DESCRIPTIVE REPORT

Social Justice and Inclusiveness

The first block of the EuroMeSCo Euromed Survey aimed to identify the main factors affecting socio-economic inclusiveness[1] in Southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs), with a special focus on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on inequalities, on already existing vulnerabilities and on specific social groups. It also sought to collect respondents' assessment on cooperation priorities to overcome the Covid-19 effects. Finally, it included an open-ended question aimed at identifying the main socio-economic impact of the war in Ukraine.

Main findings:

• There is a consensus amongst respondents of the survey that structural and governance issues affect socio-economic inclusiveness in the region and are an obstacle to socio-economic integration of some groups in the society.

• Respondents clearly agree that Covid-19 has increased inequalities and broadened the socio-economic gap among the population.

• Respondents consider that the capacity of the public sector to provide services in an effective way has been severely affected by Covid-19, particularly affecting persons below the poverty threshold.

• Inclusive economic promotion was considered as the first EU-SMCs cooperation priority to overcome the Covid-19 effects on socio-economic inclusiveness, followed by combating corruption.

• Inflation and food security in SMCs were considered as the main areas impacted by the war in Ukraine.

1. Social inclusion refers to enhancing "the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society – improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those that are disadvantaged" (Word Bank). Social exclusion is a "multidimensional phenomenon not limited to material deprivation; poverty is an important dimension of exclusion, albeit only one dimension. Accordingly, social inclusion processes involve more than improving access to economic resources" (United Nations).

The **first question** of the survey invited respondents to evaluate different factors affecting socio-economic inclusiveness in SMCs. Respondents considered "Structural and governance issues impeding the socio-economic integration of some groups of the society" as the main issue, followed by informality, the effects of the climate crisis and food insecurity. Respondents considered that the disruptive effects of the digital transformation have a smaller impact on socio-economic inclusiveness.

Graph 1: Q.1 To what extent do you consider that the following factors affect socio-economic inclusiveness in Southern Mediterranean Countries?
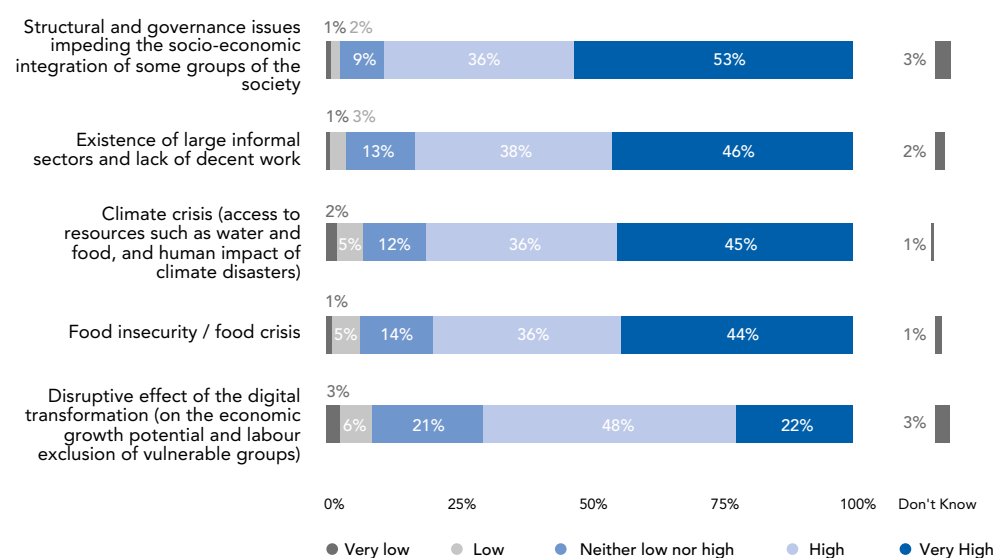
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

In their comments, some respondents highlighted the inter-relation between all the factors listed, as well as the need to improve governance:

A combination of both structural and governance issues as well as global challenges such as food insecurity and the climate crisis all affect socio-economic inclusiveness in the SMCs.

—— Greek respondent

Structure of governance, how wealth is distributed (or not), level (or lack of) people's participation in decision making should not be neglected.

—— Jordanian respondent

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All the mentioned effects will have serious impacts on gender inequalities as well as cause further obstacles to equal opportunities for a variety of vulnerable groups who have been already facing social exclusion at many levels.
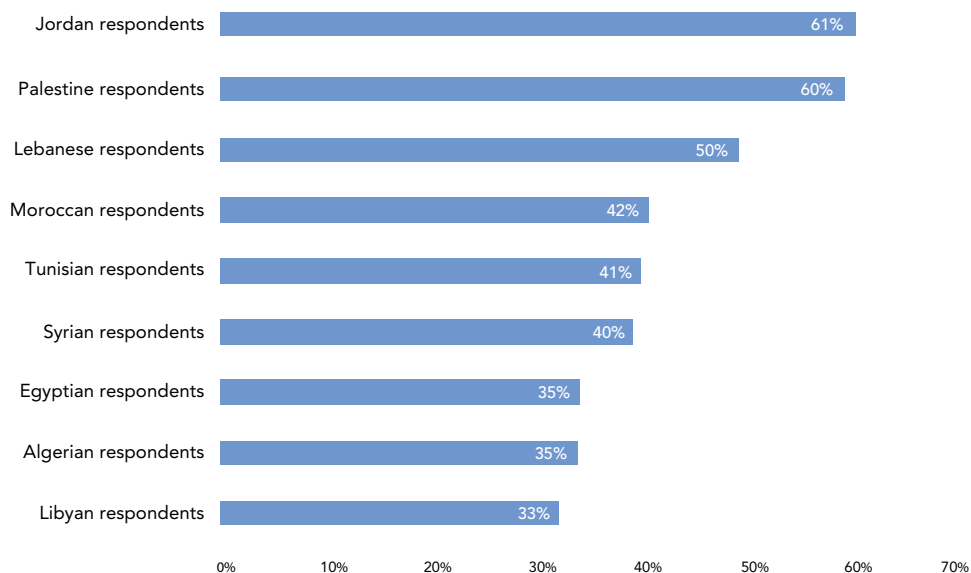
── Slovak respondent

Corruption and non-accountability of corruptors and the existence of outdated laws will impede progress.

── Lebanese respondent

In **Question 2**, when asked about the perception of the impact of Covid-19 on inequalities and the socio-economic gap in their own countries, 41% of SMCs respondents considered that inequalities have increased to a high extent. 31% of EU respondents considered that the socio-economic gap had broadened in all SMCs. There are differences between country respondents: Jordanian, Palestinian and Lebanese respondents considered Covid-19 had a greater impact.

Graph 1 bis: Q.2 To what extent do you consider that Covid-19 has increased inequalities and broadened the socio-economic gap between the population in your country? (% of very high answers)

Jordan respondents	61%
Palestine respondents	60%
Lebanese respondents	50%
Moroccan respondents	42%
Tunisian respondents	41%
Syrian respondents	40%
Egyptian respondents	35%
Algerian respondents	35%
Libyan respondents	33%

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Question 3 focused on those areas most affected by Covid-19, that is, areas where the pandemic has revealed or exacerbated vulnerabilities in SMCs. **Question 4** was linked to the former as it focused on which social groups had been most affected.

There was a quite consistent agreement (40% of answers) on considering the "Capacity of the public sector to provide services in an effective way" as the area most affected by Covid-19. However, results showed some significant differences when comparing Northern and Southern respondents. For SMCs respondents this option presented a lower percentage (33%). "Sustainability of state subsidies for basic foodstuff and energy" was the second option for SMC respondents, whereas this was the fifth choice for EU respondents who considered the "Existence of large informal sector" as a bigger issue (see graph 2). The sustainability of state subsidies was highlighted by respondents from Lebanon (25%), Algeria (22%) and Jordan (22%). "Government's accountability and transparency" was the third choice for both Northern and Southern respondents.

Graph 2: Q.3 The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed/exacerbated vulnerabilities in SMCs. Which of the following has been most affected?
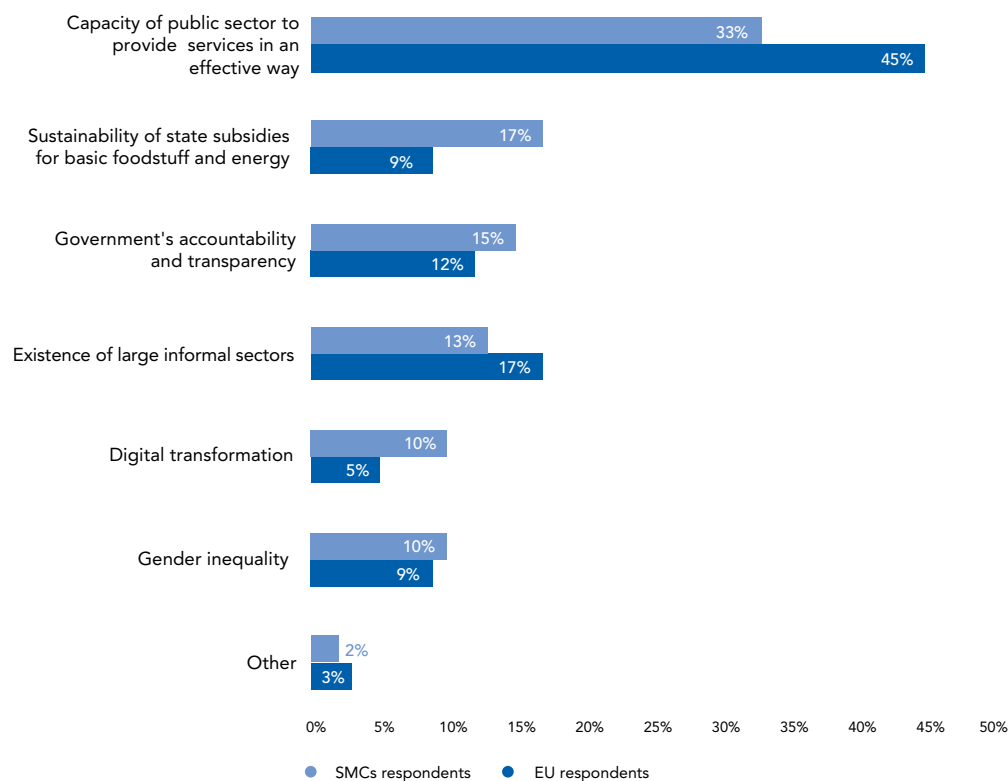
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Some comments provided further details on vulnerabilities revealed by Covid-19:

Workers in the informal sectors were strongly affected. Due to insufficient contractual arrangements, they were amongst the first persons to lose their jobs. The lack of social security coverage i.e., access to unemployment benefits, government subsidies and health insurance, further exacerbated their situation.

—— German respondent

Governments emerged as having impunity even with regards to their policies to respond to the pandemic. They used the pandemic as a blanket to crush any remaining dissent and entrenched their control over resources.

—— Jordan respondent

Due to pre-existing gender inequalities, the social and economic consequences of the Covid-19 crisis have disproportionately impacted women's jobs, income, and education opportunities.

