



Third meeting of the Steering Committee - Paris, 15-16 December 2014

Operational conclusions

The partners of the EU/CoE Joint Programme «Strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Neighbourhood» (South Programme 2012-2014), on the occasion of the Third Steering Committee meeting (agenda and list of participants attached), adopted the following operational conclusions:

The partners:

- recognised the relevance of the South Programme in supporting the democratic reforms undertaken by the Southern Mediterranean partners, in the wider context of the European Neighbourhood Policy of the European Union and the Council of Europe's policy towards neighbouring regions;
- stressed that the South Programme has played a leading role in supporting the approximation of the legislative framework of Southern Mediterranean countries, and in particular in Tunisia and Morocco, to European and other international standards, the establishment of democratic governance bodies in countries the region and the gradual creation of a common legal space between Europe and the southern Mediterranean.
- expressed their willingness to continue the tripartite cooperation between the countries from the Southern Mediterranean, the European Union and the Council of Europe on topics related to the promotion of the values of human rights, the Rule of law and democracy as to ensure the sustainability of democratic reforms.
- welcomed the flexibility of the South programme and the alignment of its objectives with the priorities of partner countries of the southern Mediterranean. This flexible demand-driven approach contributed to the South programme success and allowed ownership of programme activities by partners and governance actors involved in its implementation also through increased participation of non-state actors and civil society representatives.

Based on the discussions and taking into account the recommendations made by the independent mid-term evaluation of the South programme, partners emphasised that in future the South programme should:

- focus its activities mainly around the areas where the Council of Europe has a real added value (support to constitutional reforms, new legal frameworks and democratic governance bodies, support activities related to the efficiency and quality of the judiciary, prevention of corruption etc.);
- develop a communication strategy that ensures a balance between visibility, political sensitivity and requests from partners;
- ensure a greater involvement of experts from Central and Eastern Europe and further promote South-South cooperation, through an exchange of expertise and good practices between Southern Mediterranean partners;
- complete the capacity development programme with follow-up training schemes and “certified” training courses;
- pursue the regular coordination with Southern partners and the international donor community as regards the programme activities’ implementation ;
- develop closer cooperation with independent non-state institutions in line with the programme objectives and areas of intervention (anti-corruption, audiovisual, civil society etc.).