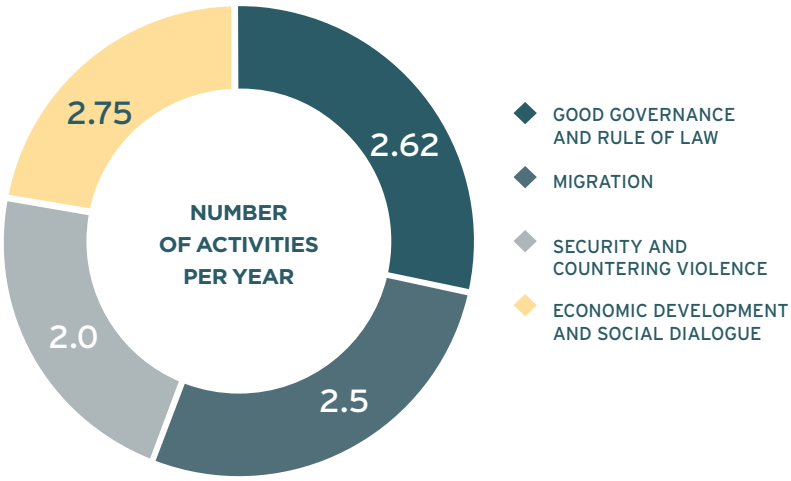
The Rights-Based approach (RBA) is a huge opportunity for the EU and civil society. The discussion on RBA takes into consideration the new dynamics following the adoption of the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. "Leave no one behind" is the motto of this new Agenda and this cannot be achieved without promotion and protection of human rights and the principles of equality, transparency, participation and non-discrimination. RBA is clearly not a new phenomenon. It started with the recognition that human rights and human development are not two separate directions/fields, but in fact mutually re-enforcing. There are challenges remaining for the implementation of RBA, but we can recognise as well that the EU has done much to integrate RBA in its working method. Some challenges have been identified for the implementation of RBA in EU development cooperation. In particular, participants highlighted that:
◇ Empowerment is crucial for RBA, but challenged in both the North and South under shrinking policy and civic spaces;
◇ "Do no harm" is at the centre of RBA but this cannot be ensured without appropriate safeguards and accountability mechanisms, especially considering the increasing involvement of the private sector in development cooperation;

◇ "Do maximum good" is the other objective of RBA, but it is also challenged given the instrumentalisation of official development assistance and allocation of development aid with security priorities;
◇ Another key challenge is in relation to ensuring policy coherence and due to lack of cross-sectoral dialogue between different policies implemented (trade, investment, aid, etc.)

As a result of the discussion, the following conclusions and considerations can be noted:
◇ The scope of the (human) rights-based approach should be widened beyond development cooperation to cover sectors such as trade and migration;
◇ Due diligence and accountability mechanisms should be in place to hold governments accountable to their commitments to the respect of human rights made in international fora and with the EU through Association Agreements/Partnerships Priorities as part of ENP.; moreover, the legal basis of RBA should be strengthened to allow for its enforcement.
◇ Agenda 2030 is an interesting entry point, as governments are/may be more willing to discuss on this basis rather than on human rights per se;
◇ The EU should work with civil society actors to promote the RBA and assess whether it is properly implemented and respected.

Towards an Effective Protection System?

The session was moderated by Hala Qubbaj (Arab Campaign for Education for All) with input by Vincent Forest (EuroMed Rights).
Participants in this session exchanged questions, assessments and recommendations regarding the protection of civil society activists, in particular with respect to EU action on this. It was noted that protection is not a new issue for the EU, notably with the EU Guidelines on human rights defenders (HRDs) adopted in 2004 which largely follow the 1998 UN Declaration on HRDs. Importantly, these Guidelines hold for both the EU and its Member States, meaning HRDs at risk should be able to request support directly from Member States and their field embassies as well. However, the Guidelines are non-binding, and their implementation is inconsistent. Protection elements are also included in the 2012 Communication on the EU's engagement with civil society, which notes that restrictions on civil society space go beyond legislation to include practices such as smear campaigns.



THIS DIAGRAM REPRESENTS THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES PER YEAR OF THE ASSESSED CSOs ACCORDING TO THE THEMES OF THE PROJECT.