—— Italian respondent

South of the Mediterranean suffers from an incredible waste of resources and from governability issues. Informal sectors are the most vulnerable in difficult times like Covid. Policies should formalise these sectors so as to offer decent working conditions.

—— Moroccan respondent

Question 4 focused on the social groups affected by the impact of Covid-19 in the different areas evaluated in question 3. "Persons below the poverty threshold" was considered by respondents to be the main social group affected by four (out of six) different areas, namely the low capacity of public sector to provide services, the existence of informal sectors, sustainability of state subsidies and gender inequality (see graph 3). In other fields such as government's accountability and digital transformation, "Marginalised minorities" was considered the most affected group.

Graph 3: Q.3-Q.4 Covid-19 pandemic in SMCs: most affected area and most affected social group in each area
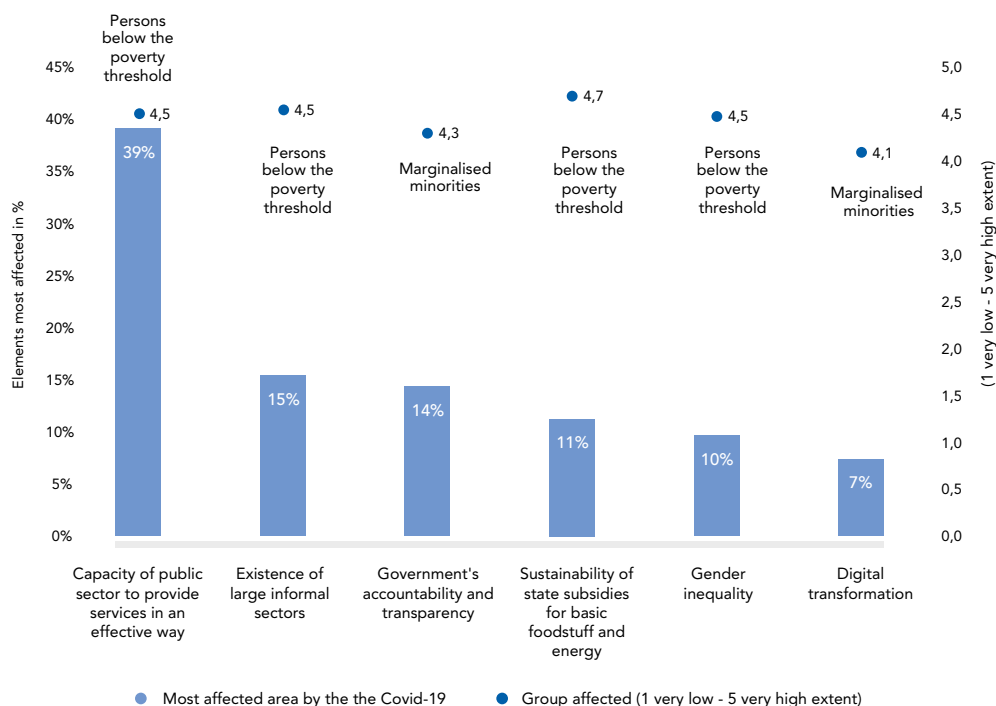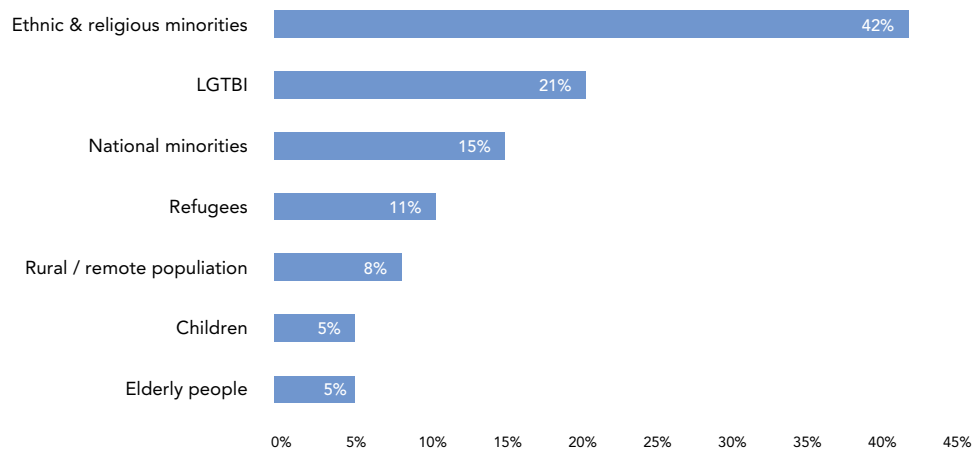

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

The questionnaire included a specific question for further insight on marginalised minorities. The question was open-ended, meaning that respondents formulated their answers without choosing from pre-established categories. Graph 4 was built from the analysis of all responses. It shows that respondents consider that marginalised minorities comprise mainly ethnic and religious minorities followed by the LBGTI community and national minorities.

Graph 4: Q.4 To what extent do you consider that the following social groups have been affected:
*Marginalised minorities: categories developed from open-ended answers

Category	Percentage
Ethnic & religious minorities	42%
LGTBI	21%
National minorities	15%
Refugees	11%
Rural / remote populiation	8%
Children	5%
Elderly people	5%

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

When looking at results relating to each of the social groups, and which conse-quence of the Covid-19 pandemic was affecting them the most (see graph 5), results showed that "Persons below the poverty threshold" were particularly affected by the ineffective provision of state subsidies. Migrants, youth, women and internally displaced people, were considered to be most affected by the existence of large in-formal sectors. Results also showed that marginalised minorities and asylum seekers were affected by the impact of Covid-19 on the government's accountability and transparency. Finally, disabled people were especially affected by the effects on the public sector and its capacity to provide services in an effective way.

Graph 5: Q.3-Q.4 Covid-19 pandemic in SMCs: social groups' most affected area (Mean 1-very low, 5-very high)
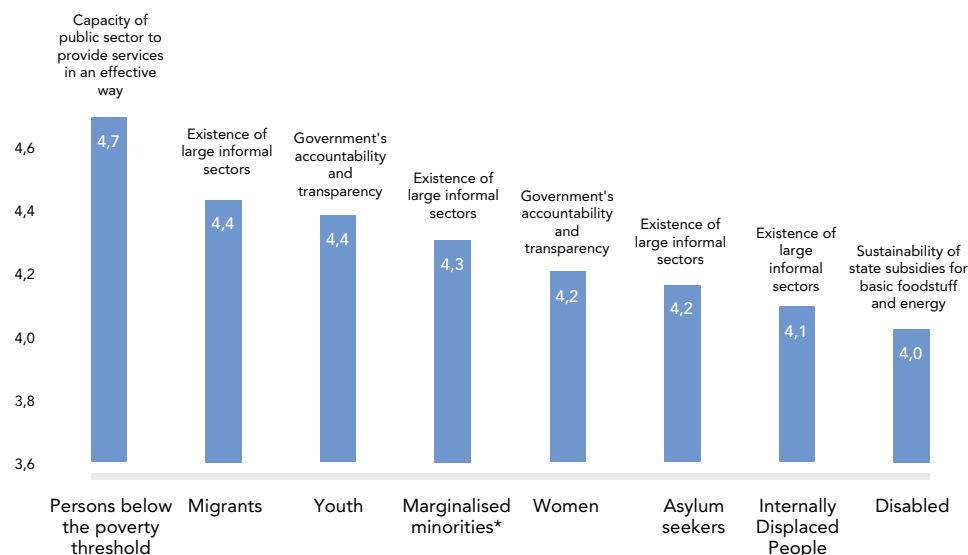
* See graph 4

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

In the open comments on these questions, some respondents provided insight on how the Covid-19 has impacted vulnerable groups:

In terms of gender discrimination and gender inequalities, almost all the above social groups have been affected. Being women and migrants, and or disabled people and poor represents often a double/multiple burden.

—— Italian respondent

I would prefer to add the elderly (people above the age of 50) because most of the people who were hugely affected by the incapacity of the health sector during the pandemic were old people who needed urgent medical intervention and treatment for which the sector was not ready.

—— Egyptian respondent

We need to understand that apart from the above-mentioned vulnerable groups, other groups with low income have been strongly affected leading to new forms of poverty and insecurity due to the lack of democracy and poor welfare state.

—— Spanish respondent

Question 5 asked participants about the EU-SMCs cooperation priorities to overcome the Covid-19 effects on socio-economic inclusiveness. All options obtained percentages of high and very high priority beyond 70% (see graph 6).

The first priority was "Inclusive economy promotion", which encompassed the "promotion of social economy models, formalisation of informal sectors and reform of social protection systems". The second priority for respondents was "combatting corruption".

Graph 6: Q.5 To what extent do you consider the following areas should be prioritized in EU-SMCs cooperation to overcome the Covid-19 effects on socio-economic inclusiveness?
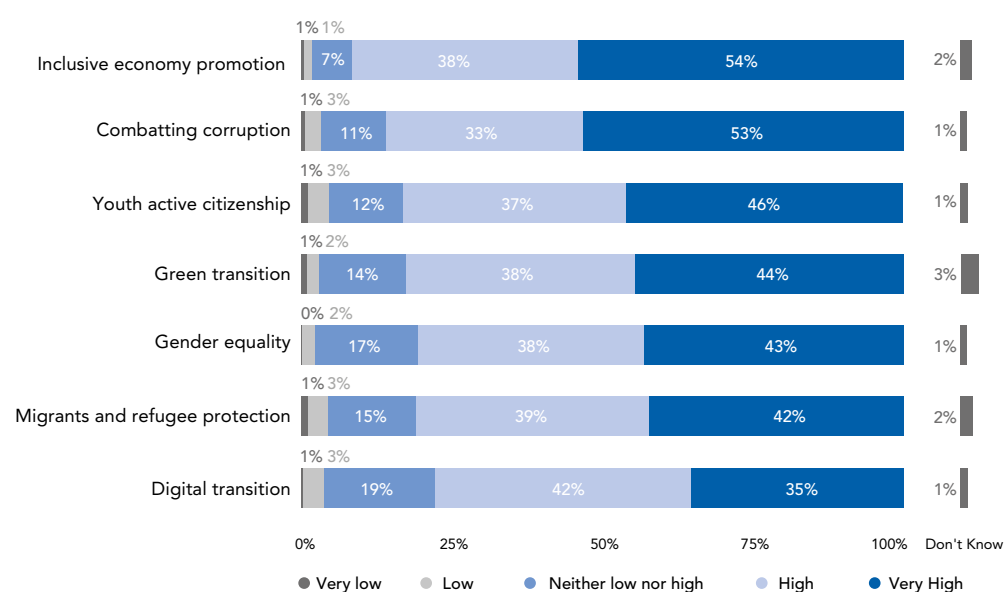
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Open comments underlined the need for an integrated approach connecting different priority options:

I believe that areas such as youth active citizenship, gender equality and digital transition should be of course supported in parallel, but I consider that the rest of topics are much more related to Covid-19 effects on socio-economic inclusiveness and therefore should be a priority in EU-SMC cooperation.

