



**European Committee
of the Regions**

CIVEX-VII/010

7th commission meeting, 30 March 2021

WORKING DOCUMENT

**Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External
Affairs**

**Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood
A new Agenda for the Mediterranean**

Rapporteur: **Vincenzo BIANCO (IT/PES)**

This document will be discussed at the meeting of the **Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs** to be held from **11 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. on 30 March 2021**.

Reference documents

Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean

JOIN(2021) 2 final; SWD(2021) 23 final

Joint Staff Working Document on Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood and the Investment Plan accompanying the Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean

JOIN(2021) 2 final; SWD(2021) 23 final

Introduction

For more than 25 years, the European Union has demonstrated its interest in nurturing relations with its southern neighbours bordering on the Mediterranean. Some key milestones are as follows:

- in November 1995, the then European Community signed the Barcelona Declaration with 12 Southern Mediterranean countries¹ promoting the emergence of a common area of peace and stability;
- in 2004, as a result of the expansion of its borders to the east, the European Union launched the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which was subsequently updated in 2015;
- 2008 marked the beginning of the Union for the Mediterranean, an intergovernmental organisation comprising the 27 European Member States and 15 countries from North Africa, the Middle East and South-East Europe (plus Libya as an observer country);
- in September 2020, the European Commission proposed a new Pact on Migration and Asylum, which covers the different elements needed for a comprehensive European approach to migration, sets out faster procedures for the asylum and migration system and sets in balance the principles of fair sharing of responsibility and solidarity;
- on 9 February 2021, the European Commission and the High Representative endorsed a Joint Communication for an ambitious and renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood. The new Agenda for the Mediterranean focuses on: human development, good governance and the rule of law; resilience, prosperity and the digital transition; peace and security; migration and mobility; and the green transition (climate resilience, energy and the environment).

Key messages

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. points out that, historically and culturally, the Mediterranean Sea has, over the centuries, been a natural unifying force rather than a dividing line for peoples from different continents;
2. welcomes the Commission's initiative to renew its partnership with the EU's Southern Neighbourhood in the interests of peace, stability and prosperity in the region; supports the prospect of post-COVID recovery outlined by the Commission in the Joint Communication as a rare opportunity to focus the Mediterranean agenda on people;
3. stresses the need to strengthen the instruments in place to protect human rights, as what the EU has actually done in this regard is still not sufficient;
4. also proposes that the process of proclaiming a Mediterranean Charter of Human Rights open to signature by the members of the partnership be set in motion, or, alternatively, proposes that the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union be applied extraterritorially to nationals of non-EU countries which are members of the partnership. This would be the basis for substantial assimilation to EU Member States precisely through partnership agreements such as those in question. In this regard, points out that some of the countries which were originally signatories to the Barcelona Declaration are now EU Member States (Cyprus and Malta);

¹ Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and the Palestinian Authority.

5. proposes that democracy laboratories be set up in the capitals of the non-EU Member States of the partnership, providing forums for dialogue and exchange between representatives of European democracies and representatives of civil society from the non-EU partner countries;
6. considers peace and security to be prerequisites for achieving all the other objectives set out in the Agenda and considers it necessary to address the factors that counteract stabilisation: poverty, inequality, corruption, weak economic and social development and lack of opportunities, in particular for young people;
7. advocates synergy between the instruments provided for in the United Nations Charter and the EU Strategy for the Security Union, to bring about a secure environment sufficient for the needs of the future to tackle the developing threats (protection from terrorism and organised crime and creation of a strong security ecosystem);
8. considers that the measures taken by the EU with regard to migration, which is another item on the Agenda for the Mediterranean, are not yet sufficient, as without the specific joint instruments envisaged in this context the burden falls primarily on local authorities in the European countries on the front line in managing the migrant emergency;
9. also considers it essential for the EU to raise internal public awareness on issues such as solidarity, tolerance, and respect for legality and dialogue, in order to improve the way migrants are perceived in social terms;
10. calls on the European institutions to complement the European Green Deal as soon as possible with initiatives aimed at rediscovering and protecting the Mediterranean Sea, a marine area very prone to sea warming, whose potential for economic development is enormous, and recalls that in 2016 the blue economy accounted for 1.3% of EU GDP; also considers that depollution and responsible use of the Mediterranean Sea represent a further opportunity for development²;
11. hopes that the support for the European Green Deal will bring particular benefits to agriculture, a sector which is essential for the economies of the majority of the non-EU members of the partnership, with those countries applying the strict standards laid down in European legislation.

² See the Report on the *Blue economy for local and regional authorities in the Mediterranean*, adopted by the ARLEM plenary session on 23 January 2020.

Questions to be discussed with CIVEX members

- What is your view on establishing Mediterranean citizenship?
- Do you consider it is feasible to proclaim a Mediterranean Charter of Human Rights? Or, alternatively, to apply the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights extraterritorially?
- Do you think it would be useful to launch a discussion between the parties with a view to recognising the extraterritorial application of the European arrest warrant within the partner countries?
- Does your region/city/country border on the Mediterranean? Does your local/regional authority have exchanges or cooperation agreements with countries in the Southern Neighbourhood? What kind (economic, cultural, other)?
- Could you describe the opportunities and challenges common to the countries on the three sides of the Mediterranean?
- Is your region/city/country experiencing a "brain gain" of skilled workers from the Southern Neighbourhood?
- Do you consider greater cooperation in the fields of youth, education (Erasmus+), skills and culture to be feasible?
- Southern Neighbourhood and immigration in your region/city/country: what mechanisms are in place for accommodating and integrating migrants?

I. PROCEDURE

Title	Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean (Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Joint Staff Working Document on Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood and the Investment Plan accompanying the Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean) JOIN(2021) 2 final – SWD(2021) 23 final
References	JOIN(2021) 2 final – SWD(2021) 23 final
Legal basis	Own-initiative opinion (Article 307(1) TFEU, Rule 41(b)(i) of the Rules of Procedure)
Procedural basis	Mandatory referral
Date of Commission letter	9 February 2021
Date of President's decision	1 March 2021
Commission responsible	Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs
Rapporteur	Vincenzo BIANCO (IT/PES)
Analysis	5 March 2021
Discussed in commission	30 March 2021
Date adopted by commission	11 May 2021
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	-
Date adopted in plenary	30 June - 2 July 2021
Previous Committee opinions	Opinion on <i>Neighbourhood and the World</i> , rapporteur: Hans Janssen (NL/EPP), COR-2018-04008-00-00-AC-TRA Opinion on the <i>Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy</i> , rapporteur Anne Quart (DE/PES), COR-2016-00982-00-00-AC-TRA Opinion of 9 July 2015 on the <i>New European Neighbourhood Policy</i> , rapporteur: Nikolaos Chiotakis (EL/EPP), CdR 02671/2015 Opinion of 3 December 2014 on <i>Neighbourhood at the Crossroads: Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2013</i> , rapporteur: Olgierd Geblewicz (PL/EPP), CdR 04459/2014 Opinion on <i>Global Europe: a new approach to financing EU external action</i> , rapporteur: Lotta Håkansson Harju

	<p>(SE/PES), CDR732-2012_AC</p> <p>Opinion of 14 December 2011 on <i>European Neighbourhood Policy Review</i>, rapporteur: Jacek Protas (PL/EPP), CdR 198/2011</p> <p>Opinion of 9 October 2008 on <i>A strong European Neighbourhood Policy</i>, rapporteur: Sharon Taylor (UK/PES), CdR 134/2008</p>
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	N/A
