EUROMED SURVEY OF EXPERTS AND ACTORS

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION

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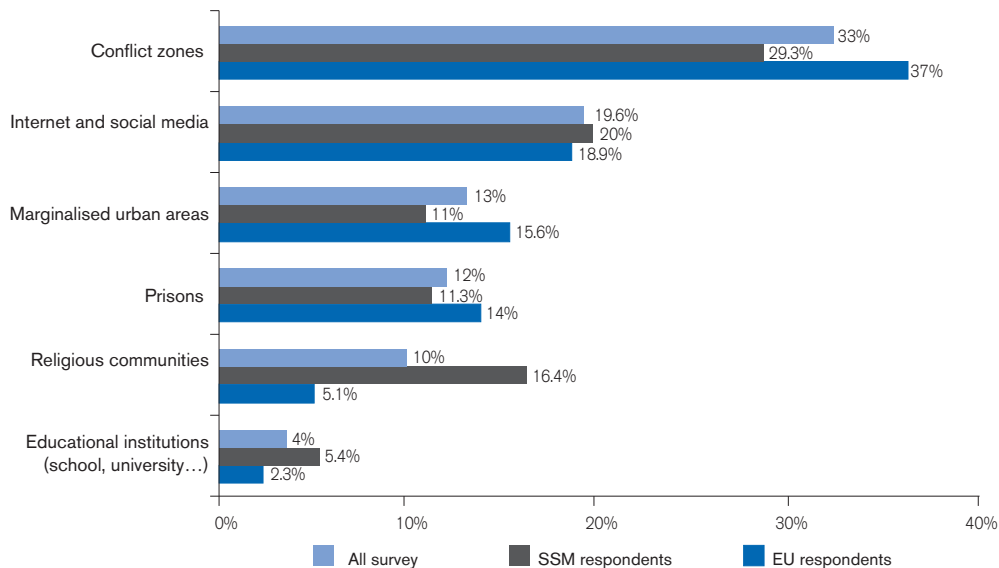
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8ᵗʰ Euromed Survey

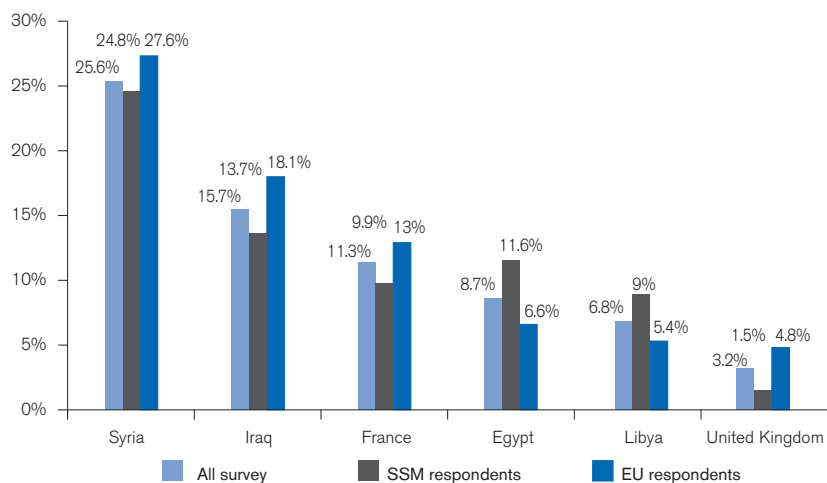## Context and Drivers of Violent Extremism

- Overall, conflict zones are seen as offering the most fertile environment for violent extremism.

- Southern and Southeast Mediterranean (SSM) respondents are more prone to identify religious communities and educational institutions as environments in which an individual can turn into a violent extremist than EU respondents.

In which environments and contexts are recruiters more likely to successfully turn an individual into a violent extremist? (results show the first choice out of three)

	All survey	SSM respondents	EU respondents
Conflict zones	33%	29.3%	37%
Internet and social media	19.6%	20%	18.9%
Marginalised urban areas	13%	11%	15.6%
Prisons	12%	11.3%	14%
Religious communities	10%	16.4%	5.1%
Educational institutions (school, university…)	4%	5.4%	2.3%

- Only one EU country (France) among the five most exposed Euromed countries.