—— Spanish respondent

Everything is important, especially actions for gender equality and active citizenship of young people, which ultimately means initiatives / actions for more democracy.

—— Moroccan respondent

Only an integrated approach in terms of EU policy for the SMCs can deliver real change in a medium and long-term scenario. All the areas here above are strongly interlinked, i.e. if the EU and the SMCs want to achieve gender equality they have to work on the social and economic inclusion of youth and women by investing in a just green and digital transition which could contribute to reducing irregular migration flows.

—— Italian respondent

Comments also showed the concern about combatting corruption:

Society can achieve a lot if corruption is minimised – more resources for services, empowering women and girls (young people) as contributors to changes in society which can lead to better inclusion and better economic outcomes.

—— Latvian respondent

The fight against corruption can have an impact on the preservation of resources and their use for the creation of economic activities to stop emigration.

—— Algerian respondent

All structural changes will need to rely on a transparent and accountable political and administrative system.

—— Italian respondent

While other open comments showed a sceptical point of view and the need for further reforms:

I am also a bit jittery when I hear someone mention 'reform of social protection systems', especially in a regional context where these systems have been weakened considerably in recent decades. Hence, in my view 'inclusive economy promotion' should include the strengthening, rather than the reform, of social protection systems.

—— Italian respondent

'Youth active citizenship' doesn't really mean anything in countries where authoritarianism is allowed to flourish by the EU.

—— Spanish respondent

The final question of this section, **Question 6**, was an open-ended question designed to focus on the impact of the war in Ukraine that broke out shortly before the field work of the survey started. While SMCs respondents answered on the effects in their own countries, EU respondents answered referring to all SMCs. In both cases inflation and food security were identified as the main consequences deriving from the conflict.

A breakdown of answers by geographical origin shows a slightly nuanced picture (graph 7). For SMCs respondents, inflation was seen as the main negative effect (referring to their own country). For EU respondents, food security was seen as the main aftereffect in the Southern Neighbourhood.

Graph 7: Q.6 In your opinion, what is the main socio-economic impact of the war in Ukraine in your country (SMC's respondents) / in Southern Mediterranean Countries (EU respondents)
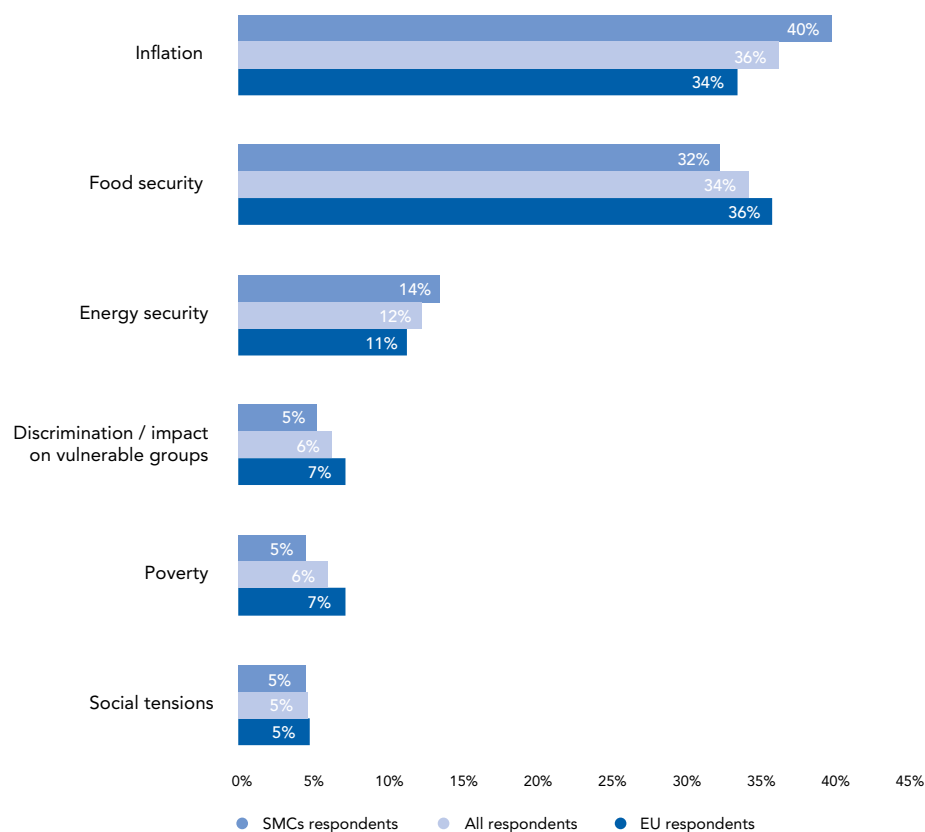
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Open ended answers expressed respondents' view on the consequences of inflation on vulnerable groups and on institutional instability:

Rising prices have increased social tensions in countries with weak social safety nets; there are few jobs and limited public spending space.

—— Algerian respondent

The war has caused the prices of many commodities to rise. Thus, contributing to food insecurity in the region. In addition to exacerbating energy security issues for those who are relying on energy sources from Ukraine/Russia.

—— Jordan respondent

The war in Ukraine has caused the prices of all sorts of products to rise (gas, energy, oil, fuel, foodstuffs...) and the purchasing power of many households is falling, especially vulnerable people.

—— Moroccan respondent

Increased prices of food and basic commodities is causing more stress on the poor and the vulnerable.

—— Egyptian respondent

The rise of the cost of everything, from energy to food, might lead to a rise in the general political mistrust in institutions and the reinforcement of informal groups who are seen increasingly as the legitimate providers of security.

—— Tunisian respondent

Inclusive Economies

This section of the EuroMeSCo Euromed Survey focused on the promotion of inclusive economies, job creation (including a specific question on job creation for migrants and refugees in SMCs) and on strengthening the social economy.[2]

Main findings:

• Cooperation to foster inclusive economies should prioritise the transition from the informal to formal labour (which is linked to decent working conditions) and the improvement of social protection systems.

• Almost a half of respondents considered that investing in quality education systems and training skills is key to promoting job creation.

• Specific cooperation on job creation for refugees and migrants in SMCs should prioritise capacities and skills recognition, regularisation and access to formalised jobs.

• An overwhelming majority of answers considered that the social economy has to be strengthened as a key agent for social and economic reconstruction.

• EU-SMCs cooperation priorities to strengthen social economies should be a combination of enhancing the financial ecosystem, supporting capacity building and promoting public policies in favour of the social economy.

2. Defined as "an economy encompassing businesses, organisations and different legal entities that aim to systematically put people first, produce a positive impact on local communities and pursue a social cause".

Question 7 aimed at identifying EU-SMCs cooperation priorities in promoting inclusive economies. Results show that almost one fourth of respondents (23%) think that cooperation should prioritise the "Transition from the informal to formal labour" (which is linked to decent working conditions), very closely followed by the "Improvement of social protection systems" (see graph 8). The third priority, gathering 18% of the answers, was "Support for self-employment and enterprise start-up for women and youth". However, these priorities change when results are broken down by geographical origin (graph 9) and institutional affiliation (graph 10).

Graph 8: Q.7 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority in promoting inclusive economies?
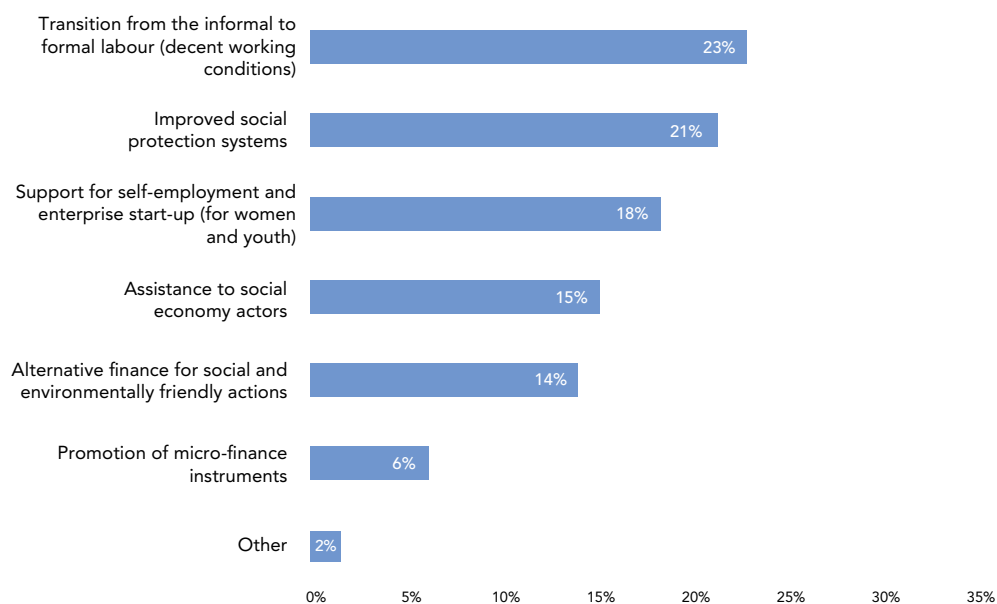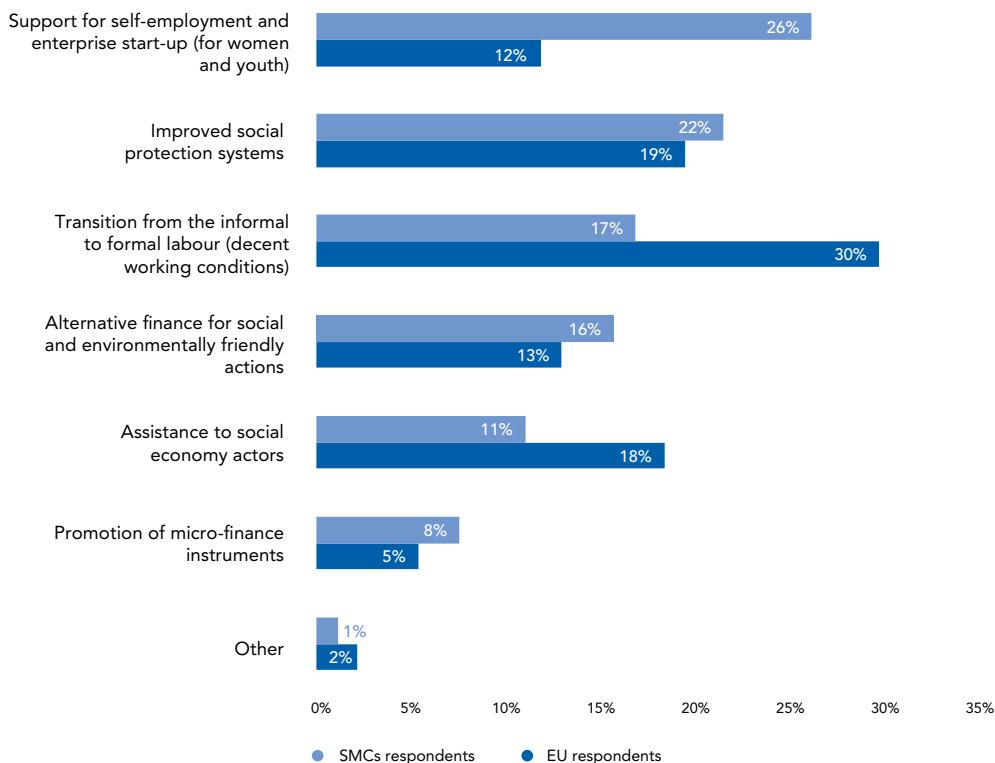

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

A breakdown of answers shows that for SMCs respondents and civil society respondents, the first priority should be "Support to self-employment and enterprise start-up for women and youth" with around a quarter of the answers (graphs 9 and 10). While one third of EU respondents considered that efforts should put the "Transition from informal to formal labour" at the forefront. Experts also considered this option as an important priority however, "Improved social protection system" obtained a slightly higher percentage of answers (see graph 10). The pattern of answers was also different when looking at results from policymakers, who emphasised "Alternative finance for social and environmentally friendly actions".

