ENP and the Southern Mediterranean: Youth as the Key Element for Stability in North Africa

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the global financial crisis in 2008, the European Union (EU) has not known a single quiet year: when it wasn't the debt crisis, the financial bailouts of Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain or high unemployment, it was the institutional design of the euro, the threat of *Grexit,* the renationalisation of European politics, the worrying increase of far-right forces in many European countries or more recently, the threat of *Brexit*, terrorism and the refugee crisis. Although the influx of refugees has been ongoing for some years, it took quite a while before the EU put it high on the agenda, mainly because it has been overwhelmed by the growing numbers, but also because the situation has turned into a political problem for Germany.

With all this going on inside the EU, it does not come as a surprise that the internal agenda and the solution of internal problems took precedence over the challenges arising in the Southern Mediterranean neighbouring countries and in eastern Europe. On top of that, the EU has always neglected its foreign policy, which is still constrained by the individual interests of each Member State. In the best case European foreign policy responses have been slow and their effectiveness is debatable.

Some experts see 2016 as a transit year for the EU (Morillas, 2016), since neither Germany nor France, traditionally the engines driving forward EU integration, will seek large-scale transformations, neither in terms of more integration nor the contrary, as both countries will hold general elections in 2017. However, the developments in the EU neighbourhood have put the Union on the spot. This is why in March 2015 the EU launched a consultation procedure on the future of its relations with its neighbouring countries. A reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy has to respond better to the challenges that have emerged in the region since 2011 and thoroughly update a policy originally designed to be applied in a completely different context.

In this article I will try to review the current state of affairs in terms of politics, economy and social issues in the Northern African countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt), all of which are receiving partners in the ENP (although the Libyan situation is quite specific). I will point out what the purpose of the ENP was when it was launched in 2004 as a follow-up of the Barcelona process, what has been achieved and where and why it has failed, after which I will summarise the lessons learnt and outline where the ENP is headed now. Finally I will raise some questions to stimulate the debate about how the EU can stabilise the region in search of its own interests but, at the same time, support the Southern Mediterranean countries in achieving *their* goals, especially those which concern their youth.

The state of affairs in Northern Africa

The Arab Spring uprisings in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt have created different scenarios. The Moroccan regime dodged the bullet by introducing minor constitutional reforms, holding a general election and tolerating a government led by the

Islamist Justice and Development Party. The Moroccan monarchy managed to steer the protests and mitigate their impact, and soon everything continued as if nothing had happened. In Algiers, the rather violent clashes did not lead to anything else than the lifting of the state of emergency, although instability can be expected as soon as the succession of Bouteflika will become reality. In Libya, the struggle led to a civil war; Gaddafi was overthrown and assassinated and Libya became a failed state regardless of the efforts of the United Nations to support a unity government and to stabilise the country. Only in Tunisia, where the uprisings started, the situation has evolved favourably. Despite the ups and downs during the transition period (the mistrust against the Islamist party Ennahda and its draft constitution, the assassination of members of the political Left), the Tunisian 'quartet', which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015, made sure that the revolution stayed on the right track. By the end of 2014, parliamentary and presidential elections were held and it seems as if Tunisia has successfully managed a transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic system, even though terrorist bombings have aimed at destabilising the country. Egypt, on the other hand, has gone the opposite way. Egyptians managed to overthrow Mubarak and hold a democratic election. It brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power which, unlike Ennahda in Tunisia, did not leave much room for inclusiveness in the transitioning phase of the revolution. In July 2013, the military organised a coup d'état supported largely by civil society. They ousted President Morsi and established a regime similar to that of the pre-2011 era. Led by Marshal al-Sisi, the new rulers quickly crushed all hopes for a regime change. Yet whatever may have happened later, 2011 definitely marked a turning point in the Mediterranean and in Northern Africa.

