

NON – PAPER

EXPANDING ON THE PROPOSALS CONTAINED IN THE COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL ON “STRENGTHENING THE ENP” – COM (2006) 726 FINAL OF 4 DECEMBER 2006

STRENGTHENING THE CIVIL SOCIETY DIMENSION OF THE ENP

Summary

- *The civil society dimension is vital for the overall success of the ENP*
- *Member States and the Commission need to work together to strengthen the involvement of civil society in the ENP*
- *Community support to civil society is undergoing a step change*
- *Information to the public of the EU and the ENP partners is a key component of the civil society dimension*

The ENP requires **broad and sustained engagement** by the EU and the Partner Countries to fulfil its promise. Ownership by governments is essential but not sufficient: involvement of civil society, organisations and individuals - **a civil society dimension** - is vital for the overall success of the ENP. The civil society dimension complements and depends on the other aspects of the ENP. Contacts and mobility reinforce the capacity of the partner countries to benefit from economic integration, while progress on mutual understanding cannot be made without making it easier for ENP citizens to visit the EU.

Civil society contacts are gaining in intensity and variety through the actions by individuals, organisations, businesses and local and regional authorities. **The role of the Commission and the Member States in the civil society dimension is primarily as facilitators**, because public bodies cannot set the agenda for civil society. What the Commission and the Member States can do is to **work to strengthen the scope for civil society** to work, *inter alia* through the regular policy dialogue with the ENP partners. There are also areas which require public funding, such as student mobility and, in particular, **building civil society capacity** in the partner countries. Member States and the Commission already support an extremely wide range of activities, reflecting the varying historical, geographic and cultural background to their relations with the ENP partners. This support is being strengthened, but we also **need to work together and to share information more fully**. The wide range of activities presents practical difficulties for organisations and individuals looking for contacts, good ideas or support, as well as for donors looking for best practices and added value when creating new programmes. This non-paper discusses ways to promote the civil society dimension under three headings:

- Strengthening dialogue with civil society
- Reinforcing Community support to the civil society dimension
- Improving the public’s knowledge of the ENP and the sharing of information.

1. Strengthening dialogue with civil society

The Commission clearly cannot work directly with all of civil society in the vast region formed by the EU and the ENP partners (a total population of 766 million). **Within the EU**, the Commission is therefore intensifying its dialogue with EU-level networks representing business, trade unions, professional, environmental, development, gender, human rights, religious, cultural and other organisations, *inter alia* to gather their views of the implementation of the Action Plans. To strengthen the already strong trend, we encourage them to further intensify contacts with their peers in ENP countries. Specific assistance programmes for this purpose are not envisaged, however. Civil society contacts are more credible and sustainable when they are carried out independently. Member States could reinforce their efforts to engage national networks and actors in relations with ENP partners.

On the ENP side, there are **no ENP-wide platforms**, but many EU networks are already engaged in increasingly structured cooperation with a wide range of counterparts in the ENP partner countries. There are also several Euro-Mediterranean networks¹. However, the Commission's **dialogue with the civil society of the ENP countries** must primarily be conducted in each partner country, reflecting the bilateral focus of the ENP as well as the fact that the role and capacity of local civil society varies.

The most important dialogue is that between government and civil society in the partner countries. The Commission and the Member States promote the role and independence of civil society through their regular policy dialogue with the partner government. Support to local civil society capacity for dialogue and cooperation with the partner state government, and in particular the role of the social partners, is also important. Increasing such support is a common thread in the recently adopted programming documents for the ENPI². EU representatives should work together locally towards strengthening the role and capacity of local civil society.

The **progress of the ENP** cannot be monitored through official channels alone. Civil society can often follow the impact on daily life much more closely. This holds particularly true for such aspects as individual freedoms, the business climate, environment or public access to government information, but civil society will certainly also contribute across a wider range. Dialogue with civil society is a regular feature before certain subcommittee meetings. A good example of civil-society involvement is the input that the civil society of Lebanon provided to the negotiations on the Action Plan. **Regular stakeholder monitoring** would be useful, e.g. through stakeholder implementation conferences. Such monitoring is already starting in some countries, e.g. Ukraine. Independent research institutes, both in ENP and in EU countries, could also prepare analyses of the implementation of the ENP Action Plans.

It should be noted that **European Institutions** are already doing a lot to promote the civil society dimension of the ENP and monitor its progress. The **European Parliament** (EP) has an important outreach role in the ENP, particularly through the parliamentary delegations with ENP countries as well as the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. The meetings between parliamentarians from the EP and the ENP partners are important opportunities for lively debates on ENP.

¹ The Euro-Mediterranean Non-Governmental Platform includes thematic networks for human rights, environment, trade unions, culture, as well as EU, Arab, subregional and national networks.