Interestingly, the percentage on transition from the informal labour to formal showed by SMCs respondents (17%, third priority) presents a rather differentiated opinion when zooming in on the sub-sample between Maghreb (23%, second priority) and Mashrek respondents (8%, fifth priority).

Graph 9: Q.7 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority in promoting inclusive economies?

Category	SMCs respondents	EU respondents
Support for self-employment and enterprise start-up (for women and youth)	26%	12%
Improved social protection systems	22%	19%
Transition from the informal to formal labour (decent working conditions)	17%	30%
Alternative finance for social and environmentally friendly actions	16%	13%
Assistance to social economy actors	11%	18%
Promotion of micro-finance instruments	8%	5%
Other	1%	2%

● SMCs respondents   ● EU respondents

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Graph 10: Q.7 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority in promoting inclusive economies?
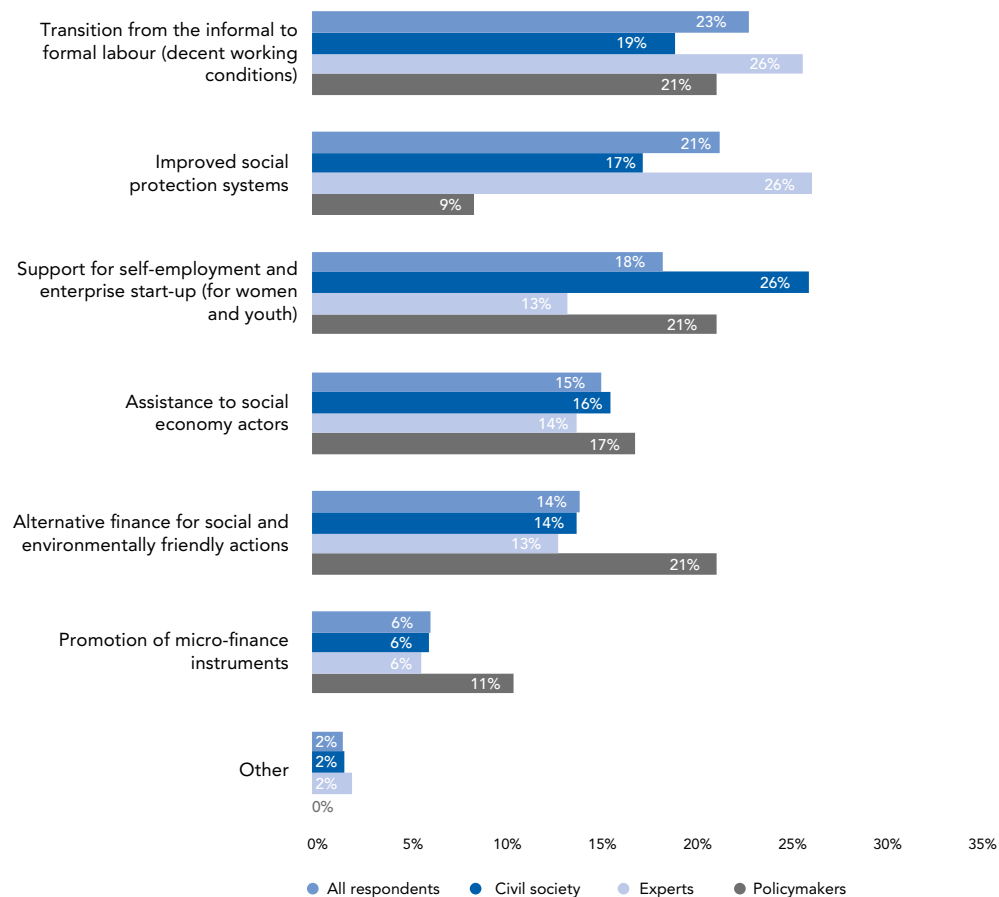
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Open comments pointed to the need to simultaneously cooperate in different areas as they complement each other:

The priority should be implementing economic reforms and policies at the public level given that measures focused on non-state actors will not eventually succeed if the public environment is not conducive. For instance, supporting self-employment or start-ups will not have a long-term impact if those entrepreneurs cannot get permits from public institutions to set up their businesses. Any policies related to this will entail tackling corruption in public bureaucracies (to increase public trust in them, and hence, public participation in politico-economic processes) and strengthening service delivery as well as social protection systems.

—— Spanish respondent

The transition to formal work is likely to include all of the other areas listed. In Algeria, informal work constitutes more than 40% of the employed population, therefore a significant loss for social security. If opportunities for self-employment and transition to stable and safe jobs arise, significant economic changes will take place.

—— Algerian respondent

All the proposed options are relevant and interlinked but if the transition to a formal labour is the main tool to guarantee decent working conditions this should primarily lead to inclusive economies. But the transition shall rely on improved social protection systems and decent working conditions will apply also to the social economy actors, etc. The self-employment is complementary to decent working conditions, not only an alternative option.

—— Italian respondent

Question 8 focused on cooperation to promote job creation and almost a half of respondents considered that the first option to be prioritised should be investing in "Quality education systems and training skills". The second priority for respondents was "Building inclusive labour markets" (17%). A breakdown of results by geographical origin showed a nuanced picture as SMCs had higher percentages for the two first priorities, while the second priority for EU respondents was "Supporting decent jobs and entrepreneurship", followed closely by "Building inclusive labour markets" and "Mobilising public and private stakeholders to create partnerships and synergies" (see graph 11).

Graph 11: Q.8 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority to promote job creation?
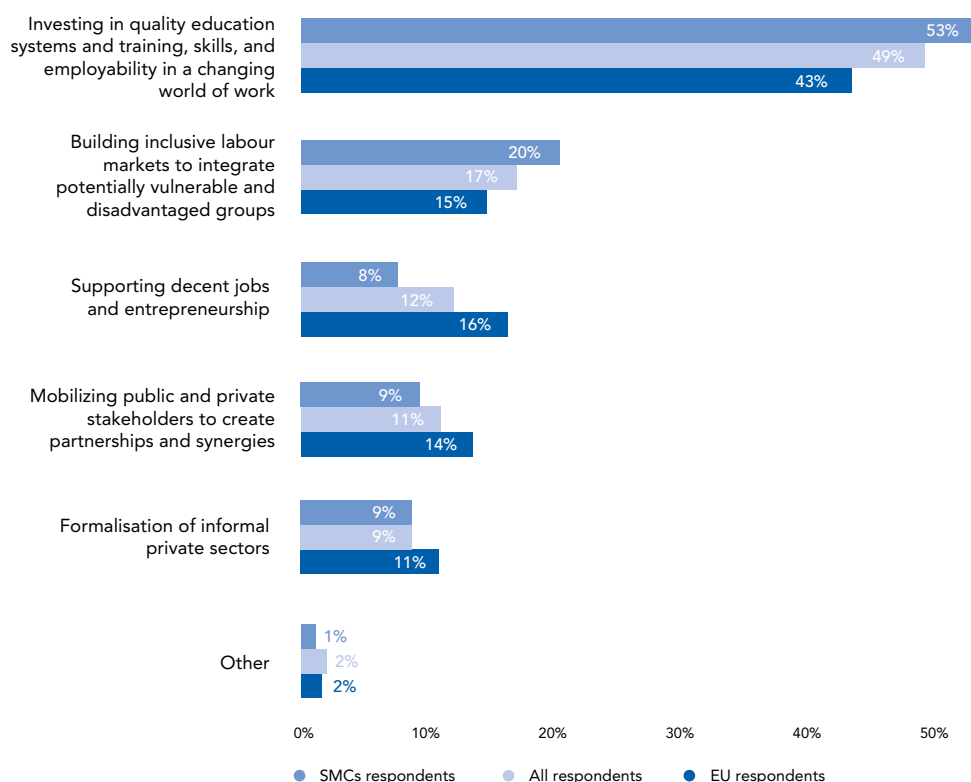
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

In the open comments, some respondents elaborated on their answers:

Formalization entails addressing key labour market structural imbalances in SMCs, linked mainly to institutional deficiencies. If such imbalances could be addressed, job creation potentials could significantly improve in the region.

—— Egyptian respondent

Decent working conditions would not only make for a fairer and more inclusive society but would also limit to a considerable extent the movement of people from one country to another.

—— Spanish respondent

Most of the SMC's economy is centralised in one or two cities, with the rural areas being left without any viable economy initiatives, the pandemic relieved the cities from the congestion for a period of time, as citizens went back to their hometowns and villages (during the work from home period) and found barely any viable infrastructure for a good economy that will help them stay there.

—— Lebanese respondent

All the above should be priorities. Building inclusive labour markets would be particularly important to activate the talents of the currently inactive labour force.

—— German respondent

Question 8b was an open-ended question, linked to the former but with a specific focus on priorities for job creation for refugees and migrants in SMCs. First cooperation priorities were related to building capacities and skills recognition-valorisation (28% of the answers) followed by the regularisation and access to formalised jobs (22%). While the importance of these two priorities was shared among respondents both from north and south of the Mediterranean, the third option was different (see graph 12). EU respondents considered that combating discrimination was the third one, while for SMCs respondents the third option showed a clear priority for the promotion of self-employment.