The economic situation in the region has not changed much since then and the structural handicaps which existed before the 2011 revolutions persist today. The two main issues all North African countries face are population growth and youth unemployment. North Africa today has a total population of more than 180 Million. Out of this number, according to World Bank data (2014) young people between 15 to 24 years represent 17,42% of the Moroccan population; 16,64% of Algeria's; 15,53% of Tunisia's; 17,77% of Libya's and 17,64% of Egypt's, while the population group under 14 represents 26,4% of the total Moroccan population; 28,8% of Algeria's; 23% of Tunisia's; 26,5% of Libya's and 31,9% of Egypt's. Bearing in mind that these countries have an annual population growth between 1 and 2% (Egypt being the extreme case, with an annual increase of 2 million people per year), meeting the demands of this sector of population is a top priority for the governments. In the current situation, not even higher education graduates are ensured of employment: the unemployment rate of graduates in Morocco stood at 18,5% (2012), in Algeria 23,1% (2011); in Tunisia 30,9% (2011); there is no data available for Libya; and Egypt struggles with 31,1% (2013). By 2014, rates peaked at 20,2% in Morocco; 20% in Algeria; 31,8% in Tunisia; 48,9% in Libya; and 41,7% in Egypt. As there is no short-term progress in sight, this could be a destabilising factor, for example, for the new political situation in Tunisia.

Nonetheless, these figures should be placed into the context of GDP growth in all countries except for Libya. In Morocco and Algeria, where the Arab Spring revolutions had a lesser effect, GDP increased by 2,4% and 3,8% respectively in 2014, and did not shrink during the uprisings. In Tunisia and Egypt, GDP increased by 2,7% and 2,2% respectively but here the uprisings did have an impact: in Tunisia, GDP decreased by 1,9% in 2011 and while Egypt experienced a rise of 1,8%, it is still far from its prior

5,1%. Libya's GDP has suffered the impact of the Arab Spring most. From a 5% growth in 2010 to a decline of 62,1% in 2011 and a 24% decrease in 2014. Similar patterns can be observed in foreign direct investment: investment levels are steady in Morocco, Tunisia and Algiers. It is also significant that in Egypt, FDI has increased directly after the military coup of 2013; as for Libya, FDI decreases. Regardless of the above, neither FDI nor an increased GDP have mitigated the structural inequality issues which are on the one hand a key factor for understanding the outburst of the revolts and on the other hand, according to the revised ENP, a challenge to tackle.

The various EU initiatives aimed at the Northern African countries have not always been very effective, and often they have solely served the interests of states on the northern shore of the Mediterranean.

Policies for the neighbours? From Barcelona Process to ENP
In November 1995 in Barcelona, the EU Member States and twelve Mediterranean partners signed a joint declaration which aimed at creating a Mediterranean region of peace, shared prosperity and sociocultural cooperation. These three chapters of cooperation: political dialogue, economic relations including free trade, and an innovative third chapter on human, social and cultural relations, did not develop to the same extent. Instability and the conflict in the Middle East inhibited the Charter for Peace and Security in the Mediterranean; not all the partners were equally keen to support a chapter promoting free trade areas, and it was obviously problematic to meet the Joint Declaration's expectations through cultural exchange only.

As the Barcelona Process turned out to be little effective, it was replaced by the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003. At first, the ENP was launched as a substitute for the BP aimed at updating prior bilateral and multilateral Action Plans, rather than as an alternative. In fact, the Commission's Strategy Paper specified that the ENP would be implemented through the Barcelona Process and the Association Agreements signed with each partner state. The ENP aimed at sharing 'the benefits of the EU's 2004 enlargement with neighbouring countries in strengthening stability, security and well-being for all concerned' (EU Commission, 2004), creating a 'ring of friends' and avoiding new divisions among EU Member States and third countries by giving the latter the opportunity to take part – as the then president of the European Commission Romano Prodi defined it – in 'everything but the institutions'.

The method proposed to further develop the ENP was to define a series of priorities, to include them in the joint Action Plans and to develop reforms in the areas of dialogue and political reform, trade and free movement, justice and internal affairs, energy, transport, information society, environment, research and development as well as social policies and people-to-people contact. In theory, the EU's efforts to facilitate and foster these reforms were to be in tune with the degree of common values each partner country shares with the Union (state of law, good governance, good neighbouring relations, market economy principles and sustainable development), with as additional issues counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. However, even though the idea was to treat all countries equally, which had committed themselves to the objective of ENP, the emphasise came to lie on the differences. This way one could differentiate among those countries which are willing to accept reforms for the mutual benefit of both sides and so conditionality came into play; meaning: the more EU values a country shares, the more easily and close the cooperation will be. Thus it

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was understood that the EU would progressively increase its technical and financial assistance, but only under the condition that the partner countries would undertake reforms guaranteeing state of law and the respect of human rights.