- Respondents are more prone to consider that other countries are exposed to the threat of violent extremism rather than their own country.
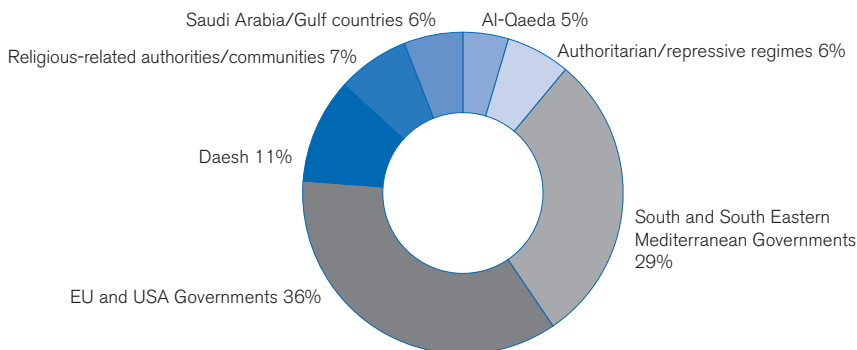
* Respondents had a drop-down menu with the 43 Euro-Mediterranean countries (members of the Union for the Mediterranean) as well as Russia, the US and the Gulf countries, Iran and Iraq.

Which of these countries* are likely to become targets or continue being targeted by violent extremism in the upcoming years? (results show the first choice out of three)

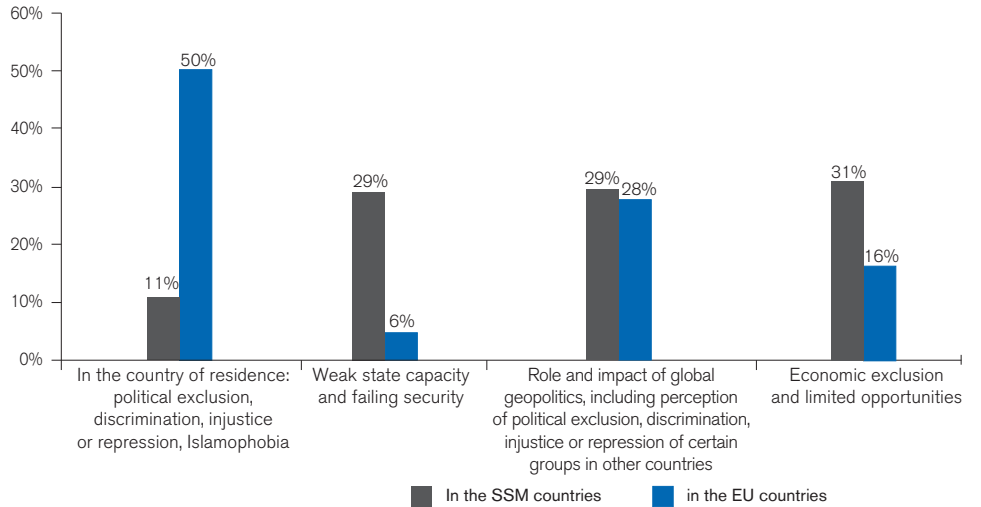|	All survey	SSM respondents	EU respondents
Syria	25.6%	24.8%	27.6%
Iraq	15.7%	13.7%	18.1%
France	11.3%	9.9%	13%
Egypt	8.7%	11.6%	6.6%
Libya	6.8%	9%	5.4%
United Kingdom	3.2%	1.5%	4.8%

- State authorities have a particular responsibility in the surge of violent extremism (foreign military interventions, authoritarian trends or the failure to come up with inclusive policies).