² http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/documents_en.htm#5

The **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** has broad contacts with civil society, specifically the social partners, in the Neighbourhood. An EESC Contact Group aims to develop close contacts between the EESC and civil society organisations in the Eastern neighbourhood (and Russia) through study visits, seminars and conferences. The EESC has also built up a network of relations with civil society organisations in the Southern Mediterranean countries. The EESC has an important role to play in developing national Economic and Social Committees across the region. Activities include opinions and reports offering specific recommendations on the ENP, and the organisation of yearly Euro-Mediterranean Summits of Economic and Social Councils and similar institutions. The work carried out by the EESC thus not only fosters mutual understanding, but also gives a channel for following the ENP, which will increase the ownership by civil stakeholders.

The **Committee of Regions** has a specific interest in how ENP is applied at the local and regional level. In that context, Cross-Border Cooperation is of particular interest.

2. Reinforcing Community support to the Civil Society Dimension

The civil society dimension is not primarily about assistance, but high-profile, well-targeted, effective and efficient assistance is an essential tool. **Community support to the civil society dimension will increase substantially in 2007-2010.** It is important to reinforce the policy-driven nature of Community ENP assistance and to focus on areas of Community comparative advantage and added value. The programmes that are most relevant for the Civil society dimension are presented briefly below:

Civil Society capacity building

The European Community will give increasing support to **a wide range of capacity-building activities** aimed at strengthening civil society in the partner countries, frequently through partnerships with EU civil society. In 2007-2010 our assistance will aim to strengthen:

- civil society organisations and other actors at national and regional level aiming at democratisation, respect for human rights, freedom of expression, women's rights, education, environment, research etc;
- the capacity of civil society to interact with the partner state government. Attention is also paid to increasing the capacity of the partner governments to open themselves up to dialogue with and participation by citizens and civil society, including by modernising the legal and administrative framework;
- the dialogue between the social partners, and between public, private and civil society stakeholders generally;
- the capacity of civil society to follow the implementation of the ENP action Plans;
- regional and subregional civil society cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

Education and training

Education **cooperation** and **student and teacher mobility** is a key, expanding part of the civil society dimension³, with in particular a strong focus on student mobility.

³ EU support to the education systems of the partner countries mainly takes the form of policy dialogue with and assistance to *partner governments*, the key systemic actors, and is thus not covered by this non-paper.

Tempus

Tempus – reform of higher education through cooperation between universities in the EU and in the ENP partners - will in 2007-2010 have a reinforced emphasis on regional cooperation between ENP countries, on the role of Partner Country institutions, and on long-term structural impact.

Erasmus Mundus

Erasmus Mundus, which provides scholarships for post-graduate studies in the EU financed from internal Community funds, has attracted a lot of successful applicants from ENP countries. To respond to the lack of a broader scholarship programme for the ENP region, the **External Cooperation Window** of Erasmus Mundus has just been launched. Well over 1500 students from the ENP countries will start studies in the EU during the academic year of 2007/8 thanks to this new programme. The programme includes undergraduate, post-graduate and doctoral students as well as university teachers.⁴ Preparation of a new, post-2008 comprehensive Erasmus Mundus programme is under way.

Scholarships to the College of Europe

A pilot project, an initiative of the European Parliament, for 35 students for 2007/8 at the College of Europe, has just been launched.

Life-long Learning

The new internal Community programme for education, Life-long Learning, focuses on exchanges for students and teachers at all levels of education, as well as on policy development, exchange and learning. Up to 1% of the overall budget can be used for participation of third countries' organisations and institutions in partnership, project and network activities under the programme. The initiative would thus have to come from the EU partner. The modalities of such participation are currently being explored.

Jean Monnet Action

This activity is a part of the comprehensive Lifelong Learning programme. It promotes learning about the EU by supporting teaching, research and debate, *inter alia* through Jean Monnet Modules, Chairs and Centres of Excellence. Dissemination of information is carried out to increase the number of Jean Monnet activities in the region.

Training young professionals

Support to mobility could be extended to young professionals. **“Training the regulators of tomorrow”** could become an essential tool in internal market reform and economic integration. Such a programme would e.g. offer internships for young professionals with some years' experience in two-three Member States and in

⁴ Because of the global demand for such a programme, the External Cooperation Window will be open also for students from other regions, for which allocations from the appropriate geographic programme has been made.

Commission services and agencies relevant to the issue at hand. The Commission would like to hear the Member States' interest in joining such a scheme. Young people coming from ENP can already participate in the Traineeship programme of the Commission.

Research

Science and technology cooperation must be deepened so as to create a **borderless European Research area** which would underpin and benefit from other elements of the ENP. This should entail progressively associating the partner countries not only to the EU research framework programme, but also to the other dimensions of the European Research Area, such as the coordination of research programmes and infrastructure, enforcement of knowledge-sharing principles and seamless mobility of researchers. In this context, the results of the Euromed Ministerial Conference on Education and Research (18 June 2006) will be taken into account.