The ENP was designed according to the same methods and by the same officials who had developed the Enlargement Policy in 2004 (Kelley, 2006). Obviously there is a crucial difference between the future Member States and the ENP partner countries as the former can be motivated with the membership incentive, whereas membership is not an option for the second category regardless of how many reforms they undertake. This turned out to be a problem for those ENP countries hoping for EU accession, such as Ukraine and Georgia, and it became obvious that the EU's soft power was neither appealing nor powerful enough an incentive to encourage reforms in the ENP partner countries. In fact, the ENP was not evenly welcomed by all partnership countries; not all of them signed the Action Plans, and those who did, implemented them according to their respective national agendas (Morocco signed the Action Plan in June 2005, but its advanced status was only granted in 2008; Tunisia signed it in July 2005 and is currently negotiating a new AP; Egypt has an AP since March 2007; Algeria is negotiating an AP, whereas Libya does not even have an association agreement with the EU.

Regardless of the concept of differentiation with which it was originally designed, the ENP put both Southern Mediterranean and eastern European countries within the same framework. The EU later tried to correct this situation with the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008 (which was eventually embedded in the EU institutional framework) and the Eastern Partnership in 2009. Notwithstanding this institutional change, the uprisings which unfolded in Northern Africa by the end of 2010 took the Union by surprise and forced it to an immediate review of the ENP, which turned out insufficient (Soler and Viilup, 2011). The EU reacted to the changed situation with offering the 'three Ms' (markets, mobility, money), none of which actually materialised (Techau, 2014); the creation of a series of new instruments to strengthen democracy in the Southern Mediterranean (European Endowment for Democracy, Civil Society Facility, the SPRING Programme, etc.), and insisting on differentiation and conditionality.

To sum up, 'visa free regimes, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) offering massive access to the EU market, the possibility to participate in EU programmes' (EU Commission, 2015) and 'more for more' mean according to the EEAS that:

> *'the EU will develop stronger partnerships and offer greater incentives to countries that make more progress towards democratic reform – free and fair elections, freedom of expression, of assembly and of association, judicial independence, fight against corruption and democratic control over the armed forces.'*

The logic behind the 'more for more' was that it simultaneously meant 'less for less', which, theoretically, could translate into the withdrawal of the aid or technical and

financial assistance in case of halted reforms or any backtracking in terms of human rights and democratisation.

Why did the ENP fail in creating that 'ring of friends' proclaimed in its objectives? On the one hand and at a general level, it should be pointed out that the EU failed as an actor with a transformative intention in the region and on the other hand, at a more specific level, one has to address the particular deficiencies of the ENP.

The EU wrongly assumed that its neighbouring states would share its values, or, at least, if not originally, they eventually would if given certain incentives. However, with membership not being an option, adhering to EU principles turned out to be a lot less appealing. Fostering trade liberalisation to guarantee economic development in neighbouring countries failed because they 'reinforced the power of small circles close to the regime' (Soler and Tarragona, 2013: 2). At the time it was suggested that this might be due to either the right policies applied to a corrupt and authoritarian context which benefited only a few; or the wrong policies such as promoting trade liberalisation which hindered local economies from competing under the same conditions and ultimately destroyed them (Soler and Tarragona, 2013). On top of this, the self-promotion of the EU as a democratic political model – from a deeply Eurocentric perspective – while at the same time supporting authoritarian regimes, seeking short-term security strategies and economic interests, externalising frontier control and prioritising stability over freedom and democracy, has left the EU with little credibility; in Stefan Lehne's words 'to put conditionality at the heart of the policy in theory and then to ignore it in practice undermines the EU's credibility.' (Lehne, 2014) When the time came after the Arab Spring revolts, the Southern Mediterranean countries looked towards other non-European models. As Soler and Tarragona (2013) put it:

> 'the desire of the EU to project a model of liberal democracy is legitimate. However, this inevitably collides with an Arab world where, as elsewhere, not all democrats are liberal and not all liberals are democrats. The EU faces a difficult choice: to persevere with a minority model in the hope that time will show that it is right, or to ally itself with new majorities with which a convergence of values will be complicated, to say the least.'