Which actor(s) (governmental or non-governmental) has (have) a particular responsibility for the surge of violent extremism? (categories developed from the open-ended answers)
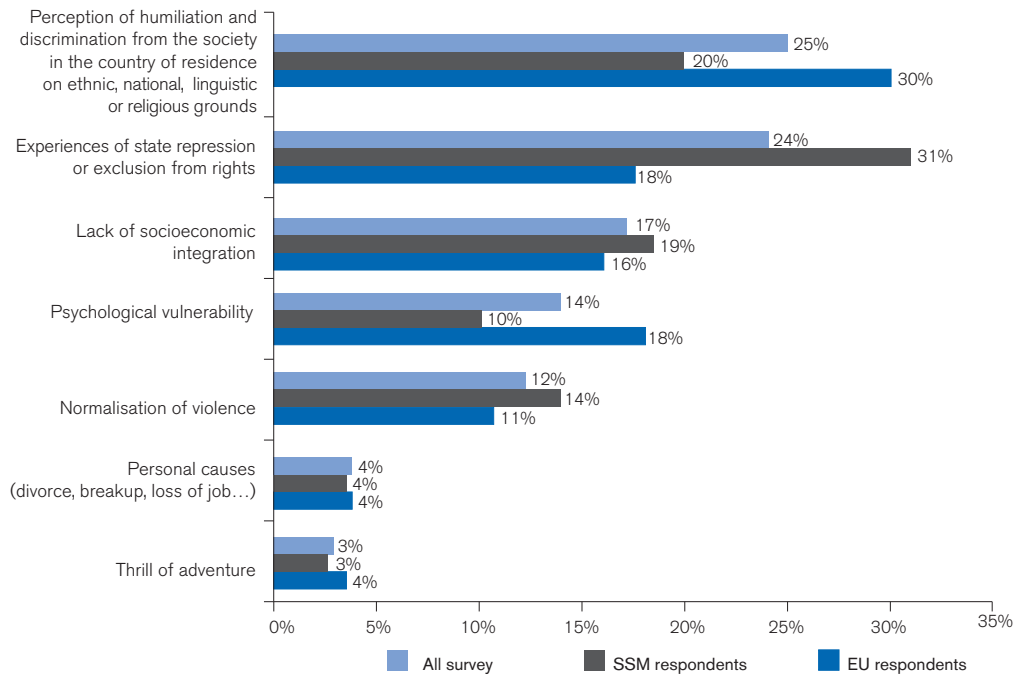
- Saudi Arabia/Gulf countries 6%
- Al-Qaeda 5%
- Religious-related authorities/communities 7%
- Authoritarian/repressive regimes 6%
- Daesh 11%
- South and South Eastern Mediterranean Governments 29%
- EU and USA Governments 36%

- Main drivers of violent extremism are social rather than religious.

- "Economic exclusion and limited opportunities" and "Weak state capacity" are seen as key drivers of violent extremism in SSM countries. "Political exclusion and discrimination" is seen as key driver in EU countries.

Drivers providing fertile ground for the development of violent extremism.
(% of the most significant driver in group of countries)

Categories: In the country of residence: political exclusion, discrimination, injustice or repression, Islamophobia — In the SSM countries 11%, in the EU countries 50%; Weak state capacity and failing security — 29%, 6%; Role and impact of global geopolitics, including perception of political exclusion, discrimination, injustice or repression of certain groups in other countries — 29%, 28%; Economic exclusion and limited opportunities — 31%, 16%

Legend: In the SSM countries / in the EU countries

- At a more individual level: perceived humiliation and discrimination from the society in the country of residence on ethnic, national, linguistic or religious grounds (in particular for respondents from EU countries) and the experiences of state repression or exclusion from rights (in particular for respondents from SSM countries) are key drivers.
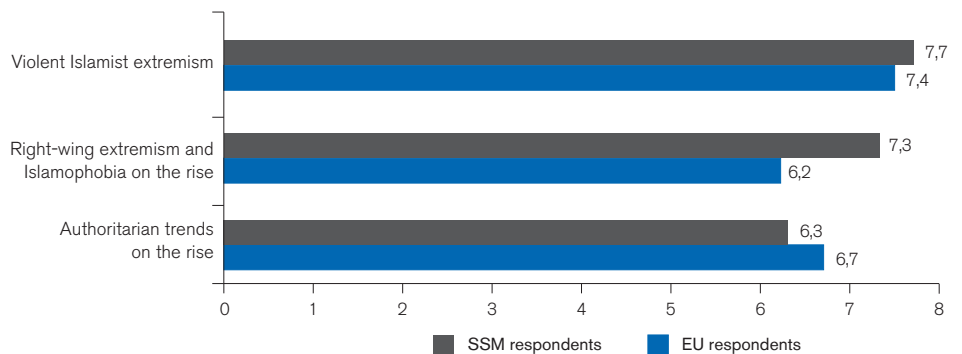
In addition to an enabling environment, to what extent can the following elements help to explain why an individual turns to violent extremism? (results show the first choice out of three)

