

## Views from the South – The European Neighbourhood Policy in Lebanon

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One year ago, Heinrich Böll Stiftung's Beirut office did a research on the European Neighbourhood Policy and its perception in Lebanon. Views from the region on the performance of the European Union are important and it is particularly beneficial to see how experts and activists on the ground perceive the impact of it and take their recommendations on what could be improved and how. Therefore this year, we conducted interviews with a number of researchers and practitioners in Lebanon on specific issues – discussing with them specific findings of the EU's own progress report and the latest press release of December 2015.

Issue areas we deemed particularly relevant are those related to core values the EU is identified with – human rights, women's rights, rights of sexual and other minorities; the refugee issue the relevance of which for Lebanon with its 500.000 Palestinian and more than one million Syrian refugees is not exclusively addressed as part of the Neighbourhood Policy but of utmost relevance; and – including a green perspective – environmental affairs.

### ***Paving the way for more access to foreign funding: a draft state budget for 2017***

The Lebanese government has been requesting international assistance, mostly to deal with the additional challenges imposed on Lebanon because of its hosting of more than one million of refugees. The EU – itself reluctant to take political steps towards accommodating more refugees as well as not able to lobby among states in the region for more burden sharing – has mainly resorted to financial aid through the EU as an institution and on a bilateral level of the Member States. The EU is one of Lebanon's biggest donors, yet the cooperation is hampered by some administrative issues: The fact that Lebanon has not had a president for more than two years and the unavailability of a state budget.

For eleven years, since 2005, the Lebanese government has not passed a state budget. It has therefore not been possible to adapt the budget to changing needs, and it is a hindrance in receiving external budget aid. In 2016, the cabinet agreed on the necessity to draft a new budget.<sup>1</sup> Most Lebanese civil society activists are convinced that the different parties who agreed to draft a budget had second thoughts, i.e. that there are less transparent deals satisfying individual economic interests related to it, or, as one activist puts it: 'It means that they have agreed how to share the cake.'

George Ghali of the Lebanese human rights organisation ALEF mentions that despite the general problems of foreign funding resulting from this governance issue, the Lebanese government has been able to influence the nature of the incoming funding and channel it into certain sectors: 'The Lebanese government is keen to push for a

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<sup>1</sup> Daily Star: Lebanese ministers agree to draft state budget, 18.07.2016

more infrastructure focused aid rather than what ALEF wishes: one that is more focused on reforming justice, human rights and rule of law.<sup>2</sup>

If the budget was passed in 2017, this would be an important step for Lebanon's accessibility to foreign and thus also further EU funding. This would be particularly helpful given that there has been hardly any economic growth over the past years and that in the deteriorating regional situation the prospects for this to improve are not good. Lebanon's external debt is at 140% of the GDP – one of the highest ratios in the world. Most of the government's expenditures therefore go into paying interest for the country's foreign debt, which is a constraint in addressing relevant social issues and improving services.

Passing a budget would, according to Interviewee 1, a researcher in international affairs and refugee studies, enable the state to improve its handling of the general financial and economic crisis. 'The approved budget would have broad political implications as well, and may serve as a positive step in dealing with Lebanon's political deadlock.'<sup>3</sup>

In this case, most interviewees agreed that the EU should stock up its aid but insist on transparency, strong monitoring mechanisms including different stakeholders – also from the non-governmental organisations and the private sector, for example, and make sure that specific projects, municipalities and villages would be aware of the amount allocated to them, thus strengthening accountability and curbing corruption.<sup>4</sup> For more transparency and involvement of the non-governmental sector, human rights activist Georges Azzi also suggests the EU should consider whether to make it mandatory for the Lebanese government to work with NGOs in the implementation of projects, and to request more transparency in front of the media.<sup>5</sup>

### ***For a few dollars more ...***

Corruption is affecting the daily life of citizens in Lebanon, and according to Transparency International, it has not become any better but worse in the last years. As the ENP's progress report states: 'There were no tangible developments with regard to legislation to make the fight against corruption more effective. Lebanon's ranking in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index has worsened, from 127<sup>th</sup> out of 177 in 2013 to 136<sup>th</sup> out of 175 in 2014.'<sup>6</sup> Experts and civil society activists expressed their concern and their hope that the EU would be able to address this problem. Yet it is clear that it is not easy to fight corruption or to support this fight from outside: 'Many international agencies have informally discussed with many researchers their hesitation to provide funds to a country that ranks so highly in terms of corruption, and

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with George Ghali, 20.08.2016

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Interviewee 1, 28.08.2016

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Georges Azzi, 24.08.2016

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Georges Azzi, 24.08.2016

<sup>6</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy Progress Report 2014 – Lebanon, p. 5

understandably so,' says Interviewee 1. 'This requires comprehensive research as to which strategies will prove best.'<sup>7</sup>

## 1. Migration, Mobility and Refugees

Lebanon has a high per-capita income on the average, yet wealth is distributed unequally. Already before 2011, a quarter of the Lebanese population lived below the poverty line. The influx of refugees has enabled some to benefit – mostly those who would be able to rent out apartments or lands, or those who could reshape their businesses to generate more income – however, it has pushed those in poverty deeper into misery. While it is hardly possible for Syrians to obtain a work permit, international organizations do not have enough resources to provide for them which forces many to moonlight. They enter the work market illegally, do not have rights and are often paid below the minimum wages. Lebanese feel their jobs endangered through this illicit but cheap workforce, and the Lebanese authorities mostly look away. The failure to address the problem and come up with a policy and a strategy contributes to tensions between host community and refugees.

More than one million Syrian refugees are registered in Lebanon as of August 2016. Many of them have been here since 2013/2014 already, some even longer. All of Syria's neighbouring states had long sealed their borders when Lebanon still kept its borders open, and for many Syrians the advantage was that they did not need a passport but could enter with their ID only. In early 2015, however, for the first time Lebanon established a visa policy for Syrians which made it much more difficult to come here. Since Lebanon is not part of the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, the latter remain in a vulnerable situation and their mobility is restricted. Apart from Germany, European states have been reluctant to agree to resettlement programmes, so there are hardly any possibilities for Syrians to move on from Lebanon. Many of them thereby get stuck in a situation in which they cannot legalise their residency here; refugee children born in Lebanon mostly are unable to get a proper birth certificate which means that their families can neither move on nor go back to Syria. George Ghali, ALEF therefore points out that the European Union's support to Lebanon for shouldering the challenges through refugees should not come under the headline of migration and mobility: 'It is obvious that the funding in matter of policy is not a migration and mobility one.'<sup>8</sup>

Interviewee 1, senior researcher on refugees, is convinced that the €182 million allocated by the EU in 2014 have made a difference and that they have been particularly visible in the Syrian refugee response. For coping with the challenges of the high influx of Syrian refugees particularly in 2013 – 2014, Lebanon has largely relied on external aid. Interviewee 1 states that the EU's approach is aligned with the priorities of the Lebanese Government and their response plans, such as the Regional Response

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Interviewee 1, 28.08.2016

<sup>8</sup> Interview with George Ghali, 20.08.2016

Plan and the Ministry of Education's 'Reaching All Children with Education' (RACE) plan.<sup>9</sup>

Core to the Lebanese government's strategy is focusing on projects that address the needs of both refugees and host communities and to prioritise those sectors that are particularly burdened, such as education, health care or infrastructural needs. As examples of successful European-Lebanese cooperation, Interviewee 1 mentions water projects in Akkar – the economically challenged northern province of Lebanon – in order to improve access to clean water and satisfy the demand that due to the settlement of large numbers of refugees in this area has increased. She also mentions the 'Lebanon Host Communities Support Project', funded by the EU, developed under the framework of UNDP's response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, which improves the municipalities' capacities to respond.<sup>10</sup>

Municipalities are at the forefront of dealing with all aspects of the presence of refugees, often with little or no assistance of the federal government. Therefore, according to refugee expert Interviewee 1, it would be necessary to enhance their capacities – operational and financial – to deal with the problem. While the Lebanese government is concerned that the Syrian refugee presence – as happened with the Palestinian refugee presence – could turn into something permanent and therefore has strong objections against any long-term strategising, Interviewee 1 is convinced that the EU and the Lebanese government should work hand-in-hand to deal with the long-term consequences.<sup>11</sup> This does not only concern material and technical improvements but also needs to include social cohesion projects, she says: 'Many studies have shown that social cohesion matters for humanitarian action and provides a basis for refugees and local communities to share in economic progress, one of the pillars of the European Neighbourhood Policy.'<sup>12</sup>

A problem that should not be underestimated with regard to the refugee population should be the rise of violence among Syrians – in the tented settlements but also at home: 'Domestic violence and child marriage are being constantly reported, and a tool to combat the phenomenon is to integrate gender, sexual rights and sexuality education in all Lebanese school curricula,' says Georges Azzi.<sup>13</sup>

Researcher Interviewee 1 considers access to the labour market as crucial: 'The point where I wish for a stronger EU position is related to refugee access to the labour market – perhaps the EU could assist Lebanon in coming out with a work permit rollout similar to what is being implemented in Jordan at the moment. If we are to discuss economic stabilisation and inclusive economic and social development, we must recognize that

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Education: Reaching All Children with Education (R.A.C.E.), June 2014

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Interviewee 1, 28.08.2016

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Interviewee 1, 28.08.2016

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Interviewee 1, 28.08.2016

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Georges Azzi, 24.08.2016

many unemployed refugees struggle to find work in the informal labour market and are very poor and highly vulnerable – such initiatives will contribute to conflict prevention, counterterrorism and anti-radicalism.<sup>14</sup> It is an aspect Georges Azzi also highlights: ‘The EU in cooperation with the Lebanese government should create sustainable models to financially support refugees and the host communities by funding business opportunities which will create jobs for both Syrian and Lebanese. This should help the Syrian community to better understand their Lebanese surrounding and help them integrate in it.’<sup>15</sup> Overall, he thinks it would be beneficial to pressure the Lebanese government into at least providing a strategic plan on how to handle the refugee crisis in a more sustainable manner as opposed to the current policy that is dealing with it as if it would be a temporary, not a long-term issue.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Human Rights and the Security Sector – either, or?

The EU’s progress report states: ‘Human rights and fundamental freedoms continued to be respected in Lebanon,’<sup>17</sup> a sentence that is viewed critically by human rights activists, or, as one put it: ‘diplomatic tip-toeing’. ‘It is a very ambiguous statement and it is weak in reflecting what is actually going on,’ says George Ghali of the human rights organisation ALEF.<sup>18</sup> He and others from this sector point to human rights abuses that the EU in a later stage of the report describes as well. As the EU writes: ‘In 2014, Lebanon was subject to an inquiry under article 20 of the Convention against Torture (CAT), the inquiry, whose methodology and outcomes were contested by Lebanon, reported that torture is being routinely used by the armed forces and law enforcement agencies for the purpose of investigation and for security confessions.’<sup>19</sup> The CAT report found the occurrence of torture practices to be ‘pervasive and systematic’.<sup>20</sup> When the report was sent to the Lebanese government, it first refused to answer. After the Lebanese government’s objections, the CAT report was adapted: ‘They changed the actual wording of the UN(CAT) findings to be in line with the Lebanese government’s “sentiments”, if I may say,’ George Ghali adds.<sup>21</sup> Alef has written a shadow report discussing effective means to deal with the occurrences of torture in Lebanon.<sup>22</sup>

Human rights, understood as a core value of the EU, and mentioned in all its documents should not only rhetorically but practically be central in its relations within the ENP. Therefore, the EU should adhere to its due diligence regulations and develop strong

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Interviewee 1, 28.08.2016

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Georges Azzi, 24.08.2016

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Georges Azzi, 24.08.2016

<sup>17</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy Progress Report 2014 – Lebanon, p. 5

<sup>18</sup> Interview with George Ghali, 20.08.2016

<sup>19</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy Progress Report 2014 – Lebanon, p. 6

<sup>20</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy Progress Report 2014 – Lebanon

<sup>21</sup> Interview with George Ghali, 20.08.2016

<sup>22</sup> Torture Prevention and monitoring in Lebanon; Snapshot on the trends and occurrences of torture in Lebanon. ALEF-Act for Human Rights

structures to allow for monitoring and implementation. As Ghali notes: ‘The traditional ENP model of more for more, less for less, has worked in Lebanon in inducing changes in human rights friendly policies. An example of this is the death penalty where the Lebanese government is adopting an informal moratorium due to the conditionality of the EU.’<sup>23</sup> In Lebanon, the death penalty exists on paper but has de facto been abolished through a moratorium. Because of a perception of growing terrorist threats, the issue of the death penalty is not finally withdrawn from the table, however. In May 2016, a Lebanese judge asked for the death penalty for 106 individuals – 73 Syrians, 33 Lebanese – for ‘acts of terrorism’ and the attack of Lebanese governmental forces. This raises the question how the EU is thinking it can bring its human rights commitment in line with support for the security sector.

### ***Fighting terrorism while committed to human rights***

In the ENP Progress report it is mentioned that Lebanon and the EU are planning to enhance their cooperation on security and in fighting terrorism. ‘Lebanon increased its engagement with the international community to fight terrorism and continued to call for international support to its security forces, in particular the Lebanese Armed Forces,’ states the ENP Progress report.<sup>24</sup>

The dilemma is obvious, especially for those working on protecting human rights in Lebanon. ‘As an organization working on gender and sexual rights, we have ourselves documented several cases of torture within the police and the military intelligence, especially towards refugees, migrant domestic workers and the LGBTIQ-community,’ says Georges Azzi.<sup>25</sup> He suggests the EU should assist local NGOs working on torture in developing a strategy of reporting and monitoring of the governmental institutions in which torture has reported to take place – beyond filling a complaint. ‘Also make sure that civil society is consulted throughout the whole process.’<sup>26</sup> The EU should make sure, though, that it does not condone human rights abuses committed under the headline of fighting terrorism.

Ghali notes there are some steps in the right direction – among them the establishment of a human rights department in the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and an anti-torture committee to deal with torture within the agency. These still need to show how well they will be able to fulfil the task, yet their establishment in this view is an effect of Lebanese-European cooperation: ‘This has only been done due to the induced commitment created by bilateral funding.’<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with George Ghali, 20.08.2016

<sup>24</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy Progress Report 2014 – Lebanon, p.2

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Georges Azzi, 24.08.2016

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Geogres Azzi, 24.08.2016

<sup>27</sup> Interview with George Ghali, 20.08.2016

The EU's commitment to human rights in the security sector should also materialize when supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces. George Ghali points out the negative effects of human rights abuses not only on the moral but on all other political levels: 'As ALEF reiterates, the occurrence of ill-practices, torture etc. is counterproductive to the very aim of counter terrorism.'<sup>28</sup> He criticises that it is not transparent what exactly the large funds for the LAF are being used for, and which strategy is the base of the cooperation. As reason for the EU's willingness to invest in this he identifies Europe's concerns about extremist organisations such as Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS that leads them to the conclusion the cross-border threat for Lebanon could be the only relevant issue while 'the level of violations perpetrated by the LAF inside Lebanon and the trend to radicalization might lead to home-grown threats that the LAF and others would have difficulties in addressing.'<sup>29</sup> He warns against turning a blind eye towards human rights violations stressing that human rights violations might contribute to generating new threats.<sup>30</sup>

'As you know, funding gives a lot of power to the funders over the institutions they fund. It is not up to us to decide whether the EU will continue to fund or stop funding the LAF, but at least make sure that none of the funding goes to departments within the LAF or the police that are using it in order to oppress minorities, including LGBTI communities, migrant domestic workers, refugees, protesters, drug users and anybody who opposes their authority. The EU ... might consider a better monitoring system and strategies to insure their funding is not used against human rights.'<sup>31</sup>

### 3. Clean power to the people: renewable energy and waste management

Lebanon is a small country that faces enormous environmental challenges. Resources are not necessarily scarce but whether it is land or water: access is hampered by a trend to privatisation which threatens to turn even the most needed basics into a commodity. Pollution of air, soil and water has a negative impact on the population but is at the same time an obstacle in attracting tourism, a sector that anyway has suffered considerably due to the security situation.

Lebanon's roads are not in bad shape but the system cannot cope with the ever increasing traffic. The EU progress report notes that a national land transport policy was drafted and submitted to the Cabinet.<sup>32</sup> Environmental expert Ali Darwish, director of the organisation Green Line, says that no draft of a national land transport strategy or policy had been accessible for civil society: 'The only accessible "plan/strategy" is a public transport plan for the introduction of buses in major areas.'<sup>33</sup> Important issues to solve

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with George Ghali, 20.08.2016

<sup>29</sup> Interview with George Ghali, 20.08.2016

<sup>30</sup> Interview with George Ghali, 20.08.2016

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Georges Azzi, 24.08.2016

<sup>32</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy Progress Report 2014 – Lebanon

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Ali Darwish, August 20, 2016

the infrastructural problems that lead to permanently congested roads in the city as well as major traffic jams on the highways connecting Lebanese major cities such as a revival of the railway system for passengers and freight or any other infrastructural innovations reducing citizens' dependency on the use of private vehicles are not being discussed. At the same time it is clear that a coastal railway would reduce the need for individual transport significantly, thus improving the quality of life, environment and limiting economic losses. As one of the main reasons behind the negligence of this important topic, Darwish identifies economic interests of different political parties and individuals who currently see more advantage in a different use of the plots that would be relevant for building and establishing a railway system.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Water: Available but scarce***

A most crucial resource for Lebanon is water. Every summer, citizens experience in daily life consequences of water shortage. The public water distribution does not match the needs of Beirut's population, forcing citizens to top up their supplies by purchasing private water deliveries to fill their tanks. According to Ali Darwish, the main reason for that is not the scarcity of resources but their mismanagement: 'Strangely and against all logic, water is available through "private providers" at relatively higher prices indicating that there are no shortages in the resources (which are surely limited), but rather in the access to them and the political will to provide water to the citizens ... Despite the decrease in precipitation and the unregulated urbanizations, no efforts have been made to reduce the run-off of storm water. Soil erosion is also increasing due to this mismanagement.'

The absence of facilities for the treatment of sewage water enhances pollution: 'Across the country, not more than a handful of sewage treatment plants can do secondary treatment. The untreated waters are going directly to the sea causing serious pollution, hence contradicting with other commitments in the agreements.'<sup>35</sup> Darwish underlines that financial contributions to the water sector by the EU and other donors have not been matched by the allocation of public funds.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Power Plants and Energy Supply***

'Lebanon's energy demand continued to outstrip supply, leading to regular power cuts as substantial investments in power plants have not been made,' states the EU progress report, while it sees 'significant progress in pursuit of its (Lebanon's) target to meet 12% of its energy needs from renewable energy sources by 2020, notably by meeting its 2014 target for installations of new solar water heaters.'<sup>37</sup>

Expert Ali Darwish stresses that this does not tackle the real issues behind the energy shortage. 'If we try to differentiate between the interest of the state and the personal

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with Ali Darwish, August 20, 2016

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Ali Darwish, 20.08.2016

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Ali Darwish, 20.08.2016

<sup>37</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy Progress Report 2014 – Lebanon, p12

interests of the ruling class, we can easily understand the reasons behind the delay in increasing the capacity of power generation. Key political figures are deeply involved in the import of oil and generators that are the pillars of the deficit coverage. ... Pushing the deadline for generating sufficient energy from 2015 to 2025 is a strong indicator of the gravity of the problem.’ He adds that it is not clear whether the goal to have a share of 12% of renewable energy is based on the 2020 demand or the current status.

Darwish agrees that positive steps have been taken towards the promotion of renewable energy generation but sees a problem in the financing mechanisms being ‘slowed down by conditions imposed by the financing sector, the vehicle to access such funding. Both Parliament and Government have not adopted and are unlikely to adopt institutional mechanisms and legislation to simplify and enhance access to funding.’<sup>38</sup>

Environmental expert Wael Hmaidan mentions photovoltaic as a single issue in which progress has been encouraged on governmental level: ‘The Ministry of Energy has helped by introducing financial mechanisms to support photovoltaic installations, which helped push the market. The Bank of Lebanon also made efforts to provide easy loans to renewable energy projects.’<sup>39</sup> However, he is convinced that there is room for improvement: ‘The country could have done much more if it really wanted to. There is no political leadership on renewable energies or climate change. .... The technical staff, working on climate change in the Ministry of Environment and the renewable energy staff in the Ministry of energy, are ambitious and constantly pushing the envelope but they are not getting the right support on higher levels.’<sup>40</sup>

### ***For the bin: waste management and recycling***

Waste management has been among the issues in which Lebanese citizens over the past one and a half years have most intensely experienced as affecting their lives. Since summer 2015, garbage removal for the city of Beirut and other areas in the country has been difficult. The country’s main garbage dump had to close because its capacities were exhausted, and garbage removal and more so, proper disposal of it, remains an unsolved problem. This has been harmful to Lebanon on many levels: It has increased the small country’s environmental problems. It poses a risk for the country’s ground water, and a study by the American University revealed the deterioration of air quality through citizens resorting to burning the garbage that is piling up whenever there is no garbage collection.<sup>41</sup> There are no studies available regarding the measurable impact this has on citizens’ health, but a lower quality of water and air as well as related hazards potentially caused through the multiplication of animals that may contribute to the proliferation of dangerous bacteria and viruses are indicators that the garbage management would be an important problem to deal with.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Ali Darwish, 20.08.2016

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Wael Hmaidan, 24.08.2016

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Wael Hmaidan, 24.08.2016

<sup>41</sup> Guide to Municipal Solid Waste Management , American University of Beirut

<sup>42</sup> Zeina Nasser: Costa Brava Landfill – Suffocating the Lebanese, 21.04.2016

While Lebanon has committed to the protection of the Mediterranean environment protection, some of the landfills for which expansion is planned, are a direct threat to maritime life.<sup>43</sup> Neither the ENP's progress report nor the press release from December 2015 mention waste and sewage treatment.<sup>44</sup> However, the EU in its Action plan committed to contribute to integrated solid waste management.<sup>45</sup>

According to Ali Darwish, the Lebanese government was ready to invest in waste export as well as moving forward with incinerators – 'thermal degradation' – it showed little interest in strengthening garbage separation and treatment facilities. He is concerned that the focus on incinerators will be a hindrance in promoting recycling: 'A transitional phase of around four years costing more than \$300 million for the establishment of two landfills in Khalde and Bourj Hammoud ... in addition to the extremely high costs of collecting waste; additionally around \$700 million will be invested in expanding separation facilities that will most probably not be used to their full potential once the incinerators become operational.'<sup>46</sup> He adds that the incinerators option was adopted contrary to public demands and expert reports that demonstrate that because of various reasons – among them that the nature of the waste is not suitable for incineration, and that furthermore thermal degradation is financially and environmentally the most costly option. 'Ironically incineration is marketed as Waste to Energy', but it is not clear where and how this energy will be used and within which energy strategy such facilities would be operating.'<sup>47</sup>

'In conclusion, I believe that the EU's Neighbourhood Policy should be more proactive and stringent in the alignment of national plans with the ones being funded by the EU, i.e. the solid waste management schemes,'<sup>48</sup> Ali Darwish says. Wael Hmaidan is also convinced that the EU should do more political advocacy to push progress in the field of renewable energies: 'Renewable energies would be cheaper than what we have in the existing situation if we take into consideration how much households pay for backup power generators. With the right political incentives, Lebanon can save money by adopting renewable energies to compensate for the lack of capacity,' he says. As a tangible measure he suggests that the EU should develop at least one mega renewable

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<sup>43</sup> Zeina Nasser: Government backflipping the sea... Three Landfills on Maritime Public Properties, 12.03.2016

<sup>44</sup> European External Action Service: European Union External Action. Action Plan for EU-Lebanon Partnership and Cooperation 2013-2015

<sup>45</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy Progress Report 2014 – Lebanon, p12: "Lebanon strengthened its environmental policy framework. Parliament approved legislation establishing an environmental prosecutor and judges in April 2014, and authorized the country to adhere to the Protocol on cooperation in preventing pollution from ships and, in cases of emergency, combating pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (Prevention and Emergency Protocol).

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Ali Darwish, 20.08.2016

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Ali Darwish, 20.08.2016

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Ali Darwish, 20.08.2016

energy project that can show the feasibility of renewable energy as a centralized source of energy.<sup>49</sup>

**Conclusions: together but firmly committed to human rights and environment**

All participants were positive about the EU – many pointing to the ‘Brexit’ as a worrisome incident since they consider a united and strong European Union more favourable as partner for Lebanon – and expressed appreciation about the ENP as such.

Lebanese interviewees – all from civil society and academia – were more outspoken about the shortcomings in implementing the European Neighbourhood Action Plan than about the EU progress report. The main concerns they expressed were related to transparency and the compatibility of current practices with human rights and environmental standards agreed upon between the EU and Lebanon or through international conventions.

Among the most important recommendations are that with the EU’s focus on stability, human rights should not become less of a priority. Especially when supporting the security sector in Lebanon, human rights activists underlined that the EU should be clear about not funding any institution or department involved in human rights violations and that it should continue its efforts to prevent torture and create more awareness of human rights. They also stressed on human rights abuses committed by state authorities towards some most vulnerable groups – domestic foreign workers, refugees and the LGBTIQ communities.

The environmental experts underlined the need for sustainable development. Most importantly – and potentially a field in which European support could be crucial – the waste/sewage management should be addressed. While the current policy was to build incinerator capacities, it was stressed that this would be a hindrance in enlarging recycling capacities and strategies and also hamper an increase in the renewable energies sector.

Most interviewees gave examples where they thought that a stricter EU policy and the insistence upon certain standards had, in the end, been successful. They mainly argued that the EU should have a close exchange with the Lebanese government and develop the policy together with them. They were also confident that more insistence by the EU on human rights and environmental standards would be both feasible and desirable.

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Wael Hmaidan, 24.08.2016