



The OSCE
and Effective
Multilateralism
in the
Mediterranean:
A Comparative
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The top of the cover features three OSCE flags flying against a clear blue sky. Below the flags, on the right, is a photograph of a classical stone building with columns. Overlaid on this building is a large, circular OSCE logo. The logo contains the acronym 'OSCE' in large letters, with the full name in German 'Organisation für Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa' and in English 'Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe' written in smaller text below it.



by Sandra Sacchetti

The bottom half of the cover is a satellite image of the Mediterranean region, showing the outlines of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. The landmasses are dark, while the surrounding waters and coastal areas are illuminated with a dense pattern of yellow and white lights, representing urban areas and population density.



This paper was prepared in the context of the New-Med Research Network, a project run by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna and the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation. Views expressed are the author's alone.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation



Fondazione
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ISBN 978-88-9368-234-3

The OSCE and Effective Multilateralism in the Mediterranean: A Comparative Analysis

by Sandra Sacchetti

Can the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) contribute to the Mediterranean region's overall security? The OSCE is best known as a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security organisation, but it also has a decades-long Mediterranean Partnership that includes Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. The OSCE's Mediterranean dimension can be traced back to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which is regarded as the Organization's founding text.¹ The political document highlights "the relationship which exists, in the broader context of world security, between security in Europe and security in the Mediterranean area"² and marks the inception of what would later become the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership for Co-operation.

Through political dialogue and practical collaboration, the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners have worked together to confront security concerns across the OSCE's three security dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental and the human dimension. In comparison with other international players working in the region, the OSCE has struggled to establish itself as a security contributor in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Due to a political focus on East-West ties, a lack of vision and strategy and a limited budget, the Organization has been unable to define a clear role and purpose in the Mediterranean. However, dismissing its southern component as unimportant would be a mistake. The OSCE is the sole intergovernmental organisation that provides a permanent multilateral forum for countries representing the Mediterranean Partners, the European Union, NATO and the post-Soviet region to debate the main factors influencing Euro-Mediterranean

¹ The Helsinki Final Act was adopted by the then-Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which was institutionalised into an organisation – the OSCE – in 1994.

² CSCE, *Helsinki Final Act*, 1 August 1975, p. 13, <https://www.osce.org/node/39501>.

security. In addition, the OSCE has comparative advantages in helping the Mediterranean region to deal with some of the most pressing challenges, including long-standing experience with building trust among a diverse group of states, dealing with all phases of the conflict cycle, promoting environmental cooperation, countering transnational threats and supporting democratic and economic transitions. The OSCE must, however, streamline its approach to the Partnership and concentrate on its strengths if it wants to play its part in the Mediterranean region.³

The objective of this policy report is to take a closer look at the OSCE's competitive advantage for comprehensive security in the Mediterranean and to make policy recommendations to refocus the Organization's Mediterranean Partnership. It is based on a desk review, informal expert interviews, an examination of the CSCE/OSCE model and an assessment of the Organization's engagements across its three security dimensions. The first section outlines the modalities and practices of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, as well as its limitations. A discussion of the state of play and potential of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership is provided in section two. Section three focuses on the OSCE's operational actions and the added value they can bring to the Mediterranean region. The fourth section provides suggestions for improving cooperation between the OSCE and its six Mediterranean Partner countries.

It is worth mentioning that the OSCE Partnership for Co-operation also has an Asian component that includes Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. The priorities and dynamics of the Asian and Mediterranean partner groups are considerably different, and the assessments in this study primarily pertain to the Mediterranean Partnership.⁴

³ Throughout this report, the term “Mediterranean region” will be used to refer to an area that encompasses the OSCE Mediterranean partners, which include the North African countries except Libya, as well as Jordan and Israel in the Middle East. Libyan authorities filed for partnership status in 2013, 2016 and 2017 but were denied due to disagreements among OSCE Ps. For more background, see Andrea Dessì and Ettore Greco (eds), *The Search for Stability in Libya. OSCE's Role between Internal Obstacles and External Challenges*, Rome, Nuova Cultura, 2018, <https://www.iai.it/en/node/9331>.

⁴ For a recent analysis of the OSCE Asian Partnership, see Marietta S. König and Liliya Buhela, “The OSCE Asian Partnership: Developments and Thematic Priorities”, in *Documenti IAI*, No. 21|10 (June 2021), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/13489>.

1. The OSCE Mediterranean dimension – Potential and procedural limitations

OSCE partners for cooperation have been compared, on several occasions, to observers in other multilateral organisations. Observer states typically have access to meetings and documentation but have no or limited influence over policymaking; they can voluntarily endorse the organisation's principles and commitments but are under no obligation to follow them; and they may cooperate with the organisation's structures but do not contribute to its regular budget. While these characteristics apply to the OSCE Partnership for Co-operation, the analogy fails to capture its uniqueness.

At the heart of the OSCE's day-to-day interaction with its partners is the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group (MPCG). The designation is misleading as it does not refer to an actual group but a meeting format that gathers OSCE Participating and partner states. Its Mediterranean precursor was set up by the OSCE Budapest Summit in 1994 as an "informal, open-ended contact group [...] to facilitate the interchange of information of mutual interest and the generation of ideas".⁵ The MPCG meets once or twice a month and is chaired by a representative (i.e., diplomat) of the incoming OSCE chair. The meetings serve as a forum for discussion of common security concerns as well as an informal sounding board for potential cooperation projects. The OSCE also organises an annual Mediterranean conference (previously known as the OSCE seminar), which was elevated to ministerial level in 2015. This is complemented by high-level talks between the OSCE Troika (incoming, current and outgoing OSCE chairs) and officials from partner states on the margins of its Ministerial Council meeting. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has for its part maintained regular parliamentary contact between countries on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea through the Mediterranean Forum.

⁵ CSCE, *Towards a Genuine Partnership in a New Era. Budapest Document*, 6 December 1994, <https://www.osce.org/node/39554>.

Since the codification of the Organization's practices in the 2006 OSCE Rules of Procedure,⁶ the Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation have a de facto standing invitation to attend and contribute to all OSCE decision-making bodies: the Summit, the Ministerial Council, the Permanent Council (PC) and the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC).⁷ Partner representatives do not have any veto powers over OSCE decisions but hold a permanent seat at the main table among their peers from OSCE Participating states (Ps) and may participate in all the debates.⁸

Partner countries are by default excluded from the informal negotiation processes and the drafting of decisions that take place in relevant committees⁹ but can attend on a case-by-case basis if invited by the relevant chairperson. They are routinely invited to OSCE conferences and events, and they participate in the Organization's operational tasks, including election observation. Some partner states have also provided short-term staff secondments to the OSCE Secretariat and field operations. Finally, partner states have the option of requesting and receiving technical support from OSCE structures and specialised Secretariat units. Given the partners' inclusion in much of the Organization's work, OSCE partnership status might plausibly be considered a quasi-member relationship with the OSCE.

It is fair, however, to say that the OSCE's Mediterranean dimension has remained undervalued. Dialogue between the partners and OSCE Ps has yet to yield a common approach to addressing transnational and cross-dimensional security challenges as foreseen by the 2018 Ministerial Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean,¹⁰ the most recent political document

⁶ OSCE Ministerial Council, *Rules of Procedure of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe* (MC.DOC/1/06), 1 November 2006, <https://www.osce.org/node/22777>.

⁷ The PC is the regular body for political dialogue and decision-making among ambassadors. The FSC consults and decides on military stability and security and is composed of the military advisers of the delegations. Both bodies meet weekly in Vienna.

⁸ The order of speeches is established on a first come, first served basis. This is not the case for Summits and Ministerial Council meetings, the rules of which stipulate that the partners will be invited to address the plenary after the Participating states have delivered their statements.

⁹ The so-called informal subsidiary bodies (ISBs), which include the Preparatory Committee, the Security Committee, the Economic and Environmental Committee, the Human Dimension Committee, the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance as well as Working Groups A and B of the FSC. Japan is the only partner country that may attend all ISB meetings according to the Rules of Procedure.