Key questions explored by the participants included: the relative effectiveness of internal strategies for protection and external pressure; areas for improvement in EU action; ensuring protection extends to all who need it; and building effective partnerships. Participants also shared their particular experiences from across the region.

As a result of the discussion, the following conclusions and considerations can be noted:
◇ While noting the clear specificities of different countries, pressure against and risks for civil society activists is a major concern across the region. Participants mentioned: the fear they and colleagues have about attending even events like the Civil Society Forum; the disappearing space for civil society activists to operate; the abuse of 'anti-terror' and privacy measures to restrict activists; the crackdown and smear campaign against NGOs; arrests and forced disappearances; pressure against those advocating for the rights of refugees and migrants; and the impunity for abuses in the absence of state-structures, e.g. in Libya.
◇ External pressure and raising individual cases of endangered activists at the international level are useful for protection. The sense that governments often listen more to external actors than to domestic civil society was illustrated by the example of Members of the European Parliament influencing King Abdullah II of Jordan regarding the Jordanian law on association when he visited the European Parliament.
◇ In light of this, there are clear calls for the EU to speak out more strongly against the pressure faced by activists, and to not let such human rights priorities be overtaken by security and other interests. Participants also called for the EU Guidelines on HRDs to be made binding, and for the EU to move towards an 'early action' approach to protection and go beyond reactive support for the physical safety of activists (relocation etc.). The EU should also do more to ensure that arms and other equipment (surveillance etc.) from EU Member States are not sold where they could be used for repression.

Inclusivity

This session was moderated by Sylvanna Lakkis (Arab Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and Daniela Moussa (AIESEC), joined by panellist Georgios Barzoukas (DG NEAR)

The general concept of "inclusivity" covers many aspects that can range from the participation of an independent civil society involving various stakeholders in the development, monitoring and evaluation of EU policies, to the inclusion of marginalised groups in projects and practices led by civil society actors. As such, the associative actors involved in the session mentioned the way they could promote inclusivity in their projects. Particular attention was paid to: geographical balance in the context of debates in Algeria; inclusion of women from different municipalities and cultures (Amazigh, Tuareg, Arab), of all ages and statuses, in a project on women victims of violence in Libya; working with people with disabilities and migrants in a project aimed at promoting democracy in Morocco.

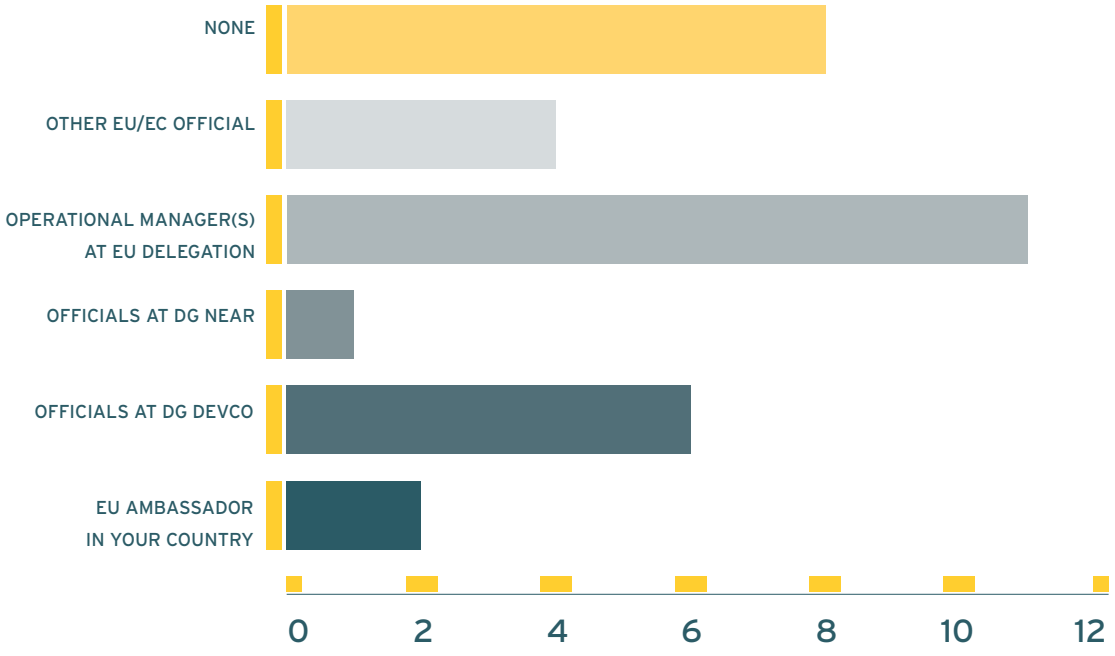
As a result of the discussion, the following conclusions and considerations can be noted:
◇ EU practices in terms of dialogue and consultation with civil society are common and its commitments are clearly mentioned in various texts[4]. Civil society is aware of the efforts made by the EU. However, these consultations must: (1) reflect civil society contributions (2); involve a variety stakeholder including organizations that are not EU grantees (3) consider EU' requirements on accountability; (4) include and promote women, youth and people with disabilities, the participation of people from rural areas, occupied territories, refugees, and sexual minorities.