Graph 12: Q.8b In your opinion, what should be the EU cooperation priority for job creation for migrants and refugees in SMCs? (Categories developed from open-ended answers)
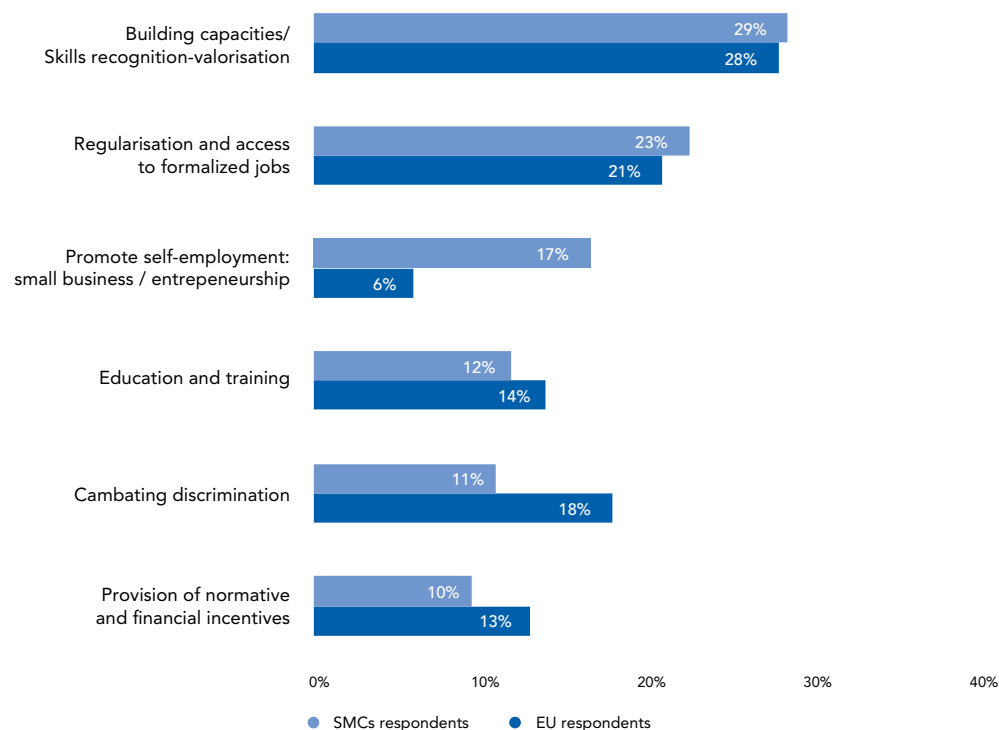
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

In the open-ended answers, respondents identified areas of improvement and formulated alternative options:

An integrated approach that brings opportunities and benefits for both refugees and local populations and encourages cooperation between the two groups.

—— Lebanese respondent

First, I think that the EU should join forces in order to help in the stability of the region and stop all actions of violence against civilians. Security is a main issue in the region. Secondly, it is very important to support the education of refugees and migrants. Thirdly, work is needed to improve health conditions and to promote small businesses between refugees and host communities.

—— Finnish respondent

Encourage employers to recruit migrants by covering the social costs of employment (tax declarations, social insurance, employment costs).

—— Tunisian respondent

First, ensuring that migrants and refugees are properly documented and possess the needed permits allowing them to work in the formal sector and access opportunities in line with their training and skills (and not just low-skilled and poorly paid jobs that "locals don't want to do anymore").

—— Spanish respondent

Expanded programmes that include all refugees, migrants, and even young people, to train them in the trades of the labour market, and then offer programmes to help them open their own projects through grants.

—— Jordan respondent

Question 9 and 10, focused on social economy, described in the questionnaire as "an economy encompassing businesses, organisations and different legal entities that aim to systematically put people first, produce a positive impact on local communities and pursue a social cause". Question 9 was on the importance of strengthening the social economy and Question 10 asked for EU-SMCs cooperation priorities to enhance it.

There was a vast majority (slightly higher for the case of SMCs) of answers considering that the social economy has to be strengthened as a key agent for social and economic reconstruction (see graph 13).

Graph 13: Q.9 To what extent is it important to strengthen social economy actors as a key agent for social and economic reconstruction?
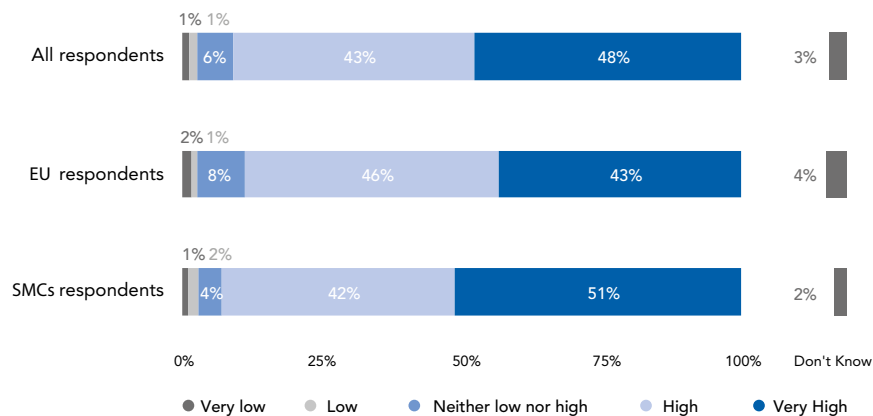
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Respondents explained the benefits of a strengthened social economy:

These actors are the ones who own the initiatives to achieve socio-economic inclusion, and the associated tools that help in developing societies.

—— Egyptian respondent

Social economy actors can promote sustainability, diversity, inclusion, and equality goals more efficacious than any other type of business.

—— Greek respondent

Strengthening social economy actors will increase capacity in connecting service providers and recipients across countries.

—— Palestinian respondent

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Others developed on how the role of social economy could be strengthened:

Some regulation could help create jobs, improve the economy and take some pressure off the public sector. Transparency and good governance are prerequisites for it to be efficient.

—— Lebanese respondent

Countries should recognize the social economy and build supportive regulatory frameworks, enhance access to capital by creating incentives for funding, taxation, and investment, enable access to relevant markets by making public and private procurement channels more inclusive, recognize the social economy by collecting, measuring and visualising social impact data, promoting role of women entrepreneurship in the social economy and investing in education and research.

—— Italian respondent

The actors of the social economy remain poorly organised although a Superior Council of Civil Society has been installed. A deep knowledge of this economy is necessary before any action.

—— Algerian respondent

It depends on the extent of space the State is allowing for these groups to play an effective role (not a cosmetic) in advocating for changes, reforms and organic initiatives.
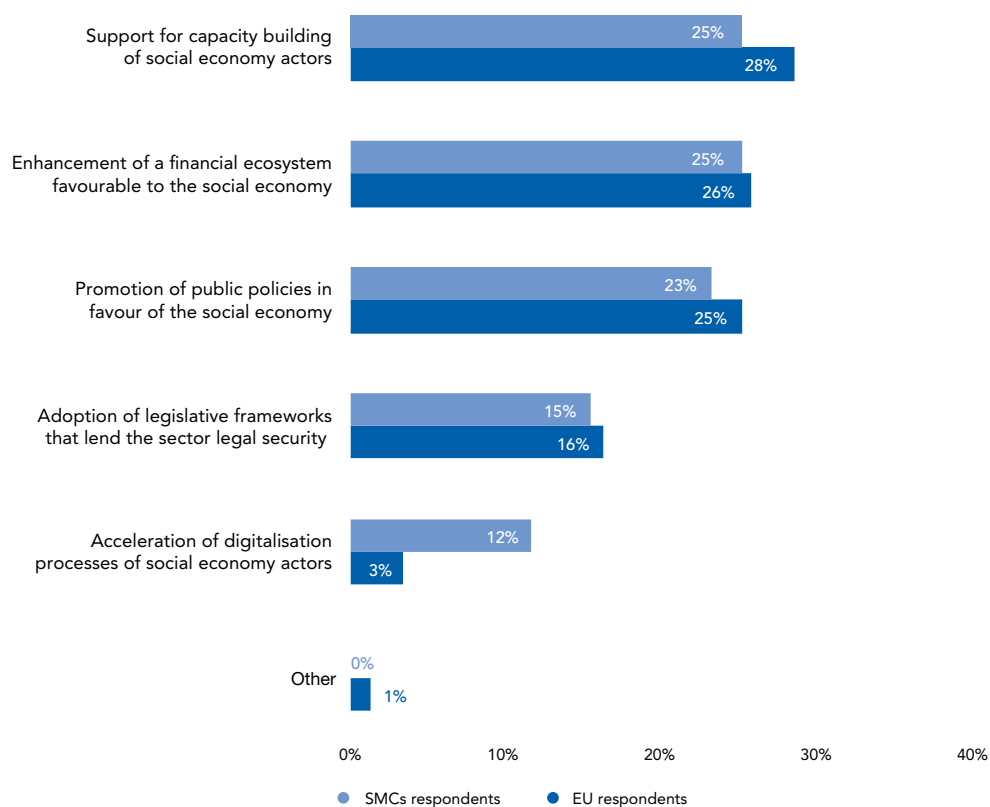
—— Jordan respondent

And what should not be done when supporting social economy:

The actors of the social economy should, in no way, compensate for the absence of a Welfare State. Wanting to subcontract social and economic reconstruction, actors of the social economy would only serve to increase inequalities and weaken the State in its protective role.

—— Lebanese respondent

Those who answered positively to Question 9, that is high (43%) or very high (48%), had a follow-up question on EU-SMCs cooperation priorities on social economies. The three first options obtained a similar percentage (25%). A breakdown of results by geographic origin revealed the same order of priorities (see graph 14). SMCs respondents gave more importance to the "Acceleration of digitalisation processes of social economy actors".

Graph 14: Q.10 What measure should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority in promoting social economy?

Measure	SMCs respondents	EU respondents
Support for capacity building of social economy actors	25%	28%
Enhancement of a financial ecosystem favourable to the social economy	25%	26%
Promotion of public policies in favour of the social economy	23%	25%
Adoption of legislative frameworks that lend the sector legal security	15%	16%
Acceleration of digitalisation processes of social economy actors	12%	3%
Other	0%	1%

● SMCs respondents ● EU respondents

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

The order and percentages of priorities varied when comparing the answers of experts, civil society and policymakers. One third of civil society respondents considered "Support for capacity building of social economy actors" as first option, while experts chose "Enhancement of a financial ecosystem favourable to the social economy" (21% of the answers). This was also the first priority for policymakers with a higher percentage 28% (see graph 15).

Graph 15: Q.10 What measure should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority in promoting social economy?
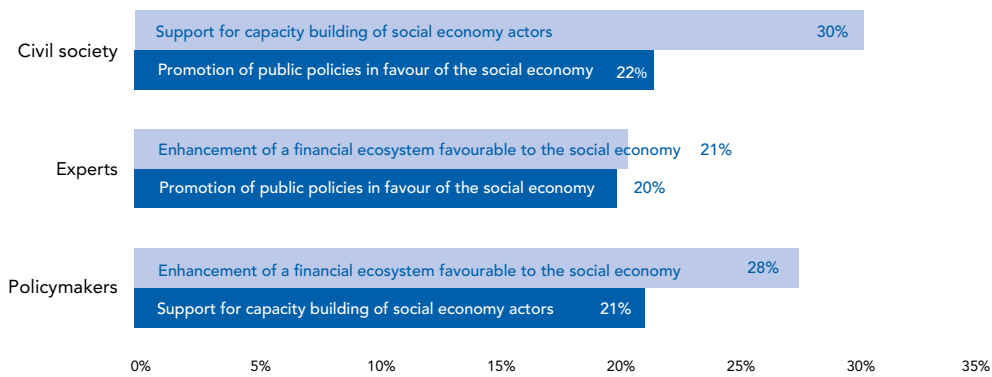
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Open comments underlined the importance of legal frameworks and the potential of digitalisation:

A proper legal framework is essential to ensure good governance for enterprises / businesses / organisations and to protect them from being attacked, also to ensure better efficiency in serving the public.