¹⁰ OSCE Ministerial Council, *Document Nr. 4, Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean* (MC.DOC/4/18), 7 December 2018, <https://www.osce.org/node/462073>.

on the issue. A review of previous and recent literature about the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership finds a long-standing sense of dissatisfaction with the Organization's Mediterranean dimension, which has been characterised as lacking vision, strategy and tangible results.¹¹ There are several explanations for this.

First, there is a discrepancy between the rhetoric of cooperation and actual engagement. Monika Wohlfeld writes in her 2011 analysis of the Mediterranean Partnership that, while OSCE Participating states have often emphasised the interconnectedness of security between the Mediterranean and OSCE areas, interest in the Partnership is unevenly distributed.¹² To this day, the Mediterranean dimension is still not viewed as central in an organisation that was created as an instrument to manage East–West relations. The OSCE is now even more focused on geopolitics in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian spheres, as the crisis in and around Ukraine has highlighted a deepening split in those relations. There is currently no critical mass among the Organization's members to take OSCE–Mediterranean cooperation to the next level. The partnership has mostly been driven by countries on the northern side of the Mediterranean as well as a few countries that are pursuing a broader agenda within the OSCE. In addition, given their differing agendas, initiatives pursued by the country holding the Mediterranean chair (which changes every year) lack continuity.

Second, activities with and for partner countries are not eligible for funding from the OSCE's regular budget (known as its "unified budget") and rely on extrabudgetary (i.e., voluntary) contributions by the Ps. In 2007, the OSCE Permanent Council established a partnership fund that serves as a repository for voluntary contributions to finance activities with the partners for cooperation. It is a small fund, which had an aggregate budget of around 3.5 million euro for the period 2008–2018. As a result, projects involving the

¹¹ See, for example, Rita Marascalchi and Oleksandr Pavlyuk, "The OSCE and Change in the South Mediterranean: A New Opportunity for the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership?", in IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2011*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2012, p. 427-439, <https://ifsh.de/en/publications/osce-yearbook/yearbook-2011>; Loïc Simonet, "The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership Four Years after the Start of the 'Arab Spring'", in IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2014*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2015, p. 315-337, <https://ifsh.de/en/publications/osce-yearbook/yearbook-2014>.

¹² Monika Wohlfeld, "The OSCE and the Mediterranean: Assessment of a Decade of Efforts to Reinvigorate a Dialogue", in IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2010*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2011, p. 351-368, <https://ifsh.de/en/publications/osce-yearbook/yearbook-2010>.

Mediterranean partners are often small-scale and limited to one-off activities. They typically consist of expert seminars, capacity-building workshops, study trips, conferences and translations of OSCE publications and guidance tools into Arabic.

The greater background to the OSCE's present fiscal issues should be noted. Since 2005, OSCE Participating states have pursued a policy of zero nominal growth, and the Organization's mandate is so broad that its regular budget is thinly spread across many smaller activities. Furthermore, the Organization's ability to plan strategically and to implement mid- to long-term programmes is hampered by the shifting priorities of the annual chair, political sensitivities, an annual budget cycle and the Organization's consensus rule for decision-making.¹³ As a result, OSCE structures are increasingly relying on extrabudgetary contributions from Participating states to fund their projects. The OSCE has a limited pool of contributors, and just a fraction of these are willing to finance the OSCE's Mediterranean activities. Indeed, many project ideas go unfunded¹⁴ as only a few of the member countries contribute to the partnership fund on a regular basis.

Third, a fundamental constraint for the Mediterranean Partnership is the requirement for unanimous agreement of Ps for project implementation outside the OSCE area.¹⁵ Because the Permanent Council's current harsh political climate thwarts decision-making, OSCE entities have avoided the consensus requirement by holding partner activities in OSCE countries or by working through other organisations in the Mediterranean region. The delegations of the partner states have, on the other hand, voiced dissatisfaction about their

¹³ OSCE Office of Internal Oversight, *Independent Evaluation of Results-Based Management in the OSCE, 2015-2020*, June 2021, <https://www.osce.org/node/491587>. The consensus rule guarantees equality among all 57 OSCE Participating states and is intended to improve states' commitment to implementing the politically binding OSCE decisions. At the same time, it has effectively suspended all decision-making due to widening rifts among the Organization's constituents. See for example Philip Remler, "The OSCE as Sisyphus: Mediation, Peace Operations, Human Rights", in *IAI Papers*, No. 21|16 (April 2021), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/13132>.

¹⁴ See Monika Wohlfeld and Fred Tanner, "Comprehensive Security and New Challenges: Strengthening the OSCE", in *IAI Papers*, No. 21|23 (May 2021), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/13457>.

¹⁵ "The Partnership Fund will not be used to finance the organization of OSCE-related conferences, seminars, workshops, other meetings and activities outside of the OSCE region without an appropriate decision by an OSCE decision-making body," OSCE Permanent Council, *Decision No. 812, Establishment of a Partnership Fund* (PC.DEC/812), 30 November 2007, point 4, <https://www.osce.org/node/29504>.

exclusion from the decision-making process, which precludes them from having a say in OSCE matters of direct concern to them. The “out of area” restriction on technical assistance for the Mediterranean partners, as well as the lack of a permanent presence in the region, pose a multitude of challenges, including of a practical and logistical nature. In addition, these factors prevent the OSCE from gaining visibility in the region and galvanising stakeholder engagement, which would be important given that the Mediterranean partners make little use of opportunities for cooperation and technical support.

2. The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership – A forum for dialogue

There are several intergovernmental formats for dialogue between Europe/ the Euro-Atlantic space and the Mediterranean, including the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue and the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership. That said, the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership is presently the only forum that brings together government officials from North America, Europe and the Mediterranean area.¹⁶

Unlike other organisations, which maintain their own multilateral dialogue distinct from that with their respective partner group, the OSCE’s partners can follow and directly participate in the Organization’s regular political debates. In addition, the OSCE’s multilateralism extends to conferences, seminars and other events at which governmental and civil society experts from throughout the OSCE area and the Mediterranean region share perspectives and experience on security-related topics. Its composition and modalities as well as the comprehensiveness of the security problems that it seeks to address thus

¹⁶ The Union for the Mediterranean is made up of EU member states, partner countries Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mauritania, Montenegro and Turkey. Dialogue within the UfM is organised around meetings of ministers and governmental representatives and focuses on issues concerning human development and sustainable development. The Mediterranean members of the EuroMed partnership are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority. NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue, which takes the form of bilateral and multilateral meetings, includes Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

distinguish it as a one-of-a-kind diplomatic forum.

At the same time, the potential of the OSCE–Mediterranean dialogue could be better utilised. While it is true that the weekly meetings of the PC and FSC provide a permanent forum for security dialogue between Participating states and Partners for Co-operation, the establishment of an additional specific but separate entity for interaction with partners, the MPCG, may have contributed to their marginalisation. Initially designed to better institutionalise the relationships between Ps and partners, and keep Mediterranean concerns on the OSCE's agenda, the MPCG is poorly attended in practice, with just a few ambassadors (decision-makers) participating in its meetings. The OSCE has an extremely busy meeting schedule, which necessitates that the delegations of Ps prioritise their attendance, especially those that do not have the staff to keep up with the never-ending succession of preparatory and consultative processes that take place in various formats. Delegations of partner states, for their part, face the difficult task of keeping up with simultaneous meetings held by the multiple international organisations in Vienna to which they are accredited. This prevents them from systematically attending all the OSCE meetings to which they have access, including the weekly sessions of the PC and FSC, which are at the centre of the OSCE's political dialogue. In addition, the two latter bodies currently have little appeal for engagement by the Mediterranean partners, as the debates among the Ps are often antagonistic, usually inconclusive and mostly inward-looking. The focus on the situation in the OSCE area leaves little room for a discussion of security challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean area. Many Participating states believe that the OSCE already has enough to deal with in its own region and are apprehensive about being drawn into discussions regarding the Middle East, which should be left to other forums.