4 Including the European Commission's 2012 Communication on engagement with civil society, the 2015 Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, and the EU action plan on democracy and human rights.

◇ However, the current mechanisms put in place by the EU remain ad hoc or sectoral, and it is important to establish a permanent mechanism to institutionalise relations between the EU and civil society actors at regional level, while taking into account complementarity at national level and the inclusion of local authorities, which are sometimes the first interlocutors for civil society.
◇ To engage effectively in decision-making processes and activities, civil society must have access to financial/technical resources and capacity building, be equal in terms of access to information and require transparency from interlocutors. It is necessary for civil society to know the agenda and calendar of EU-civil society meetings to prepare and anticipate positions and participate in events. On the issue of funding, the European Commission is currently examining the possibility of simplifying funding procedures to promote broader inclusion of civil society actors. Barriers to inclusivity such as the language of EU documents must also be reduced.
◇ The EU could also support civil society actors by developing inclusivity indicators in projects and more generally in inter-associative and EU-civil society consultation processes. The EU tries to ensure that legislation, policies and programmes are designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated in an open, transparent and inclusive manner, while integrating the human rights dimension. However, it does not currently have a tool to measure inclusivity.
◇ Inclusivity criteria must always be considered including in the implementation of the Majalat's project activities. It is crucial to ensure that local organisations are really involved and not used as service providers.

THIS REPRESENTS THE NUMBER OF CSO's WHO HAVE HAD ENCOUNTERS WITH EU OFFICIALS, ACCORDING TO THE RELEVANT EU INSTITUTIONS.

EU RELATIONSHIPS



General Considerations

An additional session took place on the second day of the Brussels Civil Society Forum in order to give some space to the participants to provide additional 'recommendations' or 'food for thought' to be considered in each theme and in upcoming forums.

Concerning the **human rights and counter violence theme,** participants pointed out the importance of not reducing the notion of violence to the fight against terrorism. In the same line, it was advised to change the name of the focus group, namely avoiding using 'security' with its 'policing' connotations. Finally, it was noted that the North and the South can differ importantly, which implies that each situation must be examined so that appropriate and adapted reforms are made in the concerned sector.

As for the **governance theme,** it was firstly mentioned that governance can be seen as a common denominator between the different themes covered by the project. It is a collective matter and there should be links built between the different themes. Similarly to the counter violence theme, the importance of taking into account the specificities of each country was stressed. At the same, given it is a global issue, it was proposed to adopt an overall approach, avoiding focusing on specific issues. In addition to that, participants referred to the importance of considering and addressing the situation of all young people. Finally, it was recommended that the EU set up a true dialogue (governance being a political concept) while putting in place mechanisms which collect civil society's concerns.

Concerning the **economic development and social dialogue theme,** two mains points were highlighted. On the one hand, there is a call for a greater social and solidarity-based economy. On the other hand, there is a call for political/policy coherence in EU actions in the field of economics.

When it comes to the **migration theme,** a participant referred to the need for greater psychological support for migrants and refugees, while another referred to taking into account of the diverse reasons why people take the decision to migrate.