The ENP has clearly been lacking the flexibility to adapt to a changing reality. Designed to mirror the enlargement policy, the ENP was made to develop in a stable environment, but the southern and the eastern neighbourhood have caught flames and the different partners have different urgent needs. The present situation in Libya, where two self-recognised governments and militias with their own agendas dispute over territories, could not be more different from the situation in Tunisia, where the 2010 uprising has culminated in a successful transition towards a democratic regime, despite the great challenges that still lie ahead.

Conditionality and the 'more for more' principle, even though well-intentioned, have ultimately turned out to be a problem. On the one hand they have compromised the legitimacy of both the EU and the ENP, since these principles have been applied

unevenly to different countries to say the least. On the other hand, the excessive conditions for receiving financial and technical assistance and the modest benefits promised by the ENP cannot compete with other donors' more financially generous offers (the Gulf countries) exempt of conditions and human rights protection requirements. This hampers the ENP's effectiveness, especially if there is no reward in the form of membership. Even more, the Eurocentric architecture of the ENP, along with the choice of geographical criteria for partnership instead of a choice based on the interests of the EU or the goals of the neighbouring countries (Lehne, 2014), often clouds the regional dynamics which these countries are involved in as well as the role and influence which other actors and donors may have in the game.

Others criticise the lack of will and political support behind the ENP (politics vs policies), which reduces it to something purely technical. Jan Techau (2014) framed it like this:

> *'The main reason for the ENP's failure was the blatant absence of political steering of a hugely important geopolitical project. The EU played the big game in its neighbourhood by assigning tasks to the European Commission and then basically forgetting about the region at the highest political level. The result was a technocratic approach to a political challenge that warranted permanent strategic oversight and diplomatic guidance by prime ministers and chief diplomats. But this guidance was only given again after things turned sour.'*

This answers to the fact that European leaders focused on the Union's internal crises, although a considerable effort was made to mobilise additional funding for those countries experiencing revolts, but also to the issue of the respective national foreign policy agendas of each Member State; thus in the hands of the Commission and the EEAS, the ENP has turned into a technical and bureaucratic tool without political weight, since the foreign policies of each Member State and that of the EU were not coordinated.

In order to solve these issues, the EU Commission in 215 launched a public consultation process on the review of the ENP which was finalised last November.

The ENP review and lessons learnt
In a conference held in September 2015, Commissioner Johannes Hahn explained what would be the pivotal points of the new ENP: more differentiation, less naming and shaming, less megaphone diplomacy and more support to civil society (Hahn, 2015); Less priorities but more effectivity, with a focus on stabilisation, more flexibility, and a les Eurocentric ENP. Later in November, a Joint Communication of the Commission validated what the Commissioner had previewed and addressed some of the ENPs failures and criticisms, yet it left some key issues untouched.

The ENP revision's innovations are: first, a focus on the stabilisation of the neighbourhood as a priority for the fostering of economic development, rule of law, democracy and human rights preservation. Although it is understood that the ENP is a

long-term policy and these are the EU goals, it is also acknowledged that 'not all the partners aspire to EU rules and standards' (Hahn, 2015) and therefore there will be greater differentiation. Second, the EU recognises the need to foster the ownership of the ENP partners, and to try to reduce its Eurocentric nature with 'tailor-made, more differentiated partnerships between the EU and each of its neighbouring partners to reflect different ambitions, abilities and interests.' (Hahn, 2015) It also aspires to involve other pivotal regional actors outside of the institutional framework of the ENP.

This Joint Communication also summarises the criticisms on the ENP and it calls for Member States to get involved, to equip the ENP with political support and to take it into account when implementing their own foreign policies. The revision also envisions a doubling of the efforts directed at engaging with civil society and other social actors which are more committed to the Union's values and in that way develop or strengthen a civil society necessary to spur democratic changes. What remains unchanged despite the tailor-made approach is the economic recipe which still consists of DCFTA's, privatisations and the fostering of structural reforms; that is, the same economic solutions which have failed to increase economic prosperity and, instead, exacerbated inequality in the Southern Mediterranean countries.

A positive point, specially having in mind that young people will soon be the largest sector of society in these countries, is that the Communication stresses the need to give opportunities to youth and to develop their capabilities through promoting higher education and vocational training, assisting in mobility and encouraging brain circulation. In fact, the Commission has long ago recognised young people in countries like Morocco, Tunisia, Algiers or Egypt as important stakeholders and launched several research projects such as SAHWA[1] or POWER2YOUTH in the context of its 7th Framework Programme.