Yet, a reprioritisation of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership is clearly needed: The rise in insecurity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region since the 2010s has had far-reaching consequences for Europe and beyond. Following the Arab Spring, terrible civil conflicts erupted in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, posing a long-term security danger to neighbouring countries, and resulting in an increase in the number of refugees arriving in Europe. In a nefarious movement pattern connecting the OSCE and MENA areas, foreign terrorist fighters have travelled to and from the conflict zones to propagate their

deadly ideology and commit terrorist acts. Long-standing regional tensions are causing havoc for the Mediterranean region's cohesion and people's human security, while poor governance and weak institutions have exacerbated state–citizen antagonism. Climate change, desertification and water shortages are all threats to environmental security that will worsen current tensions. Moreover, East–West relations are playing out in the MENA region, giving local civil strife a geopolitical dimension. As a result of foreign intervention, existing conflicts have escalated, complicating efforts to resolve them.

Countries on both sides of the Mediterranean should make use of all available fora to engage in meaningful multilateral dialogue to improve their shared security, particularly the opportunity provided by the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership. More recently, OSCE chairs have devoted Permanent Council meetings to the OSCE's cooperation with the Mediterranean partners. The PC, the “principal decision-making body for regular political consultations”,¹⁷ could indeed be used more systematically to examine security-policy problems confronting the OSCE and Mediterranean partners. This would help to better integrate the Mediterranean dimension into the OSCE's ongoing dialogue and make sure that it remains a standing item on the Organization's yearly agenda. Similarly, the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference could be utilised more strategically as a central forum for policy consultations on comprehensive security for ministers from both sides of the Mediterranean.

To mention just one example, the OSCE could serve as a suitable venue for debate on migration. Large South–North movements of migrants and refugees create security dilemmas for nations on both shores of the Mediterranean. They have strained the reception and border-control capacity of littoral countries, caused an asylum-governance crisis in transit and destination countries and exacerbated fragmentation and division within and across European societies. Migration debates in the OSCE have to a large extent been limited to the Organization's contribution to building migration governance capacities in the areas of labour migration, border security and management, human trafficking and human rights. In light of the OSCE's heavily politicised security agenda, some Participating states prefer to use their bilateral, or other

¹⁷ OSCE Ministerial Council, *Rules of Procedure*, cit., p. 3.

multilateral venues to address migration issues. The EU notably has its own channels of communication on migration with the Mediterranean countries, such as the EuroMed Migration programme, which has a dialogue component and includes the six OSCE Mediterranean partners. Furthermore, a few regional intergovernmental dialogues (or regional consultative processes – RCPs) deal specifically with migration.¹⁸ RCPs do play a significant role in increasing knowledge of migration issues, creating capacities for migration governance and sharing information on migration policy.¹⁹ However, none of the existing RCPs have a membership that includes all the countries along the various migratory routes to Europe, including those that transit via the southern Mediterranean littoral states. Furthermore, RCPs usually bring together officials from ministries and agencies in charge of migration governance (mainly ministries of interior) and focus on technical collaboration. But migration is, by definition, a global issue that impacts interstate relations and, as a result, foreign policy concerns. This relationship is becoming increasingly complicated as a succession of “migration and refugee crises” with significant foreign-policy repercussions have occurred in recent years. Foreign policies, on the other hand, have had a considerable influence on international mobility, and mass migration has occasionally been utilised as a foreign policy instrument.²⁰ The OSCE Mediterranean dialogue can offer the currently missing focus on foreign policy and supplement the aforementioned RCP arrangements due to the geographical reach of its membership. Furthermore, it can deal with migration comprehensively, from its geopolitical root causes, socio-economic and environmental drivers to implications for human security, prognosis of migration flows and a contribution to building interstate trust.

¹⁸ These include the Mediterranean Transit Migration Dialogue (MTM), the Euro-African Intergovernmental Dialogue on Migration and Development (also known as the Rabat Process), the Khartoum Process and the Regional Ministerial Conference on Migration in the Western Mediterranean (5+5).

¹⁹ Randall Hansen, “An Assessment of Principal Regional Consultative Processes on Migration”, in *IOM Migration Research Series*, No. 38 (2010), <https://publications.iom.int/node/1040>.

²⁰ Kelly M. Greenhill, “Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement as an Instrument of Coercion”, in *Strategic Insights*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring-Summer 2010), p. 116-159, <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=792542>.

3. Practical cooperation in the Mediterranean region – The OSCE's added value

A review of OSCE documents²¹ reveals an impressive list of contemporary security issues that the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership is supposed to cover through dialogue and cooperation. The list includes the fight against terrorism, all forms of trafficking, organised crime and money laundering; migration governance; the promotion of gender equality; energy security; the environment and security; cyber/ICT security; the protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief; the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination; interfaith and intercultural dialogue; as well as youth participation and engagement. Furthermore, the OSCE has a general mandate to promote its standards and values among its partners. The comprehensive agenda is in line with the OSCE's mandate and shows the Organization's desire to remain relevant and current by responding to changing security concerns. It also ensures that all topics of common interest to OSCE Participating states and Mediterranean partners are addressed. It has, however, also created thematical overlaps with the numerous international actors operating in the Mediterranean region. The following is a brief outline, beginning with the three European and Euro-Atlantic institutions that have a partnership with Mediterranean countries.

As part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU and its southern partners – Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia – have adopted bilateral action plans, cooperation goals and association agendas.²² Previous cooperation programmes included good governance and the rule of law, socio-economic development, migration and refugee relief, climate change, environment, energy and security and totalled 20.5 billion euro between 2007 and 2020.²³ The EU recently presented its “New

²¹ As listed in the most recent OSCE documents related to the Mediterranean Partnership. OSCE Ministerial Council, *Declaration on Co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners* (MC.DOC/9/14), 5 December 2014, <https://www.osce.org/node/130561>; and *Document Nr. 4, Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean*, cit.

²² EU-Syria relations are currently suspended.

²³ European Commission website: *European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations*:

Agenda for the Mediterranean”, which foresees collaborative efforts in the areas of human development, good governance and the rule of law; resilience, prosperity and digital transition; peace and security; migration and mobility; and green transition (climate resilience, energy and the environment). It also includes a plan for economic investment in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic.²⁴ Support is provided in the form of funding and technical assistance, and is based on the policy-first principle, which implies that financing comes after policy dialogue to determine the partners’ specific needs. The EU’s bilateral cooperation with its southern neighbours is supplemented by a regional approach through the UfM, which implements projects to promote stability, human development and integration. The OSCE counts the UfM as a partner. In 2018, the two organisations signed a memorandum of understanding to capitalise on their complementary socio-economic, environmental and security responsibilities.

NATO’s operational collaboration with its partners Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia covers counterterrorism; military-to-military contacts; anti-proliferation of small arms and light weapons; detection of explosive war remnants; countering improvised explosive devices; cyber defence; chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence; crisis management and civil preparedness; as well as security-sector reform.²⁵ Many of these activities are aimed at increasing interoperability so that partner countries may contribute to future crisis management, including NATO-led operations and, when appropriate, the NATO Response Force. In 2017, NATO established a Hub for the South in Naples to improve situational awareness, decision making and information exchange for its operations linked to projecting stability to the South. The OSCE and NATO hold regular staff meetings to exchange information on their respective activities, including those in neighbouring regions.

Southern Neighbourhood, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/european-neighbourhood-policy/southern-neighbourhood_en.

²⁴ European Commission and High Representative of the Union, *Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood. A New Agenda for the Mediterranean* (JOIN/2021/2), 9 February 2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0002>.

²⁵ NATO, *The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2020*, March 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_182236.htm.

