



Believe in *People*

EPP Group **Position Paper**

on the **Mediterranean**



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Stability in the Mediterranean region means stability for Europe

The EU Global Strategy and the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy offer a unique opportunity to rethink the EU's policy on the Mediterranean. The EPP Group has pleaded for a limited number of priorities to be included in the Strategy. The Mediterranean region should be one of its main priorities, with a focus on conflict prevention and on tackling the root causes of fragility in the Southern neighbourhood.

Our group has highlighted the need to consider our Mediterranean neighbours as partners in differentiated policy and security dialogues. Security considerations should be put back into the EU's renewed Strategy on the Mediterranean in a more effective and coherent manner. Besides, greater attention should be paid to achieving increased political and economic integration between our Southern partners.

While the stabilisation of the region from the security point of view is a first priority for Europe, harnessing the economic and human potential of the Mediterranean region is also key to enabling lasting peace and prosperity, benefiting both Europeans and their neighbours. It is in our mutual interest to work for a dynamic and prosperous Mediterranean region, enjoying peace and security and sustainable growth.

To this end, specific initiatives and measures are necessary to build a genuine bridge linking the EU, its neighbours and its neighbours' neighbours, including also with the Arab League and other regional and international organisations. We consider it urgent to step up EU efforts for a strategic plan and partnership with the Mediterranean region in order to solve the current crises and deliver on long-term shared interests.



1. EU migration and asylum policy must deliver in the Mediterranean region

The recent refugee and migrant crisis has shaken the EU. Existing common rules are not functioning properly and are not able to deal with the extraordinary circumstances. Now it's clear that our continent has to deal with the problem together, as a whole.

Besides better cooperation and solidarity between EU Member States it is crucial to take full advantage of the external dimension of EU migration and mobility policy. Euro-Mediterranean policy must address these challenges. The EPP Group insists on enforcing the zero-tolerance policy for migrant smugglers and facilitators, including through operations such as EUNAVFOR MED, on improving border control in origin and transit countries and on the conclusion and enforcement of readmission agreements between the EU

and Mediterranean countries, as well as between the MENA countries and African countries.

We support the work of FRONTEX and the new European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) Agency, encouraging close collaboration between the EBCG and Member States' national coast guard authorities, as well as with third-country national coast guard authorities, which also includes extraordinary assistance to the Libyan authorities.

We need to establish a common EU list of safe countries of origin. Ensuring better communication with partner countries and clear information on European visa policies to make irregular migration less attractive is also crucial.

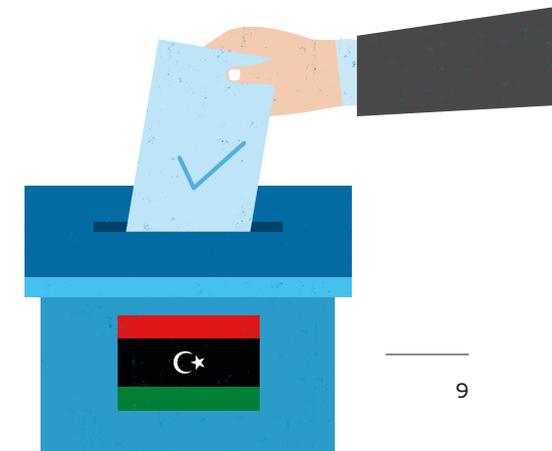


2. **State-building** and **democratic consolidation**

We consider that measures to strengthen democracy and support free and democratic elections must continue to be a top priority. The EU must fully use the potential of its development and democracy-supporting policy instruments, as well as crisis management capabilities, to help emerging democracies. It is essential to establish the rule of law and to promote institution-based trust-building processes.

The EU must do its utmost to support the internationally-recognised government in Libya, as the instability from this unresolved conflict and the subsequent spill-over across the region poses a significant threat to the Union as a whole. Securing unanimous backing for Libya's Government of National Accord within Libya is one of our key priorities for the region, as a stable Libya and a Libyan people in control of their own territory and livelihoods will steady the region.

EU Institutions should cooperate to strengthen cooperation with Mediterranean partners, to encourage democratisation and to ensure respect for democracy, the rule-of-law and human rights; to encourage the participation of women in elections as candidates and voters, in peace mediation efforts and trade negotiations; to encourage the participation of young people in political life and especially their involvement in local elections; to respect the freedom of the media and to encourage independent and investigative journalism; to step up cooperation between decentralised structures (municipal, district and regional) on either side of the Mediterranean, to develop specific projects.





3. Terrorism and radicalisation

Religious radicalisation and the expansion of terrorist groups constitute a real danger on all shores of the Mediterranean. The sudden and rapid rise of Islamic State in Libya is of the utmost concern and the EU and its Member States will focus their efforts on helping to defeat the terrorist group in the region. It is necessary to defeat not only their ground forces but also their ideology.

