

# EU'S NEIGHBOURHOOD AS AN OPPORTUNITY?

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Within the context of the “Think Global - Act European” project, *Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute* has mobilised a group of 17 European think tanks to explore the ways to attain a more integrated strategy for the EU’s external action. Experts have confronted their analyses in occasion of a series of working seminars (economic interests, strategic resources, migrations, EU neighbourhood and CSDP), organised throughout Europe in October 2012. Policy papers and final report will be available soon.

The first seminar of the project “Think Global - Act European” took place in Rome at the *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)* on 11 October 2012. The seminar was shaped by the contributions of the members of the working group IV dedicated to the EU relations with its neighbourhood:

- **Haizam Amirah Fernández**, Senior Analyst for the Mediterranean and Arab World, *Elcano Royal Institute*;
- **Adam Balcer**, Director of the EU enlargement and neighbourhood programme, *demosEUROPA*;
- **Timo Behr**, Researcher, *FIIA - Finnish Institute of International Affairs & Research Associate*, *Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute*;
- **Gianni Bonvicini**, Executive Vice President, *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)*;
- **Michele Comelli**, Senior Fellow, *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)*;
- **Elvire Fabry**, Senior Research Fellow, *Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute*;
- **Christoph Hillion**, Senior Researcher, *Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies (SIEPS)*;
- **Lucia Najšlová**, Senior Research Fellow, *Europeum - Institute for European Foreign Policy*;
- **Peter Munk Jensen**, Senior Analyst, *DIIS - Danish Institute for International Studies*;
- **Věra Řiháčková**, Senior Research Fellow, *Europeum - Institute for European Foreign Policy*;
- **Olga Shumylo-Tapiola**, Visiting Scholar, *Carnegie Europe*.

Discussions, open to external experts, were introduced by **Emanuele Giaufret**, Assistant to the Managing Director of the Middle East and North Africa of the *European External Action Service (EEAS)*.

This synthesis regroups salient points identified throughout the discussions.

## 1. An introverted EU in urgent need of strategic thinking

Deep internal crisis faced by the EU must not allow for neglecting the changes occurring in the neighbourhood. The emergence of new actors in the Mediterranean, the Arab Spring and the crisis in Libya and the current one in Syria, all have effect on European policy and urge a rethinking of EU strategic relations and priorities.

Traditionally the **European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has been overly optimistic and euro-centric**, based strongly on the assumption of the EU model’s attractiveness. The policy’s effectiveness is dubious, yet the 2012 evaluation was strikingly positive. Focusing on inputs (9.3 % increase of ENPI funds, the creation of a Civil Society Facility) rather than outputs, is an indication of the EU’s poor analytical understanding of its involvement in the region.

A lack of horizontal coordination between external action instruments and incoherence across national policies means **the bigger picture is lost because of deadlocks engendered by sectorial or national interests**.

**EU credibility and attractiveness in its neighbourhood has suffered a serious blow**. In Turkey, EU enlargement is still perceived as necessary but polls highlight lack of enthusiasm. Contrasting the EU flag waving in the Eastern revolutions, with the Arab Spring where the EU’s role was minimal at

best, serves to illustrate this point. A new stability model is urgently needed. The limits of an overly normative rhetoric have damaged the practical application of policies, which increasingly fall short of the region's real needs. Rather than better implementation, a paradigm shift is needed. **New innovative policies are to be more strictly correlated with pragmatic objectives and interests.**

## 2. Identifying concrete short term objectives inscribed within a policy that not only addresses transition but tackles traditional problematics

The ENP needs to identify **achievable short term results** or it risks running in parallel to the development of the region rather than contributing to the latter.

The lack of credible solutions to short-term problems results in **a mismatch between the EU's long term policies and institutional slowness and the fast-paced changes affecting the neighbourhood.**

Traditional problematic issues must nevertheless not be neglected (Iran and nuclear proliferation, the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the Sahel). The EU's engagement with these is characterized by **ad hoc reactions and institutional incoherence.** Merging more closely traditional "non-political" ENP instruments with the highly politicised means of the CSDP is thus desirable, particularly in relation to protracted conflicts (Transnistria, Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh). The separation of the ENP and the CSDP is both artificial and unhelpful.

With the US expecting a more autonomous defence capacity from the EU and within a context of reduced national defence budgets, **the EU may have to increasingly rationalise and coordinate all possible instruments favouring stabilisation in the neighbourhood.**

With regards to the Eastern Partnership (EaP), it is too early to judge the 2011 revision of the policy, yet it is nevertheless striking to observe the failure to date of what the revised ENP refers to as a "more for more and less for less" approach. Except for Moldova which is willing and able to reap the benefits of "more for more", **"less for less" is not only unappealing to the remainder of Eastern countries but also**

**scarcely implemented,** highlighting the failure of conditionality in the area.

The newly forged customs union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan and its potential power of attraction should lead the EU to re-evaluate its policies in the region in the light of the apathy of Eastern neighbours towards the EU.

The ENP is a positive policy based on the wrong assumption that neighbours are ready and willing to partake and share EU values. Often the opposite is true and more so since a Ukraine-centric stance has undermined the EU's alleged merit based approach.