The Council of Europe (CoE) has worked with Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia through its Neighbourhood partnerships. The aim of this primarily bilateral form of cooperation is approximation towards the CoE's human rights and justice standards.²⁶ CoE partnerships are mostly funded by the EU with additional support from individual CoE member states.²⁷ To avoid overlap in the human dimension of security, the OSCE and the CoE have established a coordination mechanism. In addition, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has a long-standing cooperation with the CoE's Venice Commission.²⁸ for reviewing constitutional provisions and other (draft) legal norms.

A plurality of UN agencies and UN-linked organisations that operate in the Mediterranean region partially overlap with the OSCE's practical operations in the region.²⁹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC),³⁰ for example, implements projects to fight organised crime, terrorism and corruption, as well as the problems posed by illicit trafficking.³¹ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has projects on electoral aid, gender justice, anti-corruption and preventing violent extremism with a regional component that spans Arab countries. It is also a member of the SDG Climate Facility, along with a group of other organisations,³² which gives access to knowledge and information, catalyses public and private financing, conducts policy-oriented research, and fosters collaborations and networks. Through regional and subregional cooperation, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) fosters the economic and social

²⁶ The Council of Europe also has a high-level bilateral dialogue with Israel, Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia.

²⁷ Council of Europe website: *Policy of the Council of Europe towards Neighbouring Regions*, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/der/policy-towards-neighbouring-regions>.

²⁸ The full name of the Venice Commission is European Commission for Democracy through Law.

²⁹ The OSCE promotes UN rules and values as a regional organisation under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and builds national capacity to implement UN resolutions.

³⁰ The OSCE and UNODC have been cooperating under the framework of joint action plans. The latest edition was signed in 2020 by their respective heads.

³¹ See UNODC, *Regional Programme for the Arab States (2016-2021) to Prevent and Combat Crime, Terrorism and Health Threats and Strengthen Criminal Justice Systems in Line with International Human Rights Standards*, September 2016, <https://www.unodc.org/romena/en/regional-programme-2016---2021.html>.

³² The League of Arab States, the Arab Water Council, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative, UN-Habitat and the World Food Programme.

development of Western Asia. It also backs Arab nations' efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ECSWA is a valuable resource for Arab policymakers since it provides analysis, policy advice, technical support and capacity-building on a variety of topics. In addition, several international migration agencies, including the UNHCR, the IOM and the ICMPD,³³ promote migration governance in the MENA region.

All these issues are part of the OSCE's cooperation mandate with the Mediterranean partners. It is worth noting, however, that thematic overlap does not always imply duplication. Within one security-relevant policy area, organisations frequently address multiple subsets of concerns. In addition, the OSCE has been able to identify niches by closely coordinating with a variety of its partner institutions before embarking on a new project. In fact, the majority of the Organization's programmes involve partnerships with other regional and international actors.³⁴ This often entails collaborating across a wide diversity of views and approaches to security.

Unlike other European or Euro-Atlantic organisations operating in the region, the OSCE has a large and diverse constituency, allowing it to be regarded as a "non-aligned" organisation capable of providing aid without negotiation, conditionality or "strings attached".³⁵ Because the Mediterranean partners are not members of the Organization, they are free to consider the OSCE *acquis* and while the lack of a lever may appear to be a deterrent to collaboration, it can also ensure maximum ownership by the partners.

At the same time, the OSCE has far fewer resources than other international organisations working in the Mediterranean region, and it must streamline its approach to its Mediterranean Partnership and focus on what it does well to have an influence in the region. The next section highlights three of the OSCE's strengths and distinctive assets that set it apart from other organisations and

³³ United Nations High Council for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

³⁴ The Platform for Co-operative Security, agreed at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999, outlines the OSCE's cooperation with various organisations. See OSCE, *Charter for European Security, Istanbul Document*, November 1999, <https://www.osce.org/node/17502>.

³⁵ Monika Wohlfeld, "The OSCE Contribution to Democratization in North African Countries", in *Security and Human Rights*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (2011), p. 383-397, <https://www.shrmonitor.org/assets/uploads/2017/09/07-Wohlfeld-EQ.pdf>.

that should be leveraged in the context of the OSCE Mediterranean dimension. They are exemplified by instances of previous, ongoing and planned OSCE interaction with the Mediterranean partners and could serve as a blueprint for future activities.

3.1 A track record in promoting intraregional cooperation

While the OSCE works with individual project recipients as well, it favours regional initiatives as part of a larger effort to improve interstate confidence. Its working method is to “embod[y] a cooperative approach to security, which is an indispensable component of its political mandate as well as its very rationale for existence”.³⁶

Furthermore, by definition, the OSCE approaches all its activities from a security perspective. This is an important aspect of its work that sets it apart from other international institutions that do not have security as the primary focus of their interventions. Below are two examples of security-related initiatives for the Mediterranean partners that include a significant intraregional cooperation component.

- *Climate action through multilateralism*: Climate change is arguably one of the most critical global security challenges, and the Mediterranean region is particularly vulnerable to the phenomenon. The UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has identified the Mediterranean region (including Southern Europe, North Africa and the Near East) as a “climate change hotspot”. Temperatures across the Mediterranean are projected to rise faster than the worldwide average in the decades to come, leading to heatwaves, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity and ultimately food insecurity.³⁷ The CSCE was among the first international forums to recognise climate phenomena as a common challenge, and encouraged its participating states to cooperate on research on “changes in climate” and “human adaptation to climatic

³⁶ Juraj Nosal, “Capacity-Building in the OSCE Context”, in IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2018*, Baden-Baden, 2019, p. 303-313 at p. 309, <https://ifsh.de/en/publications/osce-yearbook/yearbook-2018>.

³⁷ Ove Hoegh-Guldberg et al., “Impacts of 1.5°C Global Warming on Natural and Human Systems”, in Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report...*, 2018, p. 175-311, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/?p=541>.

extremes”.³⁸ Climate change was then formally included in the OSCE's agenda in 2007. It has been handled since then by facilitating political debate on climate change and security, as well as by implementing actions to identify and address potential security challenges posed by climate change. In Central Asia,³⁹ Eastern Europe,⁴⁰ the South Caucasus⁴¹ and South-Eastern Europe,⁴² the OSCE, together with its partner organisations, has facilitated regional assessments of the security implications of climate change. Risk clusters and geographic hotspots that are particularly relevant for regional security and stability were discovered through scientific and participatory analysis. The assessments have also proposed regional policies to address climate-related security threats. Government representatives, civil society organisations, academics and regional and international organisations have participated in broad intraregional consultations in the form of workshops and surveys. The lessons drawn from the assessments have confirmed that multilateral collaboration is essential to adapt to and alleviate the risks connected with climate change. The regional and transboundary cooperative elements set this activity apart from actions taken by other organisations that are active in the climate-change field. Cooperation and diplomacy on climate change are good places to start when it comes to enhancing neighbourly ties, building trust and increasing confidence. In addition, climate change needs to be addressed at the regional level since it connects global and national action.⁴³ The OSCE is ready to offer its support in replicating the effort in the Mediterranean region, in partnership with the UfM, in order to establish interstate cooperation in identifying and managing the security risks caused by climate change, while

³⁸ CSCE, *Helsinki Final Act*, cit., p. 29, 25.

³⁹ Viktor Novikov and Charles Kelly, *Climate Change and Security in Central Asia. The Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan. Regional Assessment*, Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC), 2017, <https://www.osce.org/node/355471>.

⁴⁰ Lesya Nikolayeva, *Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe. Republic of Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine. Regional Assessment*, ENVSEC, 2017, <https://www.osce.org/node/355496>.

⁴¹ Ieva Rucevska, *Climate Change and Security in the South Caucasus. Republic of Armenia, Republic of Azerbaijan and Georgia. Regional Assessment*, ENVSEC, 2017, <https://www.osce.org/node/355546>. ENVSEC is composed of the OSCE, UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe.

⁴² See Lukas Rüttinger et al., *Regional Assessment for South-Eastern Europe. Security Implications of Climate Change*, Berlin, adelphi / Vienna, OSCE, 2021, <https://www.osce.org/node/484148>.