The production and dissemination of material to counteract this narrative is therefore necessary, focusing in particular on young people, in an attempt to offer them future prospects so as to discourage their recruitment by terrorist groups. In order to do this the Union must aid its neighbours to build a better future for their youth, one they can believe in, that is enriched through employment and stability.

EU and our national authorities must fully cooperate in order to tackle these crucial issues. The EPP Group underlines in particular the fight against illegal firearms trafficking and other trafficking which enables the financing of terrorist groups.

We need to prevent radicalisation through the Internet and social media, in particular among youth, and to assist families of youth who are at risk of radicalisation. We should exchange best practices on the prevention of radicalisation and on de-radicalisation programmes with our Southern Mediterranean partners and on intelligence-sharing mechanisms between the EU Member States and Mediterranean partners, so as to fight terrorist networks efficiently.

De-radicalisation programmes preventing the spreading of propaganda and hate speech should be implemented. We also need engagement with opinion leaders, including religious leaders, in information campaigns against terrorism and in promoting effective counter narratives that highlight our shared heritage, values and Mediterranean character to combat the fear, mistrust and destruction that comes with radicalisation.



4. Pursuing the resolution of political conflicts, investing in conflict prevention, supporting stable partners in the region

We call on the European Union, in particular on the EEAS and the HR/VP, to play a more active diplomatic role in peace negotiations and conflict resolution in the Middle East, including in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, so as to play a balancing role between regional and global players.

Indeed, the Middle East Peace Process must continue to be at the top of our priorities for the region, in the sense that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would have immediate positive consequences on other regional conflicts. A negotiated two-state solution remains the only realistic way of ending the conflict to the benefit of both Israelis and Palestinians. The settlements

policy and the recent unprecedented trend of demolitions, including of EU and Member State funded projects, are seriously eroding the stability of the region as well as the prospect of any peace initiative.

We must make it clear that political efforts have to be stepped up, given that European citizens and taxpayers cannot be expected to finance reconstruction indefinitely.

The EU Strategy for the Mediterranean must also take into account the link with the rest of the African continent and with the Arab Peninsula, aiming at anticipating risks but also at harnessing benefits over the long term.



5. Developing **free trade** agreements and **economic opportunities** in the Mediterranean

Solidarity is also essential for stabilisation and economic growth in the region. We must support all efforts to achieve closer economic integration between the southern Mediterranean countries, on the one hand, and between the countries on either side of the Mediterranean on the other hand. We must understand that the development of economic opportunities in the Mediterranean will have a positive ripple effect on all other matters linking both regions together.

The EPP Group emphasises:

- > monitoring free trade negotiations to strengthen economic ties between these countries and encouraging their rapid progress on the basis of common interests, in particular through Joint Parliamentary Committees and by including all economic actors concerned.
- > channelling EU initiatives in the Mediterranean towards important strategic projects for the economic growth of the

region, such as energy, water, telecommunications and transport infrastructure.

- > supporting the economic inclusion of SMEs in its action in the Mediterranean area by facilitating their internationalisation efforts, as they are the motors of economic growth in the region.
- > encouraging and strengthening business initiatives, particularly amongst young people and women, including measures to ensure access to finance for start-up companies.
- > further encouraging networking between companies through the creation of multi-lateral chambers of commerce.
- > understanding that economic opportunities are highly dependent on ensuring security and safety around the Mediterranean, especially in the tourism sector.
- > stepping up the security of strategic infrastructure, including oil refineries and trade routes (in connection with the problem of terrorist funding).



6. Towards a **new European Neighbourhood Policy** and **reinforcing the Union** for the **Mediterranean**

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is currently under revision. To make full use of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) - the intergovernmental initiative for the Mediterranean which was born under the 'Barcelona Process' and included the Adriatic countries in Mediterranean cooperation - the future neighbourhood policy must develop a strong strategic programme with the aim of:

- > supporting partners who undertake reforms promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights.
- > contributing to their inclusive economic development and to promoting a partnership with civil society alongside relations with governments.

> supporting economic and social development, the creation of growth and jobs, the boosting of trade and enhanced cooperation in other sectors.

This means that the ENP has to do much more to achieve the objective set in 2010 under the Marseille Declaration - to 'contribute to stability and peace in the whole Euro-Mediterranean region'.

Strategic cooperation between the ENP and the UfM, which includes a parliamentary dimension through the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM, is an obligation if our continent wants to strengthen its role in the Mediterranean region and tackle all its crucial problems.



7. Energy cooperation: for the **security** and **prosperity** of the Mediterranean region

The EPP Group also acknowledges the strategic dimension of energy cooperation in the Mediterranean region and underlines the opportunity provided by the review of the ENP to strengthen energy links by:

- > organising energy cooperation through strategic dialogue with Mediterranean partners.

- > anticipating the impact of political crises on the energy sector and vice-versa.

- > ensuring cooperation in the field of science and R&D on energy diversification, storage and transport (particularly with regard to solar energy).





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