For the first time, the ENP review dedicates a special section to the security dimension. The EU will give support in the areas of security sector reform, counterterrorism and prevention of radicalisation, fight against organised crime, etc. The last section of the document is dedicated to migration and mobility. Promoting mobility among ENP partners and the EU has been under discussion since the ENP was launched, but it never came to fruition. Including a mobility dimension is a demand voiced by both the different stakeholders consulted for the review of the ENP and the partner states and their civil society.

The Joint Communication shows that the EU seriously looks for ways to address the new challenges that have arisen in the neighbourhood. However, there are still some loose ends to tie up. As the consultation process has shown, the Member States have to support the ENP politically, but even though this has been included in the Joint Communication it is questionable whether this will actually happen. In the past this was

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[1] The SAHWA Project is a FP-7 Project led by the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and funded by the European Commission. It brings together fifteen partners from Europe and southern and eastern Mediterranean countries to research youth prospects and perspectives in a context of multiple transitions in Arab countries: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. The thematic axes around which the project will revolve are education, employment and social inclusion; political mobilisation and participation; culture and values; international migration and mobility; gender, comparative experiences and public policies and international cooperation. Further information can be found here: www.sahwa.eu.

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never really the case and little seems to suggest that it will change now. Yet it would be vital for the efficiency of the ENP that Member States and Commission have a common agenda - only shared goals can ensure that the ENP can be fully developed.

Another unresolved issue deserving special attention is that of education. Besides fostering academic mobility, which is consistently mentioned in the Communication, it is necessary to encourage structural reforms in the education sector, both in order to ease the access to education in neighbouring countries and to improve higher education because 'the lack of reform of the education sector in most partner countries of the southern neighbourhood constitutes a major structural problem and an obstacle to empower the younger generations' (Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2015). It is crucial that young people find a space to develop their abilities, and education, in addition to being an empowerment tool, is what ensures employment and, ultimately, stability.

The EU's consistent attempts to empower civil society in the Southern Mediterranean countries are praiseworthy. But although civil society has always been mentioned in official documents, the EU and the ENP have not yet had a real impact on its development. What proves this lack of impact is the fact that during the Arab Spring, unlike during the revolts in Ukraine, nobody invoked the EU as a model. This does not mean that the ENP is supposed to shape a civil society based on the European model, but rather that, with the goal of promoting democratic values, human rights and the rule of law in mind, a strong and independent civil society plays a crucial role when it comes to implementing ENP tools in a partner country. To ensure the success of the ENP it is equally important to create a feeling of ownership among the formal actors (states) as the informal ones (civil society, NGO's).

Over the last few years since the Arab revolts, we have learnt that the EU should not sacrifice its values in exchange for stability, especially bearing in mind that those values will produce stability in the long run. The EU's credibility is damaged after years of connivance with authoritarian regimes, ergo if it aspires at being taken seriously by those actors who share its values it needs to act coherently when establishing relations with specific actors.

The review of the ENP is right in considering young people as key actors to generate stability in the neighbourhood and focus its policies on them. Although according to Göksel and Şenyuva (2016), 'youth is a vital component but not a direct beneficiary of the support to be provided by the EC.' To generate a proper degree of ownership, it would be necessary to count on the youth of Morocco, Algiers, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt to design and undertake policies addressed to them.

Youth as key stakeholders
The Arab Spring has demonstrated very clearly that it is not enough to address governmental authorities. To involve civil society and agents of change as pivotal as young people is crucial when designing both policies and agenda, whereas the intervention of authorities needs to be restricted. Unfortunately, the EU struggles with a credibility problem: the number of young people (15-29 years) distrustful of the Union according to preliminary results from the SAHWA Youth Survey 2015/2016 (2016), is, in Morocco, 30,1%, and 81,9% of surveyed people lean towards mistrust rather than to

trusting the EU. In Tunisia, 32,55% do not trust the Union at all and 74,55% present different degrees of mistrust.