⁴³ Esra Buttanni, “Climate Change, Global Security, and the OSCE”, in IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2019*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2020, p. 215-229, <https://ifsh.de/en/publications/osce-yearbook/yearbook-2019>.

decreasing tensions and building trust.

- *Regional collaboration in the fight against organised crime:* Across the OSCE and Mediterranean regions, organised crime is a severe threat to security and economic prosperity. Recovering assets taken from criminal organisations is an important aspect of dismantling criminal business models, and their social reuse can help boost public confidence in the rule of law. The OSCE has extensive experience dealing with criminal justice institutions in a variety of countries, including assisting them with asset seizure and confiscation systems. In the Mediterranean region, the UNODC, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the EU, the Council of Europe, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit and the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime run technical assistance projects aimed at strengthening the response of the criminal justice system to organised crime. As a result of coordination with these international and regional organisations, the OSCE suggests focusing on asset management and reuse, an area that has yet to be explored. Because five of the six Mediterranean partners are not members of any of the six regional asset recovery inter-agency networks, the OSCE may be able to assist in the creation of a platform comprised of officials from asset management offices from Mediterranean partner countries, enabling them to address region-specific concerns collaboratively. The OSCE encouraged the establishment of a comparable platform in South-Eastern Europe, the Balkan Asset Management Interagency Network, which is used for an informal exchange of information and practices and has improved cooperation among practitioners.

3.2 Experience in facilitating networks of expertise from different regions

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OSCE Participating states and partners for cooperation agree that the Organization is a useful venue to identify good practices and share knowledge. With a geographic reach that covers Europe, Central Asia, North America and the South Caucasus as well as the Mediterranean, the Organization can connect different regions and facilitate interregional networks of expertise.

OSCE activities with Mediterranean partners for cooperation are often aimed at exchanging know-how; however, they frequently rely on knowledge transfer from Western European experts to their counterparts in the South. They thereby fail to fully utilise the knowledge of the 57 members or that of the 11 Mediterranean and Asian partner states and ignore the reciprocal nature of the partnership. In addition to its constituency, the OSCE can rely on its network of field operations in Central Asia, Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe, its specialised institutions and its Secretariat to draw from a more diverse pool of expertise for activities with the Mediterranean partners. The Organization can also promote interregional connections and facilitate exchanges of good practices and lessons learned between countries facing similar challenges in remote areas. Again, the Organization's structures can be used to find expertise that fits demands for support. The following are a few examples of former, ongoing and proposed activities that have an interregional approach:

- *Border security networks:* The OSCE has a history of connecting border security agencies across the OSCE and Mediterranean regions. It has for example developed a network of contact points among border agencies that connects border focal points from the six Mediterranean partner countries with the OSCE's Border Security and Management National Focal Point Network and the OSCE Secretariat. The network's goal is to improve risk analysis and information exchange. Through a yearly meeting, multimedia conferencing and activities for smaller working groups, it shares good practices, information and ideas. Since its inception in 2009, the OSCE's Border Management Staff College has for its part attracted mid- to senior-level border and customs officers from Mediterranean nations to attend its courses. This includes female officers from Mediterranean countries who completed the College's course for women leaders. The College, which is based in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, trains border guards, border police, customs officers and employees from transnational-crime agencies from all across the OSCE and Mediterranean regions, allowing for unique professional networking opportunities.

- *Connecting female mediators:* Women remain disproportionately underrepresented in peace processes. While women from civil society organisations frequently lead informal peace initiatives, they often stay apart from formal processes. Given the significance of including both women and men in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation,

the OSCE has created a toolkit to promote women's engagement in formal negotiation procedures.⁴⁴ It has also published advice for gender-responsive mediation, which has been translated into Arabic.⁴⁵ As female mediators in different regions face similar challenges, the OSCE is creating a collaborative forum for experience sharing. It connects several regional networks of women mediators, including the Nordic Women Mediators, the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, the Women's Peace Dialogue, the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe and the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, which includes female mediators from the six Mediterranean partner nations.⁴⁶

- *Professional networks to counter human trafficking:* Human traffickers use migration patterns to recruit and exploit vulnerable people along the Mediterranean and Balkan routes, and states along those routes must step up their capacities to effectively investigate and prosecute human trafficking, as well as identify and assist victims of human trafficking. The OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has developed simulation-based training that has provided staff from law enforcement agencies, prosecutorial offices, labour inspectorates, financial investigation units, NGOs and social service providers in OSCE member and partner states with a true-to-life learning opportunity. The training has promoted multiagency collaboration within states and has also resulted in the formation of strong interregional networks among practitioners. The activity, which began as a multi-year effort to secure the long-term viability of established networks, was designed for the Mediterranean area and is currently being reproduced in Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Leena Avonius et al., *Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes. A Toolkit*, Vienna, OSCE, December 2019, <https://www.osce.org/node/440735>.

⁴⁵ Miroslava Beham and Luisa Dietrich, *Enhancing Gender-Responsive Mediation. A Guidance Note*, Vienna, OSCE, October 2013, <https://www.osce.org/node/107533>.

⁴⁶ In early 2021, OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid made a pledge as an international gender champion to "[a]ctively support networks of women change makers working in comprehensive security by promoting dialogue across regions, groups and generations; convene one networking event with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation for women mediators". International Gender Champions website: *Helga Maria Schmid*, <https://genderchampions.com/champions/helga-maria-schmid>.

⁴⁷ OSCE, *Simulation-based Training Exercises to Combat Human Trafficking. A Practical Handbook*, Vienna, OSCE, 2019, <https://www.osce.org/node/413510>.

- *Exchange of renewable energy experience among regions:* As an organisation that brings together energy suppliers, transit countries and energy consumers, the OSCE has worked on energy security by promoting regional and subregional collaboration, managing interdependence between states and non-state actors, and ensuring that energy policies reflect security, environmental and human rights considerations. The OSCE's engagement with the southern Mediterranean region has mostly centred on sustainable energy. Because certain partner countries have obtained valuable energy transition experience, the OSCE may encourage the sharing of that experience with countries and areas undergoing comparable energy transitions. Central Asian countries, for example, might benefit from some of the Mediterranean partner countries' significant knowledge about the deployment of centralised solutions for generating renewable energy. Similarly, some Mediterranean partners could lend their expertise to the "greening" of ports in the Caspian Sea and Black Sea regions, as well as dry ports in Central Asia, which are struggling to reconcile the expansion of Euro-Asian commercial routes with obligations to reduce the environmental footprint of their trading operations. Field trips to Morocco's port of Tangier Med, for example, could provide significant insights into the application of green-port principles.

3.3 Cumulative knowledge in core areas of the OSCE's comprehensive security

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The OSCE has considerably expanded the scope of its activities in order to respond to the ever-increasing list of security concerns. In order to address as many challenges as possible, the Organization's more recent work with partners and regional organisations has often overlooked cooperation in areas widely considered the OSCE's core competency. To ensure that the Organization provides distinctive value to its partners, several of its hallmark activities could be prioritised. These include:

- *Conflict prevention and resolution:* The OSCE was conceived as an instrument for early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management and

post-conflict rehabilitation.⁴⁸ Its conflict-cycle toolkit has evolved over three decades and is continually being enhanced.⁴⁹ Since 2012, the League of Arab States (LAS) has also been developing its capacity to respond to crises, conflicts and post-conflict situations.⁵⁰ The OSCE and the LAS are both regional organisations under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter with responsibility for maintaining peace and security in their respective regions. They have worked together to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism and have exchanged knowledge at high-level seminars on a number of themes, including conflict prevention. This dialogue could be more systematic. Previous OSCE–LAS talks have also focused on lessons learned in terms of early warning and early intervention. This earlier contact might also be revived by, for example, having regular exchanges on deployment experiences, the development of mediation (support) capacities or plans to improve current instruments and adapt them to good practices in terms of horizon scanning and emerging new security challenges.