In the South, the EU needs to rethink its role as a transformative power. On one hand article 8 of the Lisbon Treaty lays out a strong normative mandate for the EU in the area yet **democratisation aims remain fuzzy.** Organising elections is not enough to guarantee democracy in illiberal societies. There is a need for increasingly innovative policies coupled with **engagement with all strands of civil society,** particularly the presently marginalized religious organisations.

## 3. The need for co-management in the region – envisaging joint strategic planning with Turkey and Russia

The EU's foreign policy in the Eastern neighbourhood is undeniably affected by a **"Russia first" approach.** Even if it can be considered as a competing actor in the region, there is still a debate as to whether the customs union settled between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan is really attractive for EU Eastern neighbours. **The EU is not keen on acknowledging the potential complementarity of Russian and EU actions in the region,** but it cannot afford not to engage with Russia beyond the framework of EU-Russia summits and should encourage regular joint strategic planning for the region.

Turkey is another regional actor which the EU cannot continue to ignore. Other than the energy transport corridors which the EU desperately needs, **there has been a substantial convergence of agendas between Ankara and Brussels since 2011** dictated by common challenges in the neighbourhood (turmoil in post-revolutionary states and Syria). Turkey possesses a strong social leverage on

its neighbours, yet is in no position to bring about successful democratisation of the Arab world without the EU. Complementarity exists between the two actors.

Both with regards to Russia and Turkey, the economically struggling EU needs to concentrate its efforts on **involvement with civil society which is perceived by its partners to be its strongest point.**

#### 4. Reaping the benefits of the vicinity as an opportunity

There is an increasing reluctance in the member states to engage with the neighbourhood, whilst instead this could **represent a source of opportunity for the EU economic rebound.** A more frank and open stance regarding its involvement with its neighbours, identifying clearly its interests and the will to pursue these is required. This avoids creating unmanageable expectations. This is ever truer given the limited finances of the EU which should reorient policy following a **“Trade not Aid” rationale.** The single market together with multilateral projects should be at the forefront of a new ENP. Concrete

steps to be taken in the short term can be envisaged for **progressively opening the EU-Turkey customs union to other neighbours.**

Mobility, with **targeted visa liberalisation programmes,** could be an important building bloc towards a successful ENP.

To stimulate growth in the neighbours as well as in the EU, additional projects could be developed. Be it a new Mediterranean agriculture and food policy based on co-development or a Euro-Mediterranean energy community, based on a **partnership encouraging technology exchange and investments** whose supply in the long term is increasingly secure.

The creation of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) matching investment interests across borders and exchange of best practices, as for example in tourism, were quoted as a potential market worth exploring.

Deeper analysis needs to be undertaken with these respects in order to identify what works and go deeper with the analysis of these projects.



The project “**Think Global - Act European**” (TGAE) organised by *Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute* is focused on the EU's external action.

A more integrated global strategy would allow the EU to better respond to the substantial changes that are affecting the international arena. More coherence and coordination between internal policies and external policies as well as mitigation of institutional discrepancies through reinforced dialogue between EU institutions on those new challenges are thus scrutinised by the **17 European think tanks** involved in this project:

*Carnegie Europe (Brussels), CCEIA (Nicosia), CER (London), CEPS (Brussels), demosEUROPA (Warsaw), DIIS (Copenhagen), ECFR (London, Madrid, Berlin, Paris, Sofia), EGMONT (Brussels), EPC (Brussels), Real Instituto Elcano (Madrid), Eliamep (Athens), Europeum (Prague), FRIDE (Madrid, Brussels), IAI (Rome), Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute (Paris), SIEPS (Stockholm), SWP (Berlin).*

They confront their analyses on key strategic issues: economic interests, sustainable development, migration, the EU neighbourhood and security.

After a series of policy papers, the **final report** will be published in March 2013 under the direction of Elvire Fabry, Senior Research Fellow at *Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute*.

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SYNTHESES OF THE “THINK GLOBAL – ACT EUROPEAN” SEMINARS:

Economic interests, Strategic resources, Migrations and CSDP (*available soon*)

EUROPEAN INFLUENCE: THE NEED FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT

Elvire Fabry, *Synthesis, Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute, October 2012*

VISAS AND SCHENGEN CODE: TOWARDS A WIN-WIN COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND ITS NEIGHBOURS?

Yves Bertoncini and Valentin Kreiling, *Synthesis, Notre Europe, July 2012*

TRADE POLICY IN THE EU'S NEIGHBOURHOOD. WAYS FORWARD FOR THE DEEP AND COMPREHENSIVE FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Iana Dreyer, *Study No. 90, Notre Europe, May 2012*

AFTER THE REVOLUTION: THE EU AND THE ARAB TRANSITION

Timo Behr, *Policy Paper No. 54, Notre Europe, April 2012*

THE EU, ITS NEIGHBOURS AND ITS BORDERS

Sami Andoura and Yves Bertoncini, *Tribune, Notre Europe, March 2012*

THINK GLOBAL – ACT EUROPEAN REPORTS

First edition (2008), second edition (2010), third edition (2011), fourth edition (*to be published in March 2013*)

Elvire Fabry (dir.), *Notre Europe*

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