If we bear in mind that the reviewed ENP considers young people as key stakeholders to promote stability in the region, what can the EU do to support the youth in Morocco, Algiers, Tunisia, Egypt and eventually Libya? It has already launched several initiatives aiming at promoting mobility and the exchange of ideas among European and Southern Mediterranean youth. The SAHWA project has analysed three of those totally or partially EU-funded initiatives and it concluded that, even if young people are the ultimate target, they can only benefit from them if they take part in civil society in an organised way. The problem is that not all young people do. According to the preliminary results of the SAHWA Youth Survey 2015/2016, in Morocco around 80% of the youth do not belong to any association (neither neighbours' associations, nor women's, youth, sports, labour or students' unions, political parties or movements, political organisations with religious affiliation or religious associations) and in Tunisia the percentage of non-organised youth is 93,76%. As this automatically creates a bias in favour of a specific youth profile new or revised initiatives should widen the basis for the selection of young participants in order to reach a larger number of people.

Also according to the preliminary results of the SAHWA Youth Survey 2015/2016, nobody actually knows the EU programmes. In Morocco and in Tunisia, only around 2% of those surveyed know of any EU implemented programme in their country and the overall feeling is that these programmes benefit only the powerful and the rich (41,7% in Morocco and 33,10% in Tunisia), the current government (22,2% in Morocco and 21,10% in Tunisia) and politicians (15,4% in Morocco and 18,50% in Tunisia). Bearing in mind that it is an important goal of the EU policies towards these countries to reach civil society and especially young people, it is quite worrying that in Tunisia only 0,75% of surveyed people believe that these programmes benefit youth and only 0,65% that they benefit civil society. In Morocco the percentage is just slightly higher; 1,5% believe young people and civil society benefit from these programmes.

By the time this paper was written, only the preliminary results of Morocco and Tunisia were available, but these results clearly show that what the EU needs to do is: make its initiatives known to the population, earn the trust of the young, avoid that its policies are seen as only beneficial for a few and revitalise its role in the region. Luckily, there are some valuable lessons to be learnt from this analysis that could help improve the implementation of the ENP and increase its impact.

One of the most significant characteristics of these initiatives is the emphasis on mobility. Mobility has long been the flagship of the ENP, yet it has never been a reality as Techau explains. To be able to easily move between EU and Northern African countries is a great opportunity for young people, but many Member States are afraid of illegal immigration and emphasise the difficulties for young North Africans to access the labour market. Still, visa liberalisation and facilitation are tools to develop within the ENP in order to empower future generations, especially in combination with measures to prevent the so-called brain drain. Apart from mobility, it would be crucial to promote programmes that promote education, technological development, leadership and entrepreneurship.

In order for these policies to succeed, it is crucial to define and attune priorities (also with those of the receiving countries) and goals through research and empirical evidence (such as the survey undertaken by the SAHWA project), ideally in cooperation with the target stakeholders, which would ensure the ownership of the receiving country. In addition, it is obvious that the different institutions, policies, initiatives and programmes operating in the region should cooperate, especially those acting from within the EU institutional framework.

Better coordination, the clarification of objectives to avoid overlapping and a redistribution of tasks would notably improve the effectivity of those policies, including the ENP. Finally, due to the importance the ENP bestows upon youth, mechanisms to identify and support specific youth policies are required in accordance with the problems and the needs of this group. These policies need to be evaluated systematically to ensure their utility and efficacy.

This will probably not be the last time the EU has to change its policy in an attempt to be a transformative actor and a promoter of democracy in the neighbourhood. But as this change comes at a moment when the EU is facing both internal and external crises the answer lies in adding political content to its foreign policy tools, in being faithful to the values that it promotes, in being able to listen to its partners in the region and act accordingly, all the time being aware of the fact that in the southern neighbourhood young people will play a decisive role in determining the future of the region.

Final remarks
The political situation of Northern African countries varies greatly: the Moroccan regime seems stable, Algeria, though seemingly stable, awaits the succession of Bouteflika, Tunisia is on the right path to complete its democratic transition, Libya has yet to start over as a nation and take steps towards a national reconciliation, a considerable challenge to face up to, and Egypt lives in an atmosphere of political repression as a consequence of the return of the Old Regime. The economic situation varies from country to country, but they all have in common that inequality persists, which is a source of instability.

Because of all this, the new ENP needs to stress differentiation and conditionality, establish a compromise with those states willing to deepen its ties with the EU and apply the conditions agreed upon – always keeping in mind to include civil society. Finally, if – as the ENP review acknowledges – young people are one of the key actors regarding stability in their countries, the improvement of the quality of life and development in the region, the EU should try to reach them more effectively, to promote itself better among the youth of Northern African countries and to think beyond mobility programmes.

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