- Perception of humiliation and discrimination from the society in the country of residence on ethnic, national, linguistic or religious grounds: All survey 25%, SSM respondents 20%, EU respondents 30%
- Experiences of state repression or exclusion from rights: 24%, 31%, 18%
- Lack of socioeconomic integration: 17%, 19%, 16%
- Psychological vulnerability: 14%, 10%, 18%
- Normalisation of violence: 12%, 14%, 11%
- Personal causes (divorce, breakup, loss of job…): 4%, 4%, 4%
- Thrill of adventure: 3%, 3%, 4%

Legend: All survey / SSM respondents / EU respondents
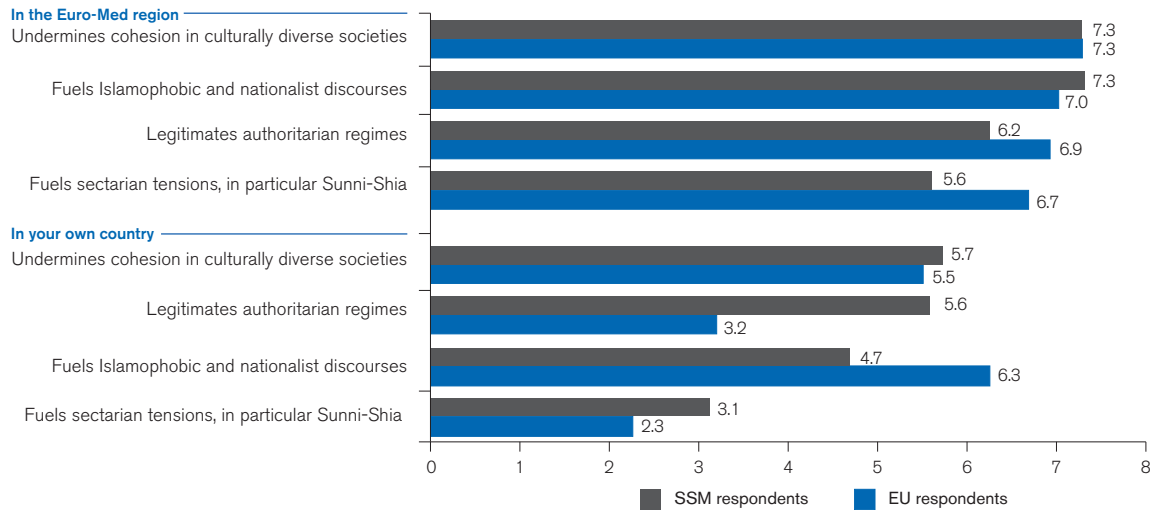
Impact of Violent Extremism

- Violent Islamist extremism is perceived as main threat to the region. However, other phenomena also affect its stability and security: right-wing extremism and Islamophobia (for a majority of respondents from Southern Mediterranean countries) and authoritarian trends (for a majority of European respondents).

To what extent do you consider that the following phenomena threaten the stability and security of the Euro-Mediterranean countries and societies as a whole?
(mean 0-very low extent, 10-very high extent)

- Violent Islamist extremism: SSM respondents 7,7, EU respondents 7,4
- Right-wing extremism and Islamophobia on the rise: 7,3, 6,2
- Authoritarian trends on the rise: 6,3, 6,7

Legend: SSM respondents / EU respondents

- The main perverse effect of terrorist attacks in the Euro-Mediterranean region is the risk of undermining cohesion in culturally diverse societies.

- Respondents acknowledge that violent extremism can fuel Islamophobia and nationalist discourses in some countries or be used in order to legitimate authoritarian regimes in others.

In addition to the harm caused by terrorist attacks as such, to what extent do you consider that the following indirect effects of violent extremism threaten the stability of the Euro-Mediterranean space and your own country? (mean 0-very low extent, 10-very high extent)

In the Euro-Med region

	SSM	EU
Undermines cohesion in culturally diverse societies	7.3	7.3
Fuels Islamophobic and nationalist discourses	7.3	7.0
Legitimates authoritarian regimes	6.2	6.9
Fuels sectarian tensions, in particular Sunni-Shia	5.6	6.7

In your own country

	SSM	EU
Undermines cohesion in culturally diverse societies	5.7	5.5
Legitimates authoritarian regimes	5.6	3.2
Fuels Islamophobic and nationalist discourses	4.7	6.3
Fuels sectarian tensions, in particular Sunni-Shia	3.1	2.3

SSM respondents / EU respondents

Most harmful attacks: Despite the fact that in general respondents see conflict zones as most affected areas, when they were asked to identify specific attacks that were particularly harmful for the Euro-Mediterranean region over the last years, they primarily mentioned attacks that hit Paris as well as attacks in Tunisia.