Finally, a couple of **cross-cutting or general considerations** were made. Firstly, it was suggested to look at the topic of education (e.g. setting up a program such as Erasmus for young people to be able to participate in Euro-Mediterranean dialogue). Secondly, looking at the case of Syria in particular, one participant insisted on the need to take into account the specific characteristics of the civil society there while situating reconstruction within a human rights perspective. Thirdly, a comment was made on the independence of civil society. It is crucial that civil society actors are truly independent from their government and it is expected that the EU acts on similar lines; otherwise the EU risks being considered complicit with corrupt government. In the same vein, it was added that the EU has sometimes funded organisations which are close to governments or which only claim to be independent. There is space here for a reflection on how to reconcile this

issue with rule of law. In addition, when it comes to the financing of civil society, there is a balance to be found as real changes must come from inside. Fourthly, it was advised to focus more on minorities and marginalised group such as people with disabilities. For example, people with special requirements must be heard on an equal basis, must have the same rights and substantial support should be provided. Inclusivity is crucial element for participants. Fifthly, it was stressed how important the rule of law is, which should serve as foundation, as advised by a participant. The fight against crime and corruption should also be considered.

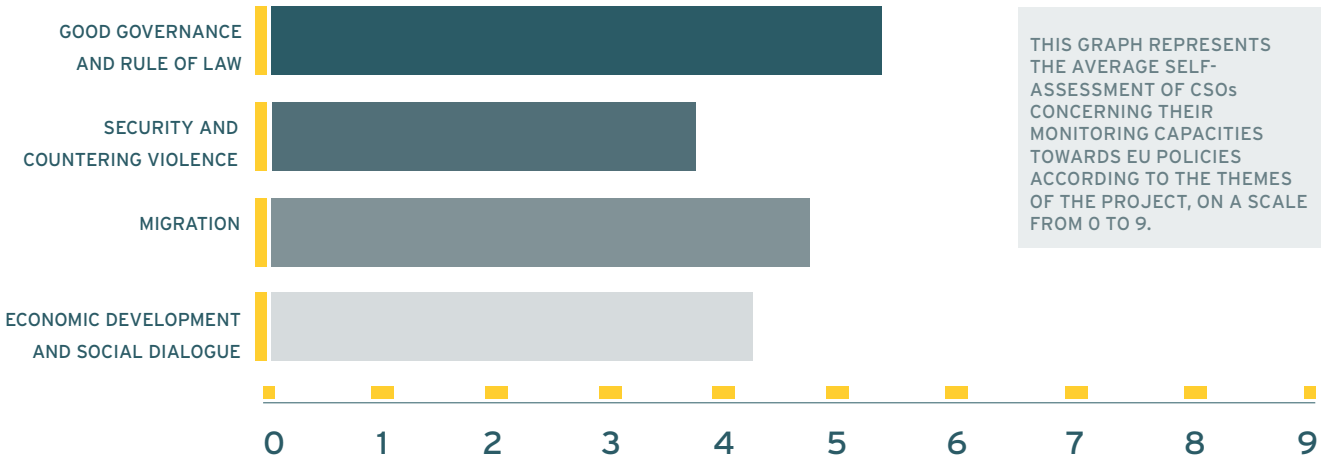
Finally, one participant insisted on the fact that civil society actors should play an integral role in the dialogue. There is however a general feeling that their points are not taking on board. There is thereof a need for more interactions as well as follow up of the Forum. As noted by a participant, there are many issues to tackle but the important thing is that there is a commitment, an engagement in dialogue and that experiences are shared so as to ensure that cooperation yields results in all areas – the Forum is a learning experience on this matter.

Comments on the Process and the Forum

Several comments were made concerning the procedure and the Forum.
Some participants expressed disappointment that not all points raised in the discussions during the South Seminar in Amman were reflected in the discussion papers prepared for the Brussels Civil Society Forum. There was some confusion about the various background documents (the South Seminar reports, the Brussels Forum discussion papers, etc.) and an agreement on the need for better follow-through between the different events that will be organised by Majalat in the next years. A point was also made regarding how the selection and role of the rapporteurs could be improved.

In addition, it was indicated that time was lacking for discussion. More time is needed to discuss sensitive issue and go into depth. It was noted that the thematic working groups of the next cycle of activities will help moving toward deeper discussion and more precise conclusions. At the same time, it was advised that such dialogue events include some elements of capacity building on how to engage with local authorities/the EU/national governments and how to contribute to regional dialogue.