- *Confidence-building measures*: The CSCE/OSCE has long been at the forefront of developing and agreeing on military and non-military confidence-building measures (CBMs) to promote transparency and create trust among its Participating states, even during times of high tension. In fact, the Helsinki Final Act included the first set of CBMs aimed at improving interstate ties between Cold War adversaries. Later the focus shifted towards military confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs). Two examples are the Vienna Document, which promotes predictability and military stability among OSCE Participating states through transparency and verification measures, and the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security,⁵¹ a rulebook that guides

⁴⁸ Emiliano Alessandri originally proposed putting the OSCE's conflict cycle tools and the development of CSBMs at the heart of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership at an International Affairs Forum meeting on "The Global Mediterranean and the OSCE Platform for Dialogue", 8 March 2021. See the event's report at https://www.ia-forum.org/Content/ViewInternal_Document.cfm?contenttype_id=5&ContentID=9138.

⁴⁹ Michael Raith, "Addressing the Conflict Cycle: The OSCE's Evolving Toolbox", in IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Insights 2020. Corona, War, Leadership Crisis*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2020, p. 43-58, <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748922339-03>.

⁵⁰ The LAS Crisis Room was established with EU funding. The UNDP and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research have contributed to the development of necessary technical knowledge and skills among LAS personnel.

⁵¹ CSCE Forum for Security Co-operation, *Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security* (DOC. FSC/1/95), Budapest, 3 December 1994, <https://www.osce.org/node/41355>.

interstate relations and ensures that armed and security forces are under democratic control. More recently, the Organization's Participating states have established and are further developing a set of CBMs to mitigate the risks of conflict resulting from the use of ICTs. They aim to make cyberspace more predictable by providing concrete tools and methods for avoiding and resolving future misunderstandings. In the context of the Mediterranean Partnership, the OSCE has promoted its CBMs and CSBMs by conducting awareness-raising activities – for example, on the Code of Conduct. In 2013, the code was translated into Arabic at the request of the League of Arab States. The OSCE has also held workshops on the relevance of ICT-related CBMs for Mediterranean security. The goal of these workshops was to improve policymakers' and technical officers' abilities to engage meaningfully with OSCE cyber/ICT security activities, as well as to foster informal links among ICT specialists so that they could better address cyber/ICT security challenges together.

The OSCE's vast experience in improving interstate and state–society relations through non-military CBMs could be especially pertinent for the Mediterranean area, which is characterised by low levels of trust. The OSCE's working definition of non-military CBMs designates “actions or processes undertaken in all phases of the conflict cycle and across the three dimensions of security in political, economic, environmental, social or cultural fields with the aim of increasing transparency and the level of trust and confidence between two or more conflicting parties to prevent inter-State and intra-State conflicts from emerging, or (re-) escalating and to pave the way for lasting conflict settlement.”⁵² The Organization's structures have facilitated the development of CBMs in such diverse regions and areas as water projects in the framework of the Geneva International Discussions on the Conflict in Georgia; multi-ethnic mediation networks in Southern Kyrgyzstan; and multilingual education in Southern Serbia. Rather than proposing agreed-upon sets of measures, focusing on the process (i.e., the technique and principles for the development of CBMs) might possibly be a better way to share confidence-building experience and ensure the participants' ownership. This might be done through simulation exercises and discussions about the OSCE region's CBMs with national and

⁵² OSCE, *OSCE Guide on Non-Military Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)*, Vienna, OSCE, 2012, <https://www.osce.org/node/91082>.

local stakeholders and civil society. The emphasis on process rather than substance would enable interested national stakeholders to choose the extent and content of the measures, assuring ownership and better integrating them into the Southern Mediterranean regional framework. It would also help to shift the focus away from the concept of exporting European security ideas to the Mediterranean area and towards learning from the positive and negative lessons gained from the OSCE's experience with European security.

- *Sustainable peacebuilding*: The OSCE, as the world's largest regional security organisation, has significant expertise in sustainable peacebuilding. Related activities include post-conflict institution-building; community security to restore trust in law enforcement and the rule of law; education for tolerance and respect for diversity; reconciliation; and people-to-people contacts.⁵³ Through its network of field operations, the OSCE has gathered best practices from on-the-ground actions that may be shared with partner countries. In turn, the OSCE may learn from Mediterranean experiences to extend its relevant toolkit.

- *Democratisation and human rights*: ODIHR marked its 30th anniversary in 2021. Established under the Paris Charter of 1990 as the Office for Free Elections and launched in 1991, ODIHR is today the leading institution for election observation in the OSCE region and an important provider of human rights and democracy assistance to governments and civil society. Following the so-called Arab Spring in 2011, the OSCE, like many other international organisations, saw an opportunity to enhance ties with Mediterranean partners by supporting democratisation initiatives in the Mediterranean area.⁵⁴ Between 2012 and 2017, ODIHR increased its engagement in support of civil society and government leaders in the Mediterranean partner countries. As funding has dried up, however, the degree of collaboration in the human dimension has diminished. Furthermore, the partners' request for technical assistance, which is required for the OSCE to lend its support, was limited to

⁵³ OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, *Building Sustainable Peace and Democracy: OSCE Experiences in South-Eastern Europe. A Reference Guide*, Vienna, OSCE, 2018, <https://www.osce.org/node/383751>.

⁵⁴ Nathalie Tagwerker, Ruben-Eric Diaz-Plaja and Bernhard Knoll, "The OSCE and the Middle East and North African Region: Not So Fast?", in *Security and Human Rights*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2012), p. 191-197, <https://www.shrmonitor.org/osce-middle-east-north-african-region-not-fast>.

Tunisia.⁵⁵ Mediterranean partner delegates attend ODIHR events, ODIHR has created a course to help young policy advisors from Mediterranean partner countries enhance their policymaking abilities, and 20 ODIHR handbooks and manuals are now accessible in Arabic. The Mediterranean partners, on the other hand, could make better use of ODIHR's long-standing experience in election observation methodology, legislative support, policy discussion for increased political involvement of women and youth, and human rights training. ODIHR has expertise supporting countries across the OSCE region in these areas, and its tools can be tailored to the Mediterranean environment. The post-pandemic recovery can offer opportunities for renewed engagement between ODIHR and the Mediterranean partner states. The institution has collected many lessons learnt about the human rights impacts of the pandemic, has published resources and recommendations for states; and can play a role in assessing the impact of the pandemic on democracy and human rights and offer relevant assistance moving forward.⁵⁶

4. The CSCE/OSCE as a source of inspiration for the Mediterranean region?

In addition to functioning as a venue for Euro–Mediterranean dialogue and practical collaboration, the OSCE has been cited as a viable model for a multilateral security forum in the Mediterranean. Several calls have been made for a Helsinki process for the Mediterranean region or the replication of CSCE/OSCE-style structures in the Mediterranean and/or MENA region.⁵⁷ More

⁵⁵ ODIHR reviewed several draft laws including on peaceful assembly and terrorism, the Draft Act on the Crime of Enforced Disappearance, as well as legislation pertaining to the Higher Committee for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (in part with the Venice Commission). Other work has included the promotion of women's participation in political and public life and training in election observation. OSCE/ODIHR, *ODIHR Annual Report 2012*, Warsaw, 2013, <https://www.osce.org/node/100110>; and *ODIHR Annual Report 2013*, Warsaw, 2014, <https://www.osce.org/node/119809>.

⁵⁶ OSCE/ODIHR, *OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic*, Warsaw, 2020, <https://www.osce.org/node/457567>.

⁵⁷ See for example Nathalie Tagwerker, Ruben-Eric Diaz-Plaja and Bernhard Knoll, "The OSCE and the Middle East and North African Region: Not So Fast?", cit.; Emiliano Alessandri, "Reviving Multilateral

recently, Malta's foreign minister, Evarist Bartolo, revived the debate by calling for a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean, which should deal with human security, the challenges posed by climate change, the coronavirus pandemic, trade and migration.⁵⁸ The Helsinki process has also been mentioned as a prospective model for security in the Persian Gulf, which lacks an inclusive platform for regional security cooperation.⁵⁹

It is worth noting that the marathon-like process of the CSCE involved thousands of meetings, countless proposals and a great deal of uncertainty before the Helsinki Final Act was approved. This key text was accepted by the Participating states because the 10 interstate relations principles contained in it strike a balance between differing emphases of these principles.⁶⁰ Similarly, the CSCE/OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and the balance between its three dimensions were the outcome of a lengthy discussion process. This process ensured that all states had enough room for their respective priorities, resulting in an agreed-upon platform for dialogue and interaction. The availability of that platform, which keeps communication channels open even during times of crisis, is one of the most commonly acknowledged benefits of the OSCE model, along with the significant body of politically binding commitments that it has created over the last 40 years.