Paris attacks in November 2015 were indiscriminate (everybody could have been a target, including Muslims), attacks on the Charlie Hebdo office targeted specifically the concept of freedom of expression. Both tried to amplify a divide within Europe (Muslims and non-Muslims) and between Europe and the Middle East.

EU respondent

While the attacks (in European cities) garnered the most attention as they hit the heart of the EU, other attacks on the southern banks of the Mediterranean had major socioeconomic impact in the countries affected. The economic impact of these attacks continues to exert tremendous pressures on those countries causing further instability and disintegrating social cohesion.

SSM respondent

"Post-Daesh" scenario: Defeating Daesh won't be easy. If Daesh is defeated, existing organisations (in particular Al-Qaeda) are likely to take the lead and/or new jihadist organisations are likely to come up.

Daesh is an ideology that is sufficiently popular and it will be able to capitalize on widespread socioeconomic and political grievances.

SSM respondent

Defeating Daesh might be a part of the puzzle. The other part is the quality of governance in the region.

SSM respondent

The defeat or weakening of Daesh might have an impact on the radicalisation of European Muslims (loss of a trend). However, in the whole Euro-Mediterranean region there are many other violent extremist groups active that can replace Daesh.

EU respondent

The next major threat may not even exist yet. Few predicted that Daesh would be the next big threat until it was.
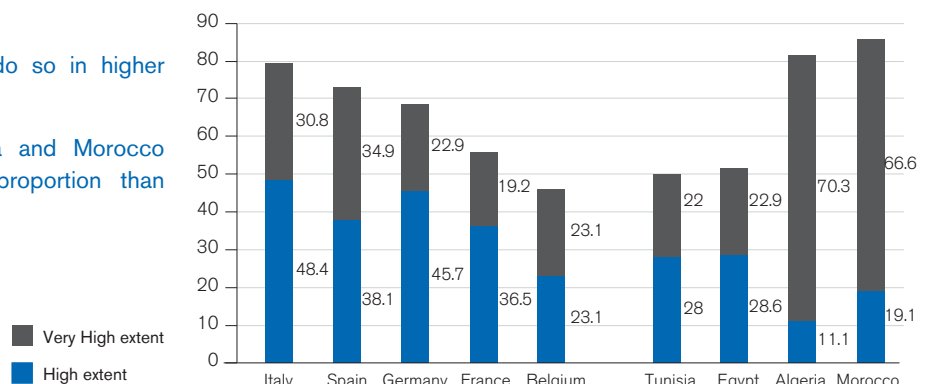
EU respondent

Confronting Violent Extremism

Overall Evaluation

- Respondents evaluate rather positively the efforts of their respective countries in confronting violent extremism.

- In Europe, Italian and Spanish respondents do so in higher proportion than French and Belgian participants.

- In SSM countries, respondents from Algeria and Morocco evaluate positively these efforts in higher proportion than respondents from Egypt and Tunisia.

To what extent do you consider that the overall efforts deployed so far in confronting violent extremism in your own country are effective? (answers in %)