MONITORING CAPACITIES EU POLICIES



THIS GRAPH REPRESENTS THE AVERAGE SELF-ASSESSMENT OF CSOs CONCERNING THEIR MONITORING CAPACITIES TOWARDS EU POLICIES ACCORDING TO THE THEMES OF THE PROJECT, ON A SCALE FROM 0 TO 9.

Closing Session and Panel Discussion:

"Where do we see this dialogue in 5/10 years and how do we engage youth and ensure gender equality?"

To conclude the Brussels 2018 Civil Sociev ty Forum and its two days of focus groups, plenary sessions and exchanges, a panel discussion was held on the future of the Majalat project and the regional dialogue. The panel was composed of Michael Koehler (Director for Neighbourhood South, DG NEAR), Colin Scicluna (Director for the Middle East and North Africa, EEAS) and Ibrahim Kassou (President, FMAS), with Giovanna Tanzarella (Vice-President, REF) chairing. This was followed by some closing words from Ziad Abdel Samad (Executive Director, ANND).

Opening the session, the panellists highlighted that this edition of the Forum is only the start of a long cycle of activities, and that therefore the discussions which occurred in the past days will be further deepened and elaborated on in the future. Colin Scicluna and Michael Koehler congratulated the process that led up to the Forum and highlighted the importance of civil society and the vital need for civil society actors to remain independent, autonomous and representative of society. The panellists also emphasised the importance of youth and its role in shaping the future of countries in the South Mediterranean region.

Forum participants then proceeded to exchange views, constructive criticism, feedback, and suggestions with the panel. Key points raised included:

◇ While the dialogue within this project is at a regional level, most EU relationships with the Neighbourhood South are at a bilateral level. Therefore, a roadmap for the region should be elaborated and implemented at EU policy level. It was noted that this project aims at establishing such a regional approach, and Colin Scicluna stressed the many interactions between bilateral and regional relations at all level and encouraged the cross fertilisation of ideas and sharing of lessons.

◇ EU officials should be well acquainted with the nature of civil society in each context and be able to distinguish and understand its pillars and dynamics so that consultation can be more effective. The panel noted that the EU also depends on the people on the ground to keep it well-informed of country-level dynamics.

◇ Participants expressed their concerns regarding the degree to which civil society is included in the bilateral dialogue and agreements between the EU and the governments of the Neighbourhood South,. Michael Koehler highlighted that the EU cannot dictate or impose change on governments: compromise is always necessary. Exchange needs to also happen domestically between civil society and its respective government.