Cooperation among research institutions and think-tanks

Cooperation between research institutes dealing with policy and security issues helps building confidence with partner countries. In 1996, Euro-Mediterranean countries formed **EuroMeSCO**, a network of forty-eight member-institutes, twenty-four observer institutes and two international associate members of the thirty five member-countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The network provides a forum for debate of essential matters that might otherwise prove to be sensitive issues for governments. It also seeks to establish a common vocabulary for policy and security issues in the region and thus contribute to the policy process whilst, at the same time, providing a mechanism by which the views of civil society within the Mediterranean can be presented to decision-makers. In the economic area, **Femise** fulfils a similar role.

Youth

Youth exchanges are an important part of the work **on promoting mutual understanding**. A Youth platform exists for the Euromed region. Because of the relative lack of resources of young people, this is one area in which the need for assistance is widely recognised. The *Youth in Action* programme, launched in 2007, includes increased opportunities for cooperation with neighbourhood countries within the *Youth in the World* action. Organisations from the EU and the ENP countries will cooperate through exchanges and training and network projects. The initiative must, however, come from the EU partner. ENP organisations can also participate in other actions, in particular the *European Voluntary Service*, on similar conditions. The *Euromed Youth programme*, the management of which is now decentralised to the partner countries, provides support to actions initiated by the Euromed Partner countries. A third Euromed Youth Programme will be launched. A similar programme may be created for the Eastern neighbours.

CBC

Cross-border cooperation involves local actors such as civil society, local and regional authorities in cooperation, often with an important civil society dimension. The 15 ENPI CBC programmes, established for the period 2007-2013 along the EU's external borders in the east and the south, will fund cooperation projects for socio-economic development, to meet jointly

defined common challenges, for border issues as well as people-to people cooperation. In these programmes, the involvement of locally-based actors is important to contribute to the establishment of good neighbourly relations. **Cross-border cooperation is a major priority under ENPI, addressed in the ENPI regulation with special implementation modalities and with a considerably expanded budget.** The priorities of the CBC programmes are established by local and regional actors on both sides of the borders in the designated areas, to create bottom-up initiatives, important human exchanges and lasting contacts.

Cooperation between local and regional authorities

EU-wide networks and national associations as well as individual regions, cities and communes are actively involved in cooperation with local and regional government in the partner countries. In the ENPI bilateral programmes, much increased attention is given to strengthening the local government level, reflecting the APs which contain commitments to strengthen local and regional governments. Several Member States also support capacity building for local government. UNDP is working to bring a greater degree of coherence and local ownership to this field. The new EC Interregional Programme includes **capacity building for local and regional authorities** in democratic governance and sustainable development.

Culture

Dialogue between writers, thinkers, painters, artists as well as cultural organisations is an essential part of the ENP. So is the dialogue between civilisations and faiths. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is a key forum for inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue: the Anna Lindh Foundation is an important component, but there are several others. The question of ENP-wide or – for example – Black Sea-based action merits discussion.

The Community programme Culture (2007-2013) gives opportunities for cooperation with third countries, which may be possible to extend to the ENP partners, in particular as regards special actions under this programme. In internal EU events, such as the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, ENP aspects should be reflected, where appropriate.

3. Improving the public's knowledge of the ENP and the exchange of information

Public **knowledge of the ENP** is still being built up, both in the EU and in the ENP partners. A well-structured Community information programme is therefore an essential component of the civil society dimension. Equally, the Member States should continue to include ENP in their information activities, both externally and internally.

ENP is one of the priorities of the Commission's "EU in the world" information and communication strategy. The objective, as regards ENP, is to increase the **visibility and understanding** of the EU in the ENP region. The objective is also to increase understanding within the EU of the EU's aims and achievements with regard to the neighbours. Common messages for both audiences have been developed.

The Commission's ENP website (http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm) contains all **key documents** relating to the ENP. Commission Delegation websites give information, in local languages, and the Delegations run other information activities. Since 2004, journalists

from ENP as well as from EU countries have participated in training or information sessions. It would be useful to obtain information about similar training or support schemes run by Member States. ENP is one of the top foreign policy subjects requested by EC-organised visitors groups in Brussels. The ENP will be the subject of a major conference to be held in Brussels in September, 2007, involving governments, civil society, business, press and other stakeholders and networks from EU and ENP partners.

Information about the ENP from independent organisations is likely to have more impact than information from the Commission or Member States. We should therefore encourage such information activities in both the EU and the ENP partner countries, while trying to ensure, through our own information efforts as well as our dialogue with civil society, that such information is accurate.

The EC Delegation and the Member States Embassies need to coordinate their **ENP information in the partner countries**. There is no need to lay down guidelines centrally, but best practices should be exchanged. Embassies and delegations in the ENP countries could be asked to report on how this information is managed today.

Member States and the Commission should share information about existing and new activities, lessons learnt etc. As a first step, **an internal EU network for exchange of information** related to the ENP civil society dimension should be set up. This could lead to a joint web site for public information, a “virtual information board”, linking national web sites. There is also a clear need to **simplify the search processes** for individuals looking for information about national as well as Community programmes for scholarships, youth exchanges, internships etc. The Commission is willing to set up a web site for this purpose, a one-stop shop.