—— Lebanese respondent

The priority should focus on two critical policy levers that can help unlock the potential of the social economy, namely legal frameworks and social impact measurement, while considering the entire policy ecosystem as a framework.

—— Maltese respondent

If digitisation plays a prominent role in reaching the goals of the social economy, this role is to embody the principle of equal opportunities because, in my view, digitisation reduces many costs and social disparities, especially the costs of education and higher education.

—— Algerian respondent

Towards More Equal Societies

The third block of the questionnaire explored challenges and cooperation priorities dealing with gender equality, promoting youth citizenship, and identifying ways to promote the integration of immigrants into the social protection systems.

Main findings:

• Results clearly show that cultural norms and stereotypes were considered as the main challenge while dealing with gender equality, followed by guaranteeing non-discrimination and equality laws.

• Regional (Maghreb-Mashrek) and gender (men-women) breakdowns of results display a differentiated pattern when assessing challenges on gender equality.

• The need to strengthen legal frameworks for access to equal opportunities was highlighted as a key priority for gender equality by all respondents. Women also underlined raising awareness to combat gender-based violence, whereas men considered the promotion of women's entrepreneurship as key.

• Unemployment and lack of decent employment perspectives is considered the main challenge when promoting active youth citizenship. However, a breakdown of results by Maghreb and Mashrek displays different perceptions of the challenges facing youth.

• Measures proposed to overcome these challenges are related to fostering educational and vocational training and developing job quality and opportunities.

• Covid-19 particularly affected migrants causing an increased dependence on smuggling for border crossings, a drop in remittances and the involuntary immobility of people on the move.

Question 11 turned to challenges that SMCs encounter while dealing with gender equality. Results clearly show that "Sociocultural norms and gender stereotypes" were considered as the main challenge, followed by "Ensuring non-discriminatory and equality laws". Results by geographical origin present almost the same pattern of results, with some nuances. Among SMCs respondents, "Sociocultural norms and gender stereotypes" had a lower percentage (9 percentage points less) than among EU respondents (see graph 16).

Graph 16: Q.11 In your opinion, what is the main challenge that SMCs countries encounter while dealing with gender equality?
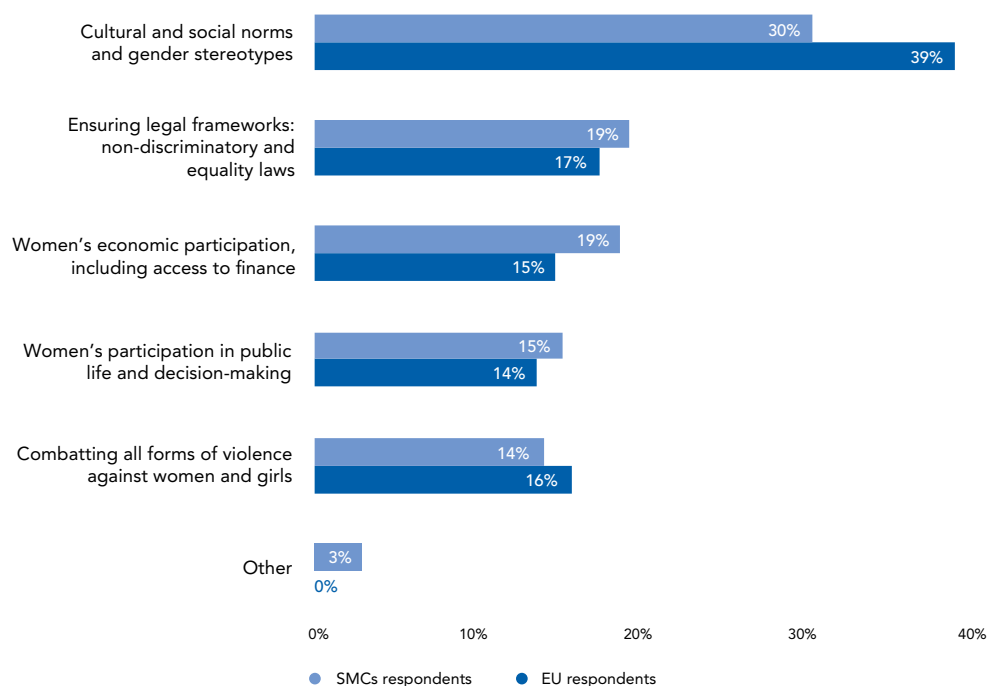
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

The breakdown of results from SMCs respondents between Maghreb and Mashrek showed some specificities on the results. Respondents from the Mashrek followed the survey's general pattern of results, with a particularly higher percentage on "Sociocultural norms and gender stereotypes" (see graph 18) while Maghreb respondents considered it a slightly less challenging issue (15 percentage points less) and considered "Women's economic and public life participation" in higher percentages (see graph 17).

Graph 17: Q.11 In your opinion, what is the main challenge that SMCs countries encounter while dealing with gender equality?
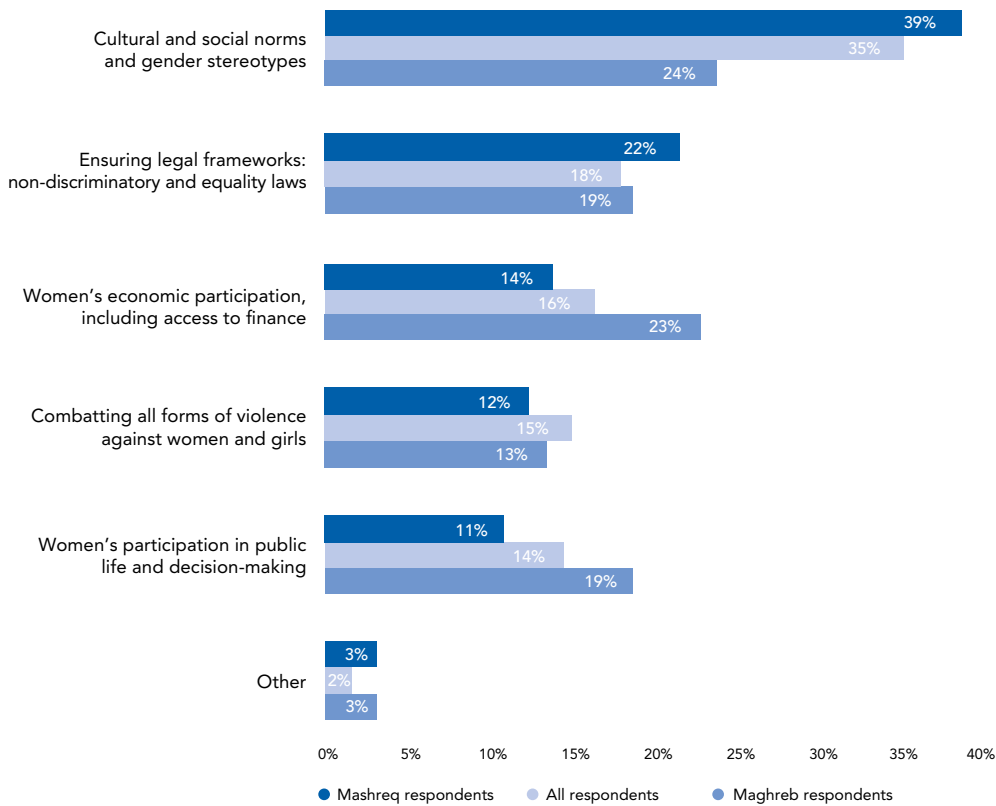
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Some differentiated results appeared as well in a breakdown of results by gender. The first two challenges followed the same pattern as the survey answers, with women participants considering "Cultural norms and gender stereotypes" in higher percentages than men. Third challenge for women was "Combating all forms of violence against women" while men put "Women's economic participation" in third place (see graph 18).

Graph 18: Q.11 In your opinion, what is the main challenge that SMCs countries encounter while dealing with gender equality?
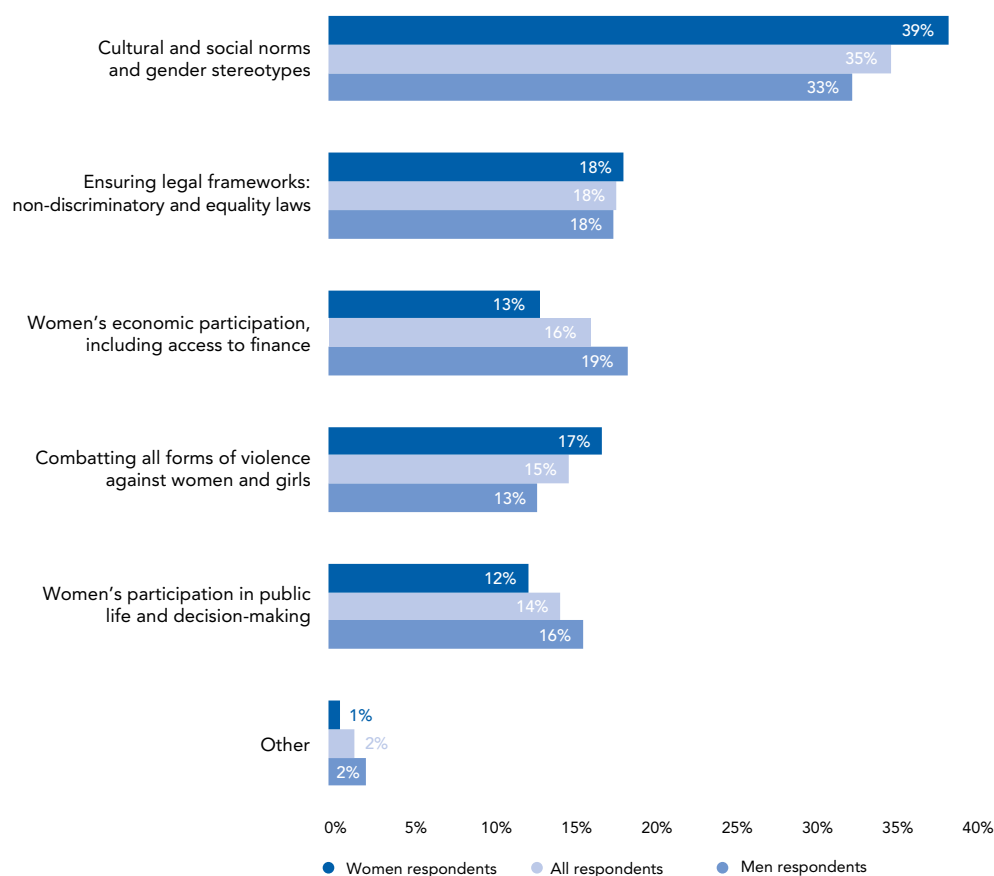
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Comments pointed to the importance of the county-specific context and the implementation of existing laws:

The most significant challenge facing Southern Mediterranean countries in the area of gender equality is those sociocultural laws that possess some untouchable sanctity in their societies, as well as the gender stereotypes that prevail in the application of gender equality on the ground.