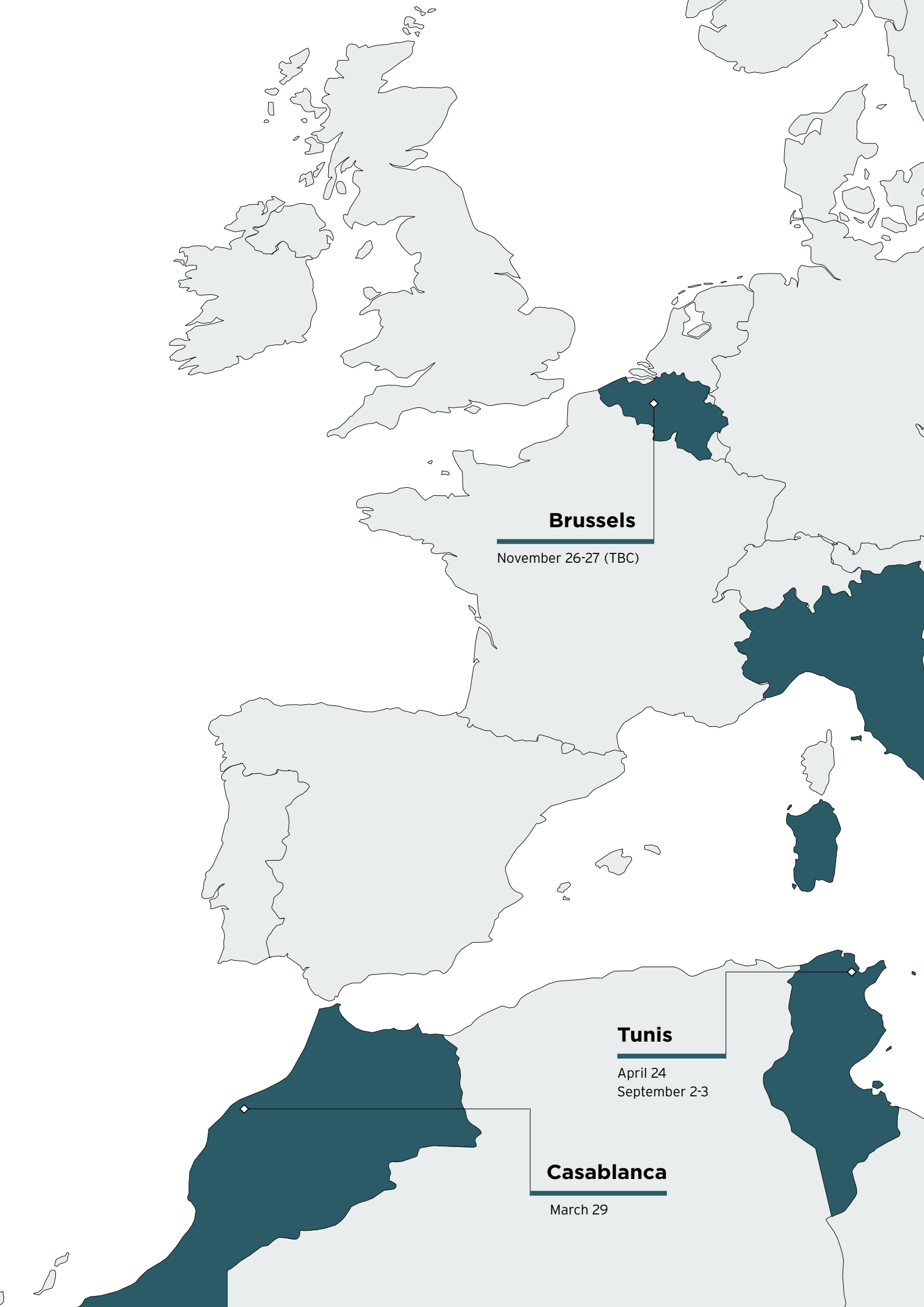
◇ Building on the discussion of inclusivity, the low inclusion of people with disabilities in the Neighbourhood South, particularly in light of war crimes committed there, remains an important issue for civil society. As Sylvana Lakkis (Disabled People International) noted: "45 million people with disabilities in the Arab world are outside the development agenda and the human rights agenda", urging the EU to review its current policy.

◇ Participants also raised the issue of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and insisted that it should be better included in the ENP. Michael Koehler noted that most international funding to the Palestinian Authority comes from the EU. He also mentioned the internal problems in Palestine and that civil society has a responsibility to tackle them.

◇ Recent developments in Europe and the rise of nationalist and far-right movements were also brought to the discussion, as participants questioned the relationship between the EU and its neighbourhood in light of these changes. The panellists claimed these developments have not impacted the EU's external cooperation, though they do not reinforce the EU internally.

◇ As a conclusion, participants asked for concrete commitments. Colin Scicluna underlined the EU's comprehensive approach though ongoing political and humanitarian work in Syria and Libya, also looking at strengthening the resilience of societies. He gave the examples of the third high-level Syria Conference in Brussels in March 20199 and of the work done in Libya at the level of community leaders, and municipalities. On the idea of tripartite dialogue, wherever possible the EU will aim to achieve this on a more regular basis.