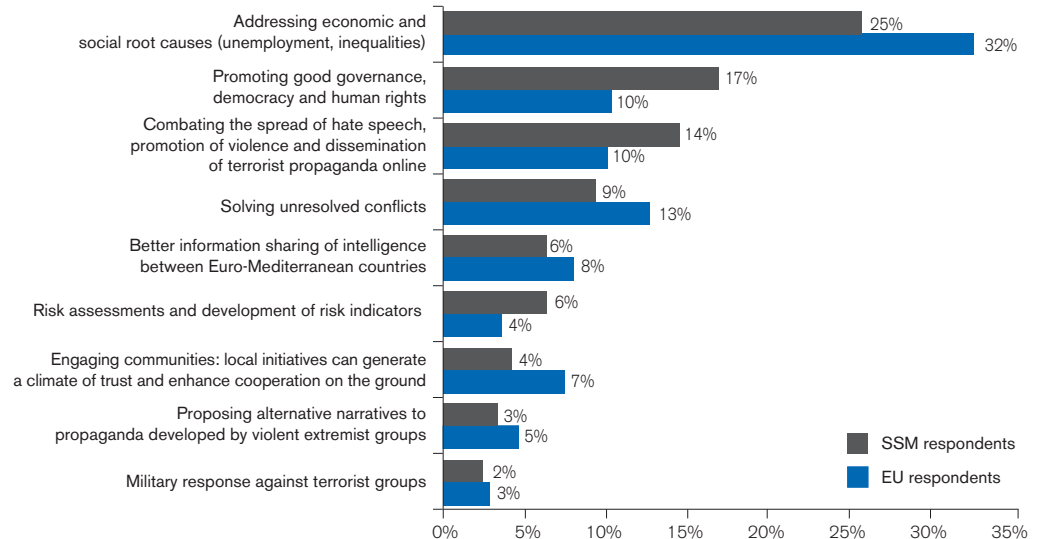| Country	Very High extent	High extent
Italy	30.8	48.4
Spain	34.9	38.1
Germany	22.9	45.7
France	19.2	36.5
Belgium	23.1	23.1
Tunisia	22	28
Egypt	22.9	28.6
Algeria	70.3	11.1
Morocco	66.6	19.1

Very High extent / High extent

Priorities

- In general, addressing structural elements (and in particular tackling economic and social root causes) is seen as the best remedy to counter violent extremism.

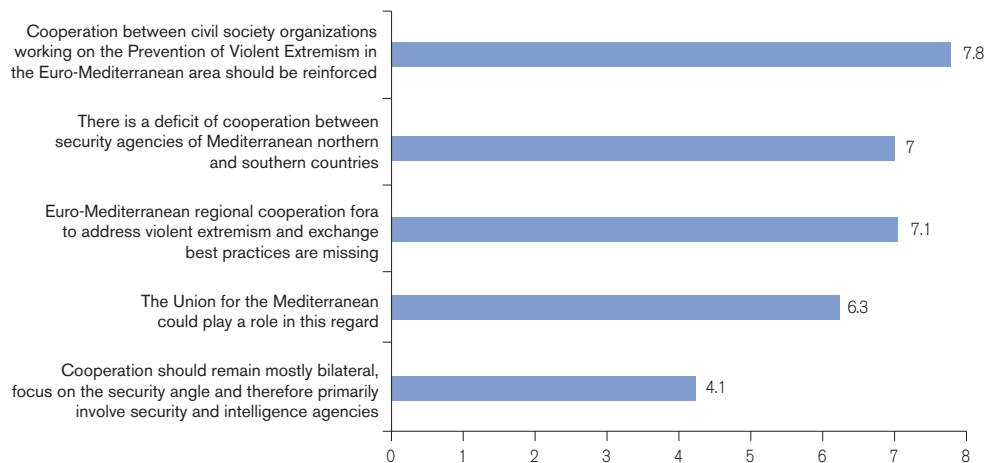- Security-oriented measures are not seen as the main priorities.

What should be the main priorities in order to effectively counter violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean region? (results show the first choice out of four)

Priority	SSM respondents	EU respondents
Addressing economic and social root causes (unemployment, inequalities)	25%	32%
Promoting good governance, democracy and human rights	17%	10%
Combating the spread of hate speech, promotion of violence and dissemination of terrorist propaganda online	14%	10%
Solving unresolved conflicts	9%	13%
Better information sharing of intelligence between Euro-Mediterranean countries	6%	8%
Risk assessments and development of risk indicators	6%	4%
Engaging communities: local initiatives can generate a climate of trust and enhance cooperation on the ground	4%	7%
Proposing alternative narratives to propaganda developed by violent extremist groups	3%	5%
Military response against terrorist groups	2%	3%

Euromed Cooperation

- Respondents unambiguously highlight the need for more regional Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on preventing and countering violent extremism.

- There is a deficit of cooperation between security agencies of Mediterranean Northern and Southern countries.