The Helsinki process laid the foundation for a European security architecture that has contributed to decades of peace, but current challenges, such as the crisis in and around Ukraine and other conflicts, are putting Europe's record to the test. The OSCE is not only a product of its time, but it is also in perpetual flux and often called into question. Wilhelm Höynck, the OSCE's first-ever Secretary

Security Dialogue in the MENA: Finding the Hard, But Possible, Compromise", in *OCP Policy Center Policy Briefs*, No. 17/12 (April 2017), <https://www.policycenter.ma/node/3936>.

⁵⁸ Sebastijan R. Maček, "Ministers Call for OSCE-Type Conference for the Mediterranean", in *Euractiv*, 3 September 2021, <https://www.euractiv.com/?p=1642161>; "Italy, Vatican Representatives Welcome Malta's Proposal on Med Security, Cooperation", in *Malta Independent*, 14 September 2021, <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2021-09-14/local-news/6736236705>.

⁵⁹ Frederic Wehrey and Richard Sokolsky, *Imagining a New Security Order in the Persian Gulf*, Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2015, <https://carnegieendowment.org/publications/61618>.

⁶⁰ The principles guiding relations between participating states in the CSCE, the so-called decalogue, include sovereign equality, refraining from the threat or use of force, inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity of states, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-intervention in internal affairs, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, cooperation among States and fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.

General,⁶¹ described it as follows in a speech in 2012:

I cannot remember how often I have seen discussions about the future of CSCE or OSCE. Feelings of crisis or concerns about difficult times for OSCE have not been extraordinary incidents; they have appeared almost as a standard item on OSCE health certificates. This is a genetic defect of OSCE that certainly needs treatment, but which is not life-threatening.⁶²

All of this is to suggest that the OSCE remains a one-of-a-kind framework for cooperative security and cannot serve as a blueprint for how other regional cooperation mechanisms should work. What it can do is share the lessons learned (both successes and failures) from more than four decades of experience in fostering cooperative security in its region. This should start with the Helsinki preparatory talks in the early 1970s, which outlined the practical arrangements and rules of procedure for dialogue among Participating states. Placing the emphasis on the underlying diplomatic processes can help to avoid “exporting [European] models of cooperative security to the Mediterranean region, but rather using [them] as sources of inspiration”⁶³ and predicating success on specific outcomes. Rather than the Helsinki conclusion, the “Helsinki method”,⁶⁴ as then-Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni referred to it, might serve as an example for multilateral security cooperation in the wider Mediterranean area. Any new regional security arrangement will undoubtedly be shaped by the historical and political environment in which it operates. In the MENA and Gulf regions, however, this environment does currently not offer any realistic short-term options for a multilateral security forum.

⁶¹ Wilhelm Höynck was OSCE Secretary General from 1993 to 1996.

⁶² Wilhelm Höynck, *Statement on the OSCE Medal* (CIO/GAL/182/12), Vienna, 20 December 2012, <https://www.osce.org/node/98820>.

⁶³ Monika Wohlfeld, “The Concept of Cooperative Security”, in Monika Wohlfeld (ed.), *Cooperative Security and the Mediterranean*, Msida, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, April 2020, p. 8-23, https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/439855/CooperativeSecurityandtheMediterraneanMEDAgenda.pdf.

⁶⁴ US Department of State, *Joint Press Availability with Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni*, Rome, 2 December 2016, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/12/264781.htm>.

5. Refocusing the OSCE Mediterranean dimension – Conclusion and policy recommendations

The OSCE provides significant prospects for ongoing Euro-Mediterranean security discourse and cooperation, but it is mired in a vicious cycle of procedural limits, financial constraints and lack of political prioritisation. Underlying this cycle is a lack of common vision and political will, as well as the OSCE's current state of play, which is damaging to its Mediterranean dimension. Getting out of the deadlock and leveraging the OSCE's competitive strengths for security challenges in the larger Euro-Mediterranean space will require intent and strategy.

Since the establishment of formal OSCE relations with the Mediterranean partners in 1994, the OSCE has been examining ways to strengthen its contribution to Mediterranean security on a regular basis, leading to an ever-more structured and operational cooperation framework. A number of (unrealised) suggestions to revive the Mediterranean Partnership have surfaced in recent years, particularly within the context of the New-Med Research Network.⁶⁵ These include revising the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group's function and procedures, better connecting its work with that of the Permanent Council, ensuring better follow-up to events and activities with partner states, adopting a more strategic approach to projects, enabling activities to take place in partner states and providing funding from the OSCE's regular budget.⁶⁶ This report supports these recommendations,

⁶⁵ Launched in 2014, the New-Med Research Network is a network of independent Mediterranean scholars who examine the evolution of broad geopolitical trends in the Mediterranean, engaging in research, outreach and dissemination activities as well as Track II and Track 1.5 initiatives. Guided by a commitment to comprehensive security, New-Med approaches Mediterranean security issues from a non-Eurocentric perspective. The Network is run by the Rome-based Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the OSCE Secretariat and the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation. For more information see the official website (<https://www.new-med.net>) and IAI website (<https://www.iai.it/en/node/2004>).

⁶⁶ See, for example, Istituto Affari Internazionali, "Towards 'Helsinki +40': The OSCE, the Global Mediterranean, and the Future of Cooperative Security", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 14|08 (October 2014), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/2377>.

starting with the format and cooperation modalities.

The Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group's informality provides for a more open exchange between delegations than would be possible in a more formal setting, but its status as an informal subsidiary body (ISB) of the Permanent Council⁶⁷ implies that it has a preparatory and technical function.⁶⁸ The poor participation at MPCG meetings, particularly by heads of delegations warrants a reassessment of meeting formats with Mediterranean partners. This might imply a more systematic inclusion of Mediterranean security-related topics in PC and FSC sessions, which would draw greater attention by all delegates. At least one PC or joint FSC/PC meeting per year could be devoted to discussing Euro-Mediterranean concerns at the ambassadorial level, for example. Raising the more political talks on Mediterranean issues to the level of the PC and giving the MPCG a role in preparing for that meeting would better represent the two bodies' different statuses and would recentre the Mediterranean dimension. There is also potential in the OSCE's flexibility and convening power to bring together governmental representatives, experts, international organisations and civil society at different levels and in various constellations to discuss how to strengthen multilateral responses to a range of security challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

Several recommendations to establish "programmatic baskets" or "framework initiatives"⁶⁹ for partnership activities have been made but never implemented. These would, however, be necessary to promote a shift away from the current random approach to technical collaboration with Mediterranean partners and toward more coherent and long-term programming. The development of multiannual or even just biannual work plans should be considered. The latter would take advantage of the fact that the chair of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group will preside over the OSCE the following year, ensuring

⁶⁷ OSCE Ministerial Council, *Rules of Procedure*, cit.

⁶⁸ This is the case for the other ISBs of the PC, which are used to hold expert-level discussions and draft OSCE documents. Also see footnote 8.