—— Algerian respondent

EU policies in this area can be used as an inspiration but should be adapted to the problems and realities of the countries.

—— French respondent

We have many laws that support women's rights, but the problem is that they are not implemented. Therefore, there is no point in more laws if they do not apply! We need real action to prevent all forms of violence against women.

—— Libyan respondent

According to the 2nd UfM Progress Report on gender equality, published in March 2022, in the last 10 years many countries have strengthened legal frameworks and developed new programmes and policies in order to increase women's participation in political, economic, and social spheres and to protect women from all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence. However, extra efforts are required to strengthen women's economic and political empowerment and to put an end to violence against women and girls in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

—— Italian respondent

Question 12 invited participants to identify EU-SMCs cooperation priorities on gender equality. Respondents deemed the top priority was "Strengthening of legal frameworks for access to equal opportunities" followed by two options that obtained almost the same percentages: "Awareness raising to prevent and combat gender-based violence" and the "Promotion of women's entrepreneurship" (see graph 19).
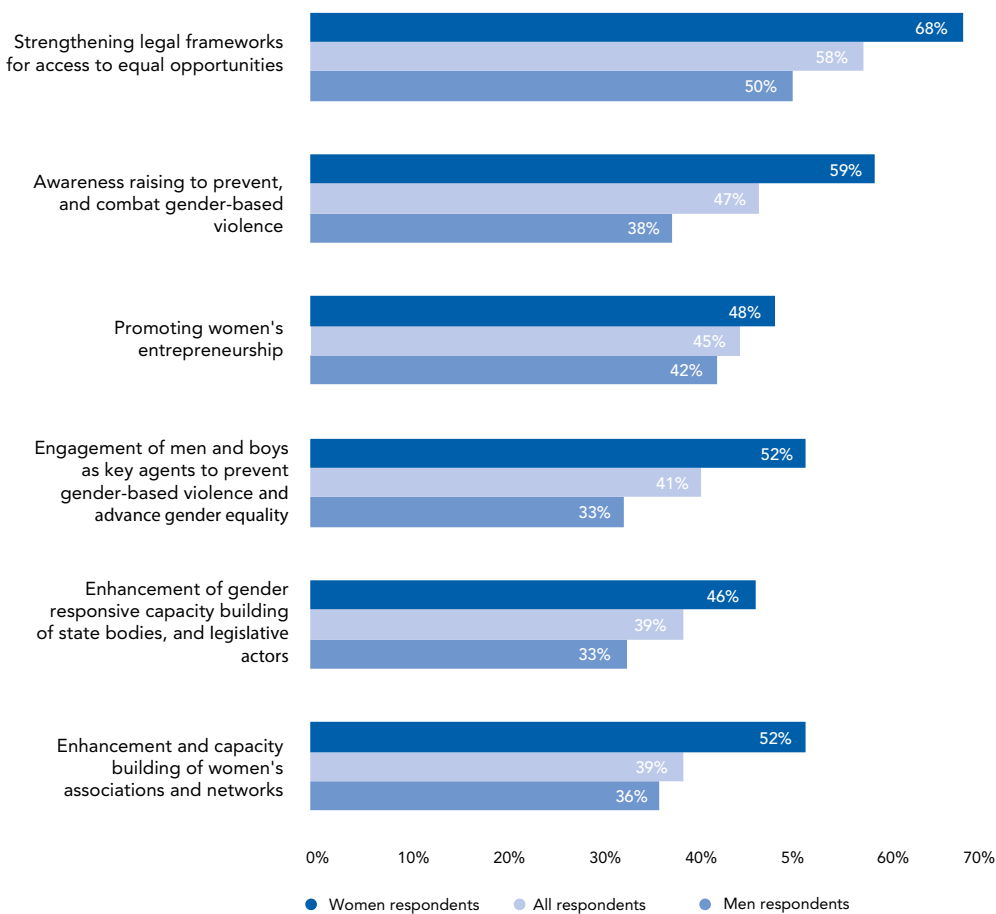
Graph 19: Q.12 To what extent should the EU-SMCs cooperation prioritise…
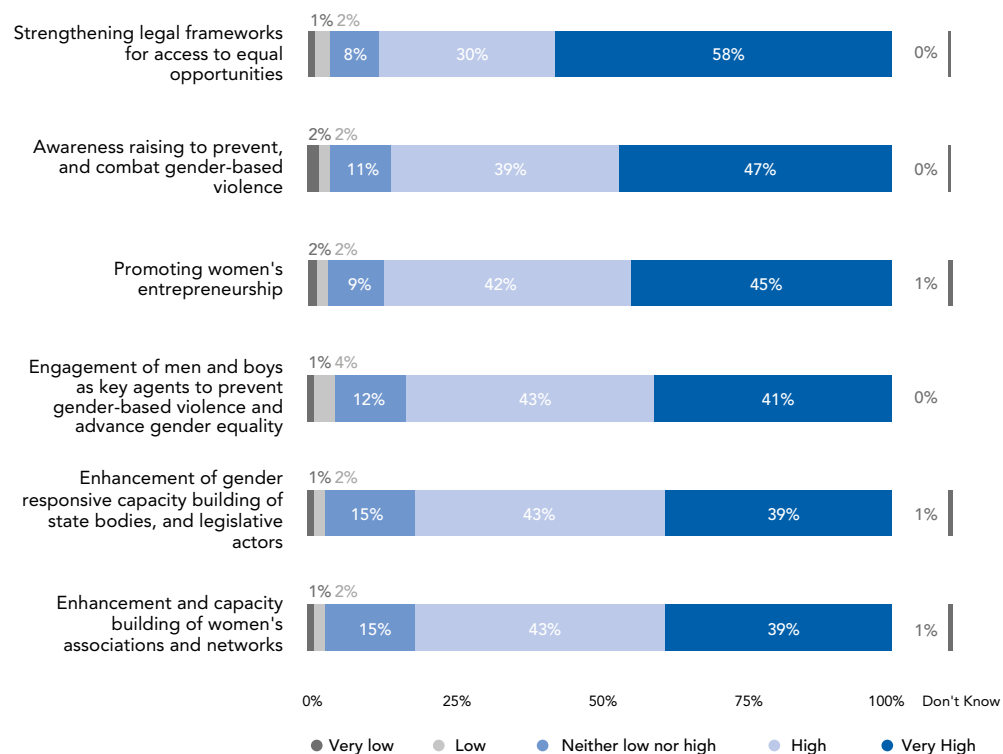
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Sorted by geographical origin, results depict a similar pattern as previously described. It is worth noting, however, that priorities were different when comparing results by gender. Looking at "very high extent" answers (see graph 20), there are differences of almost 20 percentage points between men and women's answers in priorities such as "Engagement of men and boys as key agents to prevent gender-based violence", "Awareness raising to prevent and combat gender-based violence" and "Strengthening legal frameworks". The order of priorities varies as well. Men considered the "Promotion of women's entrepreneurship" as the second priority, while for women the second option was "Awareness raising to combat gender-based violence". Women tended to give higher importance than men to "Enhancing the capacity building of women's association and networks" and "Engaging men and boys to prevent gender-based violence".

Graph 20: Q.12 To what extent should the EU-SMCs cooperation prioritise…
(% of very high extent answers)

	Women	All	Men
Strengthening legal frameworks for access to equal opportunities	68%	58%	50%
Awareness raising to prevent, and combat gender-based violence	59%	47%	38%
Promoting women's entrepreneurship	48%	45%	42%
Engagement of men and boys as key agents to prevent gender-based violence and advance gender equality	52%	41%	33%
Enhancement of gender responsive capacity building of state bodies, and legislative actors	46%	39%	33%
Enhancement and capacity building of women's associations and networks	52%	39%	36%

● Women respondents   ● All respondents   ● Men respondents

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

In their comments some respondents further elaborated on proposals for gender equality:

Support for women leadership should be widespread across all ideologies and not restricted to one current. The aim is to showcase women's economic and political participation across all religious, cultural, tribal, ideological spheres. This will reduce a feeling of disenfranchisement by some groups and increase legitimacy.

—— Lebanese respondent

Adopt measures that, in addition to working on equal opportunities, allow people in this situation to move towards autonomy.

—— Spanish respondent

There has already been so much spent on awareness raising and supporting women's organisations, but we need to work more on women's economic empowerment and their political participation – these will have a greater impact than educational campaigns.

—— Tunisian respondent

Communicate better on European achievements in terms of equality without acting as prescribers of what is to be done.

—— French respondent

Question 13 turned to the challenges that SMCs encounter while promoting active youth citizenship. More than a third of the answers (36%) considered that "Unemployment and lack of decent employment perspectives" was the main challenge to be faced. The second challenge was the "Equitable access to public goods" (28%) and "Lack of active role in the public policymaking" came in third place (21%).

It is worth noting that, although the order of results is the same, results by geographical origin show a different pattern (see graph 21). For SMCs respondents these three first challenges have a more homogeneous importance while EU respondents gave "Unemployment and the lack of employment perspectives" more importance (41%) and considered that the "Role public policymaking" was not as important as it was for SMCs respondents.