- Communities, civil society and local actors are key stakeholders in the fight against violent extremism.
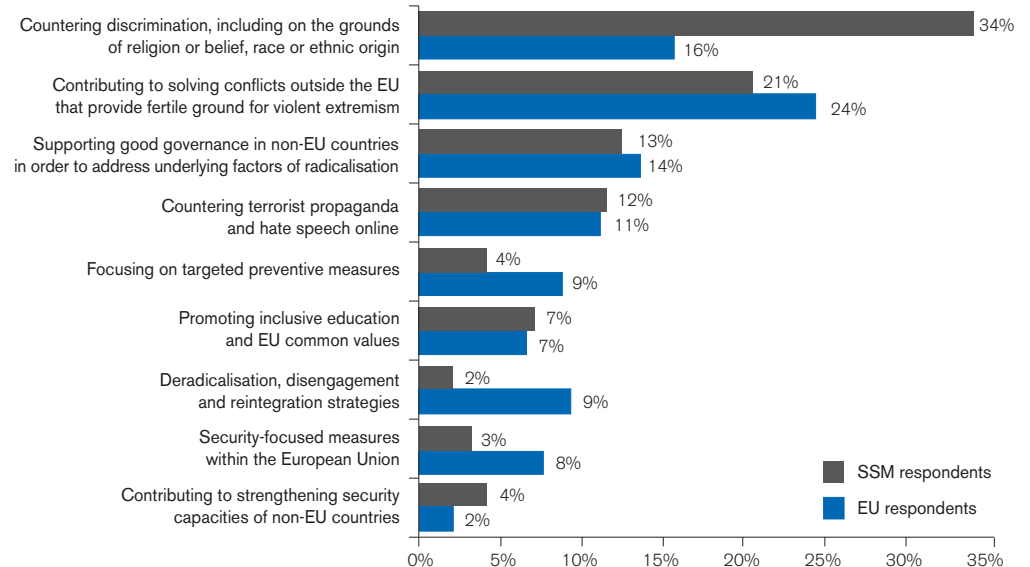
Do you agree with the following statements regarding Euro-Mediterranean cooperation?
(mean 0-very low extent, 10-very high extent)

Statement	Mean
Cooperation between civil society organizations working on the Prevention of Violent Extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean area should be reinforced	7.8
There is a deficit of cooperation between security agencies of Mediterranean northern and southern countries	7
Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation fora to address violent extremism and exchange best practices are missing	7.1
The Union for the Mediterranean could play a role in this regard	6.3
Cooperation should remain mostly bilateral, focus on the security angle and therefore primarily involve security and intelligence agencies	4.1

In the European Union

- EU focusing on "Countering discrimination, including on the grounds of religion or belief, race or ethnic origin": first priority for SSM respondents.

- According to EU respondents EU's main focus should be on "Contributing to solving conflicts outside the EU that provide fertile ground for violent extremism".

- Scaling-up security-focused measures within the European Union is not seen as a matter of priority.

- Specific and operational initiatives (such as tracking online terrorist-related content or strengthening the fight against terrorist financing) are considered more effective than broad policy frameworks.

What should the EU and its member states focus on as a matter of priority?
(results show the first choice out of three)

Priority	SSM respondents	EU respondents
Countering discrimination, including on the grounds of religion or belief, race or ethnic origin	34%	16%
Contributing to solving conflicts outside the EU that provide fertile ground for violent extremism	21%	24%
Supporting good governance in non-EU countries in order to address underlying factors of radicalisation	13%	14%
Countering terrorist propaganda and hate speech online	12%	11%
Focusing on targeted preventive measures	4%	9%
Promoting inclusive education and EU common values	7%	7%
Deradicalisation, disengagement and reintegration strategies	2%	9%
Security-focused measures within the European Union	3%	8%
Contributing to strengthening security capacities of non-EU countries	4%	2%

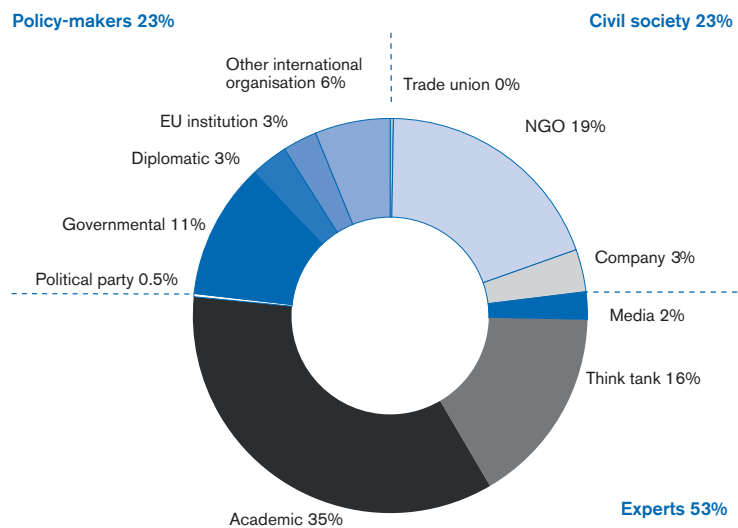## The Euromed Survey of Experts and Actors

The European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) has carried out seven Surveys of actors and experts so far with the objective of assessing the progress, achievements and shortcomings of Euro-Mediterranean relations and policies.