⁶⁹ OSCE Secretariat, *Speech by the OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier at the Conference on Helsinki + 40: The Mediterranean Chapter and the Future of Mediterranean*, Valletta, 10 November 2015, <https://www.osce.org/node/198771>; and Stephen Calleya and Monika Wohlfeld (eds), *Helsinki Plus 40: The Mediterranean Chapter of the Helsinki Final Act and the Future of Mediterranean Co-operation*, Msida, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, Malta, February 2016, p. 27-32, https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/278874/Helsinki40FinalActPublication.pdf.

more consistency in the activities undertaken. A longer-term approach to partnership activities would also encourage better coordination among OSCE structures in preparing proposals for activities to maximise their synergies. Following the OSCE Ministerial Council held in Vilnius in 2011, OSCE structures published a list of proposed projects of special interest to the Mediterranean partners for cooperation, which was compiled in direct cooperation with the partners.⁷⁰ Multiannual work plans would differ from that practice by placing individual activities within a strategic framework of priorities and longer-term objectives. They should be based on the existing OSCE documents that pertain to the Mediterranean Partnership and implemented along central topics of mutual interest. The latter could be distilled through a consultation process including the partners, the OSCE Troika⁷¹ and the secretary general.

The work plans could be developed in the framework of the MPCG and presented to the FSC/PC for a broader discussion but not for formal approval, given their status as working documents and considering that partner activities are funded through voluntary contributions. Periodic reports on workplan implementation would be given to the PC to ensure maximum transparency, and the outcomes would be discussed at the annual OSCE Mediterranean conference.

Multiyear work plans might also help the delegations make a more convincing case for project funding to their capitals. Fundraising for extrabudgetary initiatives is often handled by the OSCE entities that will carry out the activities in question. In the case of activities with partners, however, Participating states could be engaged in a manner similar to that of the FSC chair, who appoints coordinators from among FSC delegates to assist it in driving progress in defined thematic areas, raising awareness for planned and ongoing activities, and mobilising funds for projects.⁷² This could contribute to expanding the number of countries involved in the Mediterranean dimension and give them shared ownership of the related activities.

⁷⁰ OSCE, *The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership for Co-operation. A Compilation of Relevant Documents and Information*, Vienna, OSCE, 2014, <https://www.osce.org/node/132176>.

⁷¹ The OSCE Troika is composed of the incoming, current and outgoing OSCE Chairmanships.

⁷² The FSC chair is supported by coordinators for the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, activities related to small arms and light weapons and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Projects with the Mediterranean partners could remain small in scope, but should be distinct from those of other organisations. Introducing the parameters outlined in this report might assist the OSCE in maximising its relevance in the Euro-Mediterranean region:

- *Fostering intraregional cooperation:* Without precluding individual assistance projects upon partners' requests, work with the Mediterranean partners as a group should be included in projects. Of course, the Mediterranean Partnership is not oblivious to regional tensions, and regional dynamics, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and current tensions between Algeria and Morocco, unavoidably affect the Partnership's activities. At the same time, the Organization is known for its ability to find common ground where interests coincide and take small but incremental steps towards cooperation. The regional approach to security-relevant activities sets the OSCE apart from other organisations and reflects the Organization's long-standing experience in fostering interstate cooperation.

- *Leveraging membership:* The cumulative experience of Participating and partner states must be represented in the activities of the Partnership. Not all states are currently involved in the Mediterranean dimension, and the participation of key actors such as the Russian Federation and the United States would be critical in this respect. The sharing of information and skills through peer-to-peer programmes should be based on reciprocity, with the understanding that OSCE and Mediterranean subregions may benefit from one another.

- *Focusing on core OSCE expertise:* In a race to cover as many security issues as possible, traditional OSCE areas of competence have not been central to cooperation with the Mediterranean partners. Underlying the suggested areas of engagement – conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, confidence-building measures, and the promotion of democratisation and human rights – is the goal of increasing trust among regional players as well as between governments and their populations.

This study identified several instances of initiatives that can bring value to security in the OSCE and Mediterranean areas, demonstrating the Organization's creativity in finding security solutions. Some of them, such as

study trips to Mediterranean partner countries to learn from their experiences, are presently not feasible due to the so-called out-of-area restriction. The need to hold activities with partners in member countries impedes the Mediterranean Partnership's operationalisation. It imposes logistical constraints, limits the scope and sustainability of operations, and decreases the OSCE's visibility in the Mediterranean area, which is critical for the partners' engagement. The restriction was introduced in 2007 (as part of the decision creating the Partnership Fund, see footnote 16) in part to prevent the diversion of unified budget resources from their core purpose in OSCE countries. This predates, however, the newer practice by OSCE structures of including project management costs in the budgets of extrabudgetary projects, as well as an internal policy guidance from 2018 introducing a standard percentage rate for expenses incurred in providing support to extrabudgetary activities (indirect common costs or "overheads") in extrabudgetary projects. In view of these developments, the Participating states should consider lifting the requirement for authorisation of projects taking place outside of OSCE activities in order to take OSCE-Mediterranean cooperation to the next level.

Finally, the OSCE must boost its visibility in the Mediterranean region in order to gain greater impact there. This includes i) raising awareness and increasing understanding of the OSCE, ii) establishing a narrative that describes the OSCE's added value that it can provide to the area and iii) spreading success stories that illustrate the potential of its actions. To that end more OSCE documents could be translated into Arabic and disseminated to opinion leaders, academia and thinktanks, beginning with the Helsinki Final Act⁷³ as well as publications aimed at preserving and making available the institutional memory of the CSCE/OSCE.⁷⁴ To reach out to active audiences in the Mediterranean area, particularly youth, the Organization could deploy customised social media campaigns. Furthermore, high-level visits to the area by the OSCE chair and

⁷³ Andrea Dessì, "The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, Libya and the MENA Crisis: Potential, Limits and Prospects", in Andrea Dessì and Ettore Greco (eds), *The Search for Stability in Libya. OSCE's Role between Internal Obstacles and External Challenges*, Rome, Nuova Cultura, 2018, p. 15-45, <https://www.iai.it/en/node/9331>.

⁷⁴ Examples include *CSCE Testimonies. Causes and Consequences of Helsinki Final Act 1972–1989* by the OSCE Documentation Centre, which was produced in 2013 in the context of an OSCE oral history project and features interviews with prominent figures involved in the Helsinki process (<https://www.osce.org/node/459244>); and *Helsinki Catch. European Security Accords 1975* by Maarhu Reimaa (Helsinki, Edita, 2008), which describes Finland's role in the CSCE.

secretary general would not just allow for talks with state officials but could also be used to promote public awareness about the Organization.

The recommendations above should not be seen as a replacement for, but rather as a complement to, mainstreaming the Mediterranean component in the OSCE's work, including the participation of partner representatives in all activities, in the spirit of the Milan declaration, which

call[ed] for Mediterranean-related issues to be clearly reflected throughout the relevant work of the OSCE across the three dimensions of comprehensive security, and for greater engagement in advancing a common approach in tackling the related challenges, many of which are transnational and cross-dimensional in nature, and in seizing emerging opportunities, in a spirit of genuine partnership, co-operation, and ownership.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ OSCE Ministerial Council, *Document Nr. 4, Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean*, cit., point 2.

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List of acronyms

CBMs	Confidence-Building Measures
CoE	Council of Europe
CSBMs	Confidence- and Security-Building Measures
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
ENVSEC	Environment and Security Initiative
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia
EU	European Union
FSC	Forum for Security Co-operation
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFSH	Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISB	Informal Subsidiary Body
LAS	League of Arab States
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MPCG	Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group
MTM	Mediterranean Transit Migration Dialogue
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation
PC	Permanent Council
Ps	Participating states
RCP	Regional Consultative Process
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Council for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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The OSCE and Effective Multilateralism in the Mediterranean: A Comparative Analysis

The Organization for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) is widely credited as an East–West forum, but its Mediterranean dimension is less well known. The foundation for the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership was laid in the 1975 Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which recognised that improving security could not be limited to Europe but must also extend to the Mediterranean area. Since then, the OSCE has established a structured Partnership with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia involving both political dialogue and practical cooperation along the OSCE's comprehensive definition of security. However, the Partnership's full potential has been hampered by a lack of resources and political prioritisation. This is a missed opportunity because in dealing with some of the Euro-Mediterranean area's most serious security challenges, the OSCE has some particular comparative advantages.



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