

## MAJALAT Thematic Workshop on Economic Policies and Social Dialogue in the Southern Neighborhood /Beirut 6-7 April 2019

### Concept Note

#### Background

The need for a better involvement of the civil society in the EU policy dialogue, particularly those in regard to the European Neighborhood Policy, came up in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings and the changing priorities of the region. The EU willingness to take into account the demands of the region has been transposed in various ways whether internally or externally. Into this framework fit for example the ‘EU Global Strategy’<sup>1</sup> which called for a stronger engagement with the civil society in partner countries of the EU, the communication “The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in external relations”<sup>2</sup>, the CSO roadmaps created with the EU delegations of countries of the region, the IISG (Intern-Institutional Steering Group), and the ENP review of 2015. Although the EU reviewed the partnership framework in 2015 and launched a related consultative process including the civil society, the shift in paradigm towards a security- based approach and the focus on promoting societies’ resilience and stability instead of development is considered a regressive measure towards the achievement of the region’s prosperity and peace. In addition, the EU has engaged in a structured dialogue with the civil society, including the Neighborhood South aiming to enhance the cooperation with the civil society in the policy-making process in a consultative manner. As this process is a succession of many previous dialogues launched in 2014, it has defined main priorities to discuss: **strengthening resilience and building stability** including issues such as security sector reform, conflict prevention and preventing/countering violent extremism; **migration and mobility** including issues legal migration and mobility, humanitarian and protection imperatives on migrations and building tools and mechanisms for monitoring by the EU and the CSOs of international response; **reducing inequalities** tackling socio-economic challenges related to employment and the necessity of promotion of social

<sup>1</sup> <http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/roots-democracy-and-sustainable-development-europes-engagement-civil-society-external-relations\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/roots-democracy-and-sustainable-development-europes-engagement-civil-society-external-relations_en)



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dialogue and **good governance** tackling issues related to transparency and corruption. The engagement of the EU in participating as an actor of peace and stability and its work on constructing a political dialogue is cemented by its engagement to the Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030.

## MAJALAT

Despite all of the initiatives, CSOs still are confronted to several inherent challenges that limit their participation in the policy-making process with the EU such as the shrinking space, the mobilization of sustainable resources, the access to information etc, and prohibit them from addressing the key challenges that they face and presenting their approach into tackling the above-mentioned priorities and into achieving them. Consequently, one of the main recommendations of the last civil society dialogue in 2017 is a need for a regional hub for structured dialogue by and for the civil society while ensuring coordination with EU institutions; where a regional platform is needed to create a space for the region to set priorities for contributing to regional policy agendas, boost contributions on priority themes, strengthen partnerships, and facilitate the creation of networks to act at a regional level. Therefore, a consortium of civil society organizations working for the Southern Neighborhood (Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), EuroMed Human Rights, Arab Trade Unions (ATUC, SOLIDAR, Réseau EuroMed France (REF), Forum des Alternatives (FMAS) have created MAJALAT, a regional hub for structured dialogue. MAJALAT is an initiative aiming at creating spaces for a constructive dialogue between civil society organizations, trade unions, social movements and academics from both shores of the Mediterranean and the European Union, in order to influence the vision and policies of the region.

### Thematic Workshop on Economic Policies and Social Dialogue

The thematic workshop on economic policies and social dialogue is one of a series of five workshops that will be conducted yearly, focusing each on one priority determined by the structured dialogue. The 2019 workshop mainly aims at showcasing trade and investment policies adopted by the ENP and their socioeconomic and human rights impact on the countries of the Neighborhood South. This is MAJALAT's third event since its launching in 2018, the first year that aimed at identifying the priorities to be discussed between the Civil Society in the Southern Neighborhood region and the European Union –as it has included: the organization of the **Neighborhood South Policy Seminar (20-21 September 2018 – Amman, Jordan)** that gathered more than 100 CSOs, trade unions and social movement from the region and EU



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representatives that extensively discussed the four main themes priority themes proposed for the dialogue (economic policies and social dialogue, governance and rule of law, migration and mobility and security and counter-terrorism); based on four policy briefs prepared by experts from the region tackling each theme. The NSP set the tone for the civil society's topics of priority to be discussed in the dialogue with the EU and has presented main recommendations and entry points for joint work with the Union in order to achieve the true benefit of the region throughout this cooperation. The dialogue with the European representatives took place in the **Brussels Civil Forum (20-21 November 2018 – Brussels, Belgium)** where representatives of civil society from the region gathered and discussed the main priorities with EU representatives from various levels (political, technical...) based on the outcome of the NSP and on thematic papers including cross-cutting issues such as inclusivity in the heart of the ENP, role of the youth and human rights.

**The Thematic Workshop on Economic Policies and Social Dialogue in the Southern Neighborhood 2019 will deepen the discussion on the following topics in order to determine specific entry points and recommendations to be discussed in the NSP 2019 and the Brussels Civil Forum 2019:**

- The framework of the EU-Southern Neighborhood relation and to which extent the existing framework hinders effective regional cooperation and the achievement of sustainable development on a regional and national level.
- The status of the EU policy coherence and its impact on the Union's external policies, particularly those affecting the Neighborhood South
- The trade liberalization tools promoted by the EU towards the region since the Arab Uprisings throughout its investment plan and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements; and their impact on socioeconomic and environmental rights
- The impact of this cooperation on the enabling environment of the civil society in the countries of the Neighborhood South: critical overview of the EU CSO roadmaps to engage with the civil society
- The impact of the increasing role of the private sector in development policies of the European Union and to which extent does this sector abide to human rights standards.