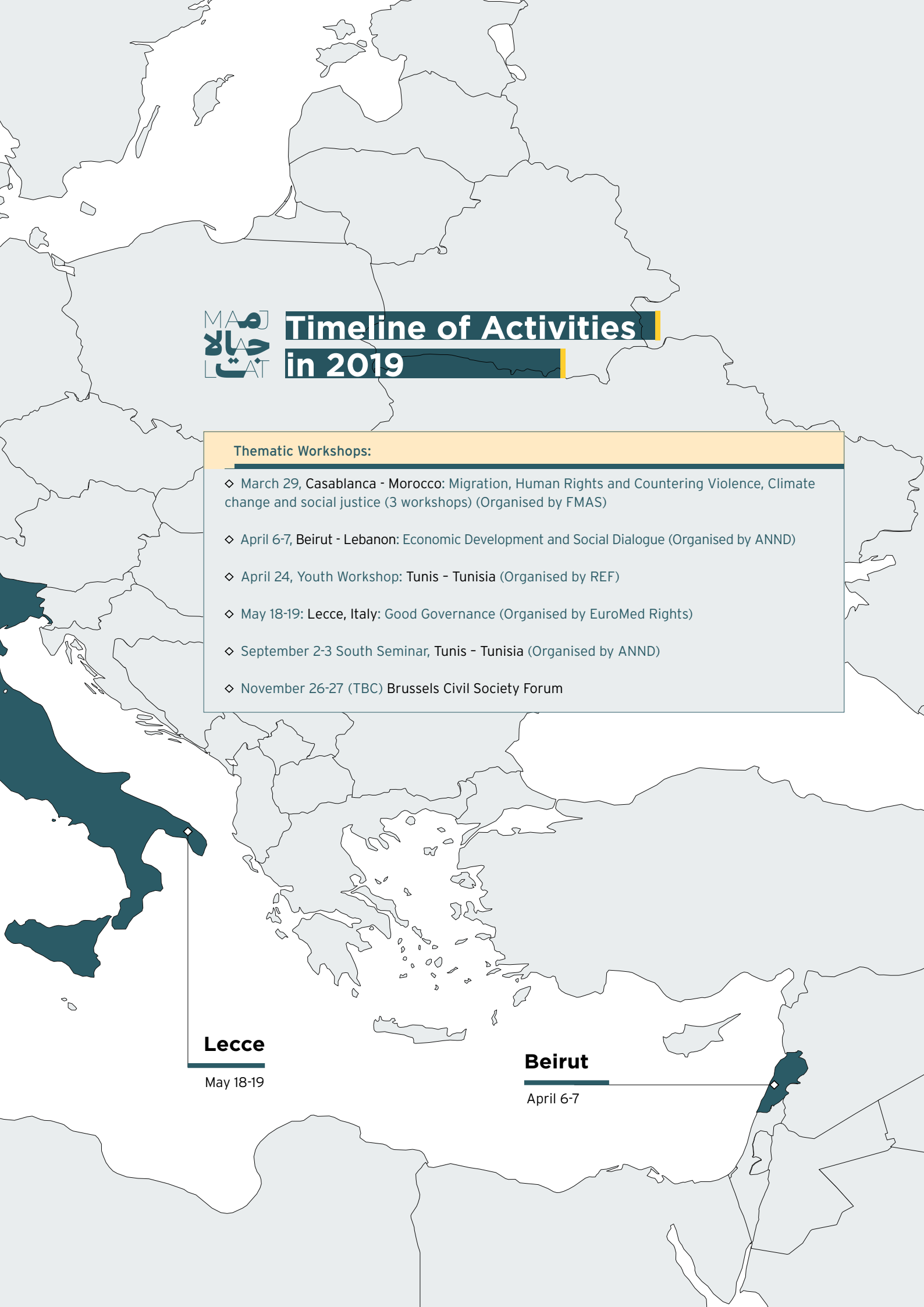
Ziad Abdul Samad closed the session and the two days of the Brussels Civil Forum, highlighting the importance of the EU as a partner to the southern shore of the Mediterranean. He also reiterated that this is a long-term process and impact is only possible with the inclusion of different actors, including EU and Southern Mediterranean governments and the European Parliament. He also highlighted the series of Majalat project activities for direct outreach with civil society actors to work towards respect of human rights and democratic change.


Brussels
November 26-27 (TBC)
Tunis
April 24
September 2-3
Casablanca
March 29

Timeline of Activities in 2019

Thematic Workshops:

- March 29, Casablanca - Morocco: Migration, Human Rights and Countering Violence, Climate change and social justice (3 workshops) (Organised by FMAS)
- April 6-7, Beirut - Lebanon: Economic Development and Social Dialogue (Organised by ANND)
- April 24, Youth Workshop: Tunis – Tunisia (Organised by REF)
- May 18-19: Lecce, Italy: Good Governance (Organised by EuroMed Rights)
- September 2-3 South Seminar, Tunis – Tunisia (Organised by ANND)
- November 26-27 (TBC) Brussels Civil Society Forum



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