

# EU response to the Arab Spring

## Overview

**The EU was quick to respond to the events of the Arab Spring.** Since the beginning of 2011 a number of actions have been taken.

- **The European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection** was first to react in February 2011 and later on in March and in April 2011. The total amount allocated to date is **EUR 80.5 million** which covers a EUR 40 million emergency decision; EUR 20 million Humanitarian Implementation Plan (i.e. programmed funding); EUR 10 million for the reintegration of Chadians from Libya; EUR 10.5 million from the Civil Protection budget line for evacuation of third country nationals.
- A permanent dialogue was maintained – and is ongoing - throughout the events, with discussion in a number of international fora – including the G8 – as well as in the European institutions.

### Visits

- The EU's commitment to support **Tunisia** was signalled by a **series of high-level visits**, the first by the **EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Commission Vice-President Catherine Ashton** on 14 February 2011, a few short weeks after the revolution. Mrs Ashton was followed by **Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle** and **Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström**, and then, in April, by the **President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso**.
- Mrs Ashton opened an EU office in Benghazi in **Libya** on 17 May 2011.
- A visit from President Barroso to **Egypt** took place in July 2011.

### Joint Communications

- Two **Joint Communications of the European Commission and of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy** were published with a view to carving out an EU wide approach to the changing environment in the countries of North Africa and the Middle East based on mutual accountability and a shared commitment to respecting universal values, international human rights standards, democracy and the rule of law.
- First **Joint Communication entitled "[A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean](#)"** was published on **8 March 2011** and the second **Joint Communication entitled "[A new response to a changing Neighbourhood](#)"** was published on **25 May 2011**.

## **Recent decisions: September 2011**

### [EU response to the Arab Spring: new package of support for North Africa and Middle East](#)

**Support for Partnership, Reforms and Inclusive Growth (SPRING):** On 26 September 2011 the European Commission adopted the [Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth \(SPRING\) programme](#). This flagship initiative will provide support to the Southern Neighbourhood countries in the spheres of democratic transformation, institution building and economic growth. SPRING will be tailored to the individual needs of each country. The total value of the initiative is EUR 350 million to cover the years 2011 and 2012.

[A Special Measure designed to support poorer areas of Tunisia](#) worth EUR 20 million in the aftermath of the events of the Arab Spring, was adopted on 26 September 2011 to foster employment and job creation in the country and to improve living conditions for inhabitants of urban areas in the most impoverished regions, as well as to improve access to microfinance.

**Erasmus Mundus programme** ([Erasmus Mundus](#) and [Erasmus Mundus II](#)) was adopted with an overall budget of EUR 66 million. This will go towards achieving better understanding and mutual enrichment between the EU and neighbouring countries by creating possibilities for student and academic staff mobility (for example, the opportunity to study in universities in EU Member States) and exchange of knowledge and skills.

[Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility](#) was designed to strengthen the capacity of civil society to promote reform and increase public accountability in their countries. With a total budget of EUR 22 million, the programme will also support regional and country projects led by non-state actors. Similar amounts are envisaged for 2012 and 2013.

The European Commission published a [Communication entitled "Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change"](#) on 13 October 2011. This will govern the delivery of development aid from now on and will focus, inter alia, on good governance, human rights democracy and rule of law and thus reflects the response to the events of the Arab Spring.

**Web Links:**

Joint Communication A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the SouthernMediterranean

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/documents/communication\\_conjointe\\_mars\\_2011\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/documents/communication_conjointe_mars_2011_en.pdf)

Joint Communication A new response to a changing Neighbourhood

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/documents/communication\\_conjointe\\_mai\\_2011\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/documents/communication_conjointe_mai_2011_en.pdf)

European Neighbourhood Policy

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/index_en.htm)

ENPI Info Centre

<http://www.enpi-info.eu>

European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection

[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm)

European External Action Service

[http://eeas.europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/index_en.htm)

**Press Releases:**

EU response to the Arab Spring: new package of support for North Africa and Middle East

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/1083&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

First meeting of EU/Tunisia Task Force to support transition to democracy and economic recovery

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/1087&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Main entry website of the European Commission for Press Releases

<http://europa.eu/rapid/showInformation.do?pageName=recentPressReleases&guiLanguage=en>



**EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION**