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News stories

Strengthening dialogue between Civil Society from the Southern Neighbourhood and the EU



High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini today addressed the second annual Southern Mediterranean Civil Society Forum, held in Brussels on 28-29 May. The objective of the Forum is to create mechanisms for a sustained and structured dialogue between civil society, the authorities and the EU at a regional level.

Civil Society Organisations play a crucial role in fostering and assist the democratic transformation process in the Neighbourhood partner countries. The forum seeks to provide a space for civil society representatives to express their views about EU policies in the region and, more broadly, about the policy priorities needed to improve the lives of the people.

This year, the Forum focuses on two main topics:

1. the **ENP** Review; and
2. the role of **dialogue** and **civil society** in light of the new socio-economic, political and security challenges in the **Southern Neighbourhood and Europe**

HRVP Mogherini, Commissioner Hahn and EP President Schulz, together with EESC President Malosse and CoR President Markkula, discussed with participants the results of an 18 month-long consultation between the EU and civil society and marked out the next steps in this process.

In her keynote address HRVP Mogherini said: "Politics has its deep roots in the civil society and it is with the civil society that we build our collective responses to the many challenges we face. By monitoring and giving advice to parliaments, governments and political parties on issues of human rights and fundamental freedoms, Civil Society Organisations are key in reshaping our European Neighbourhood Policy and strengthening the cooperation, while we are tackling so many threats around us."

The event, jointly organised by the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, is an important milestone in of a series of initiatives aimed at improving dialogue between civil society, the EU and the authorities, and promoting reform in the region. It underlines the importance of offering Civil Society Organisations increased support.

- [Read the full press release on Second Annual Southern Mediterranean Civil Society Forum](#)

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