Based on a broad sample of stakeholders, the Euromed Survey offers a unique platform for experts and actors involved in Euro-Mediterranean relations to express their evaluation of key topical issues on the agenda of the region and to put forward proposals and ideas.
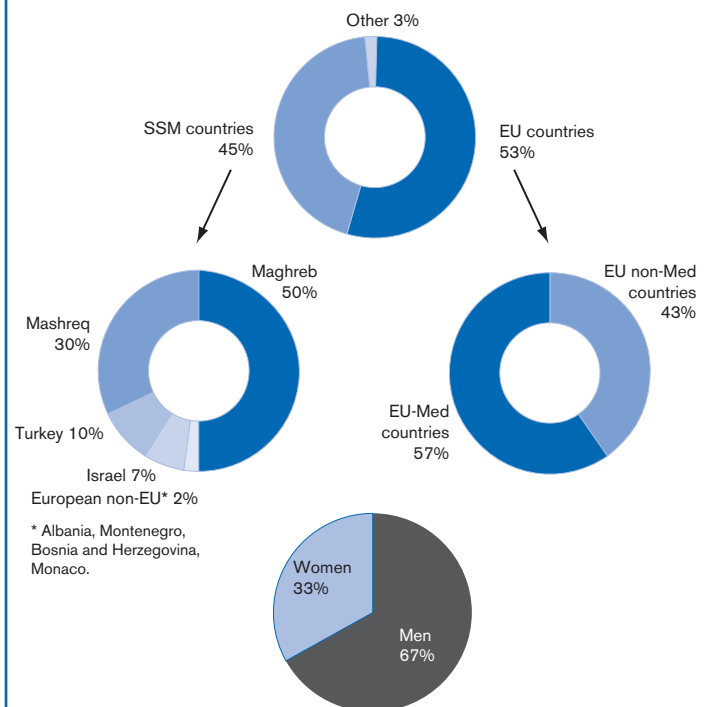
The present eighth edition of the survey is devoted to violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean region and focuses on the environments, causes and mechanisms that favour the surge of violent extremism at the societal and individual level, as well as on the impact of violent extremism and on the policy responses to confront this phenomena.

This project is in line with the IEMed's overall mission. As a public diplomacy and research institution dedicated to Euro-Mediterranean relations, the IEMed is indeed committed to generate and disseminate ideas and policy options that could serve to consolidate the building of a genuine Euro-Mediterranean area. While doing so, the IEMed is keen to channel views and concerns from both EU and Southern/Southeastern Mediterranean countries.

Distribution of the sample by institution of affiliation

Policy-makers 23%

Civil society 23%

Other international organisation 6%

Trade union 0%

EU institution 3%

NGO 19%

Diplomatic 3%

Governmental 11%

Company 3%

Political party 0.5%

Media 2%

Think tank 16%

Academic 35%

Experts 53%

By geographical area and gender

Other 3%

SSM countries 45%

EU countries 53%

Maghreb 50%

Mashreq 30%

EU non-Med countries 43%

Turkey 10%

EU-Med countries 57%

Israel 7%
European non-EU* 2%

* Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monaco.

Women 33%

Men 67%

The Questionnaire and the Survey Sample

The Survey was conducted among **6,500 experts and actors** from the 43 countries that are members of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), **746 responses** were received, which can be considered a representative sample.

The questionnaire has 18 general questions and has been designed to capture some of the main dimensions of violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The questions are organised along three thematic blocks. The first one looks into the context and drivers of violent extremism. The second focuses on the impact of violent extremism. Questions from the third block cover several aspects of the policy responses.

In addition to close-ended questions, respondents were given the chance to elaborate on their answers through additional comments.

Survey directors

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