Graph 21: Q.13 In your opinion, what is the main challenge that SMCs encounter while promoting active youth citizenship?
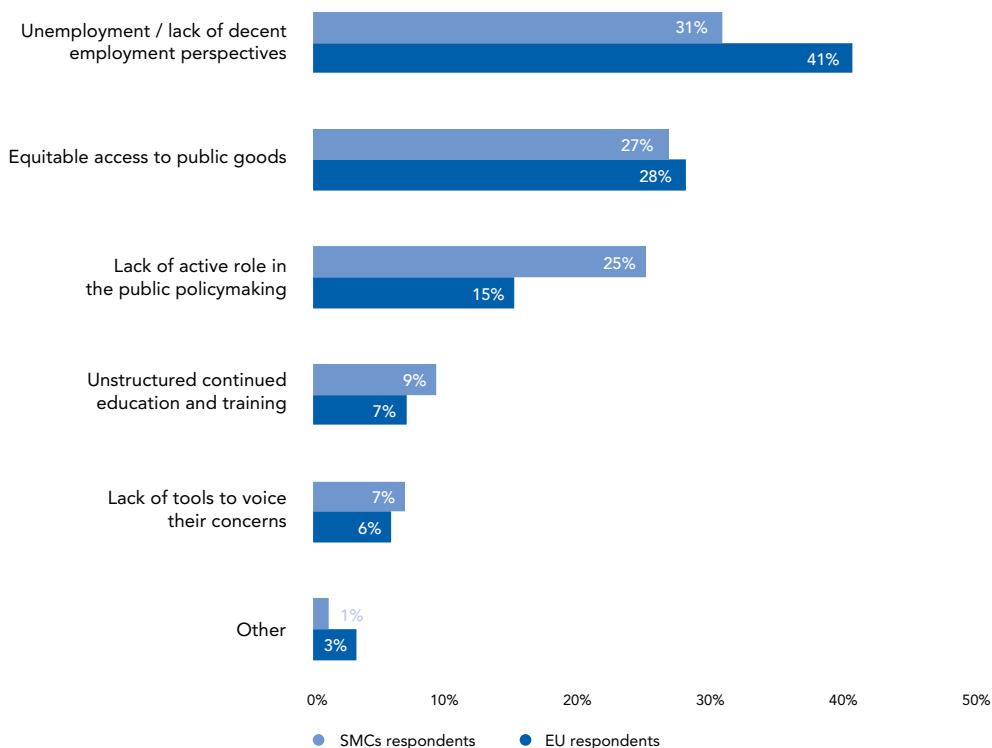
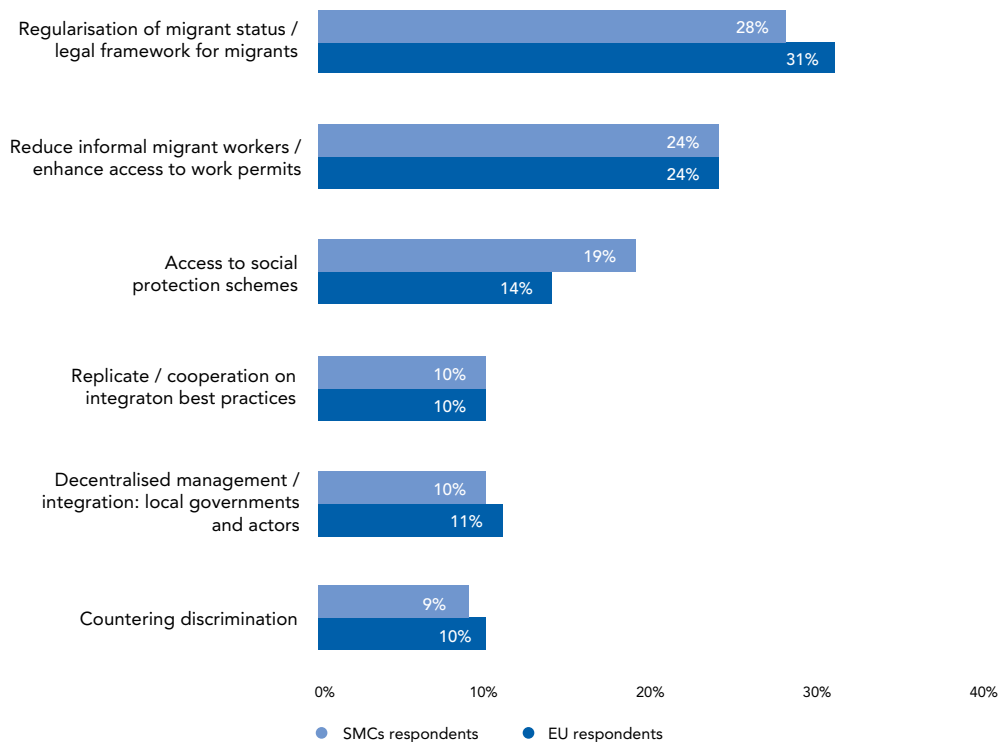**Source:** Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

A breakdown of Maghreb and Mashrek results displays a clearly different order of the challenges (see graph 22), with 33% of Maghreb respondents designating "Equitable access to public goods" as the main challenge when promoting youth citizenship. In contrast, Mashrek respondents opted for "Unemployment and the lack of employment perspectives" (35%). It is worth noting how the "Lack of active role in the policymaking" is differently perceived in the Mashrek (29% of answers) and in the Maghreb (21%).

Graph 22: Q.13 In your opinion, what is the main challenge that SMCs encounter while promoting active youth citizenship?

● Mashreq respondents   ● All respondents   ● Maghreb respondents
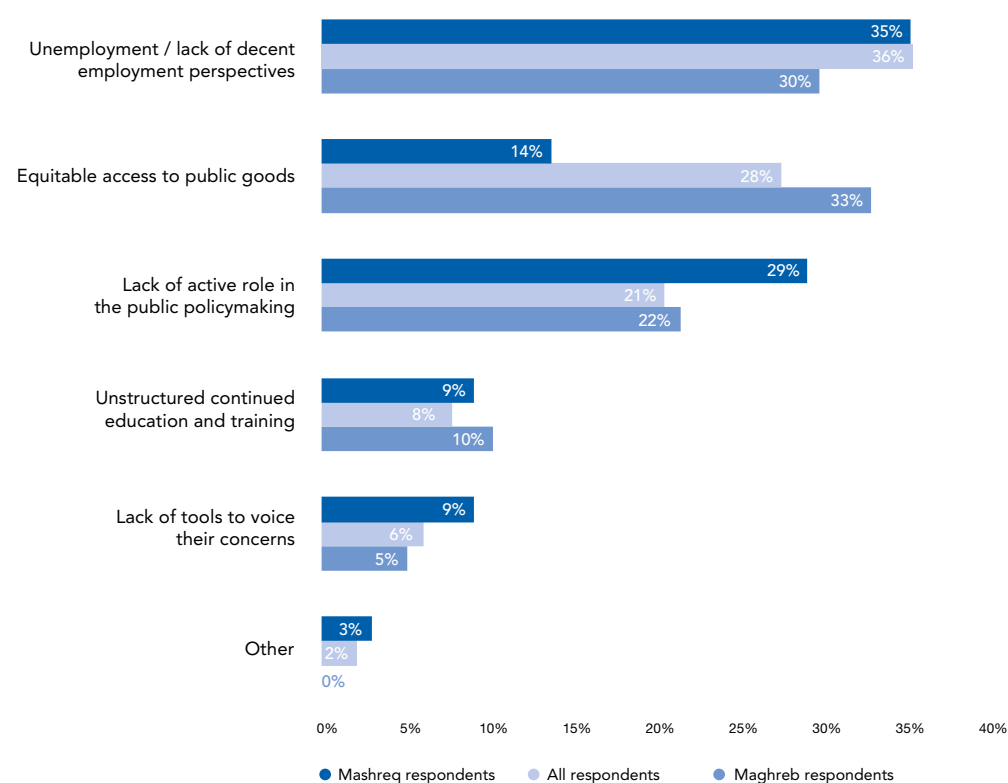
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

The open-ended **Question 14** aimed to grasp respondent's suggestions on EU-SMCs priorities to promote active youth citizenship. Respondents highlighted the importance of "Educational and vocational training" (30%) followed by "Development of quality and opportunities" (23%).

When considering a regional breakdown, results show a differentiated pattern. Answers from SMCs were less polarised (see graph 23) with similar percentages for the different cooperation priorities, particularly when considering "Enhancing youth as civil society actors", "Participation in the policymaking" and "Capacity building: communication, leadership, social activism".

Graph 23: Q.14 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority to promote active youth citizenship? (Categories developed from open-ended answers)

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Open answers expanded on how to promote the active citizenship for youth:

It is necessary to expand political work with young people in the Middle East, in addition to finding solutions that compel decision makers to take young people seriously on the political side and not intimidate them on the security side.

—— Jordan respondent

I think EU-SMCs cooperation should adopt a new beneficiary-centred and beneficiary-oriented approach. The idea is also to increasingly limit intermediaries and to target active youth organisations capable of uniting young people, of addressing decision-makers and implementing serious action plans in terms of public policies for young people.

—— Moroccan respondent

The main EU-SMCs cooperation priority to promote active youth citizenship is paying extra focus towards the disadvantaged groups among the youth, especially given that a large sum of them are within the lines of poverty and do not have access to basic education resources due to their fragile financial status.

—— Lebanese respondent

The last questions of this block focused on the Covid-19 impact on immigration in SMCs since migrants, as a vulnerable group, have particularly been hit by socio-economic consequences and mobility restrictions of the pandemic. **Question 15** was designed to evaluate the main impacts while **Question 16** was an open-ended question on specific cooperation priorities to promote integration of migrants in SMCs social protection systems.

The overall results showed three main elements with very similar results. These were related to dependence on smuggling for border crossings, the drop of remittances and the involuntary immobility of those people on the move (see graph 24). Geographic breakdown of results didn't show remarkable differences. It is worth noting, however, that zooming in on results from Mashrek, in contrast to the overall results, the impact on the drop of remittances and on tensions between migrants and forcibly displaced with hosting communities, were considered the main ones.

Graph 24: Q.15 Migrants, as a vulnerable group, have particularly been hit by the socio-economic consequences and mobility restrictions of the pandemic. In your opinion, to what extent has Covid-19 impacted the following migration-related elements in SMCs?
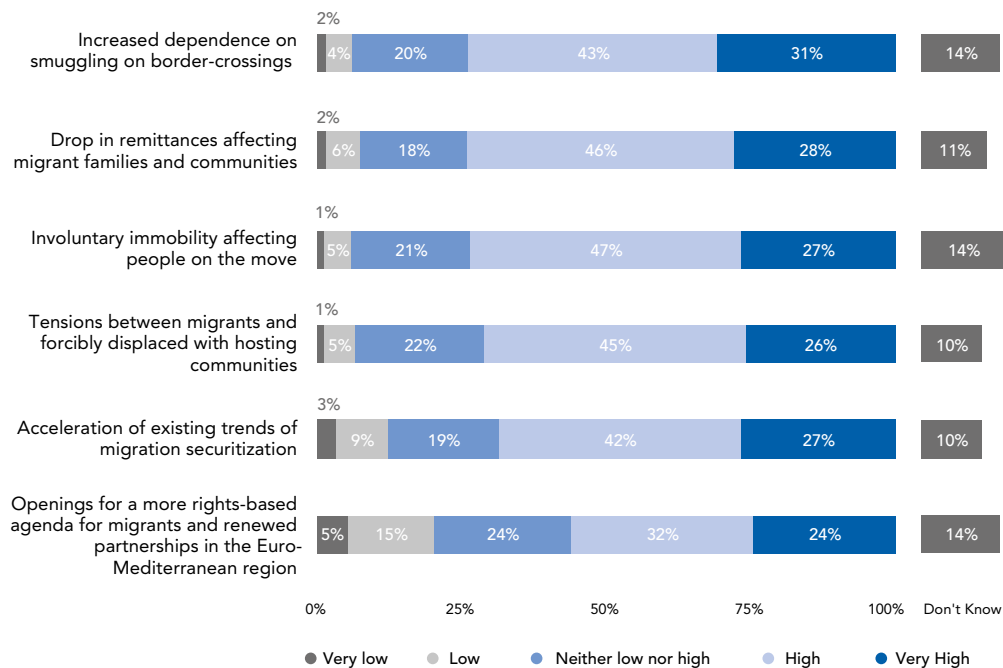
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Results of the open-ended question on priorities to promote the integration of migrants in SMCs social protection systems, clearly showed that "Regularisation of migrant status" and the "Reduction of informal migrant workers" should be the main cooperation priorities (see graph 24bis).

Graph 24bis: Q.16 In your opinion, what should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority to promote the integration of migrants in SMCs social protection systems? (Categories developed from open-ended answers)
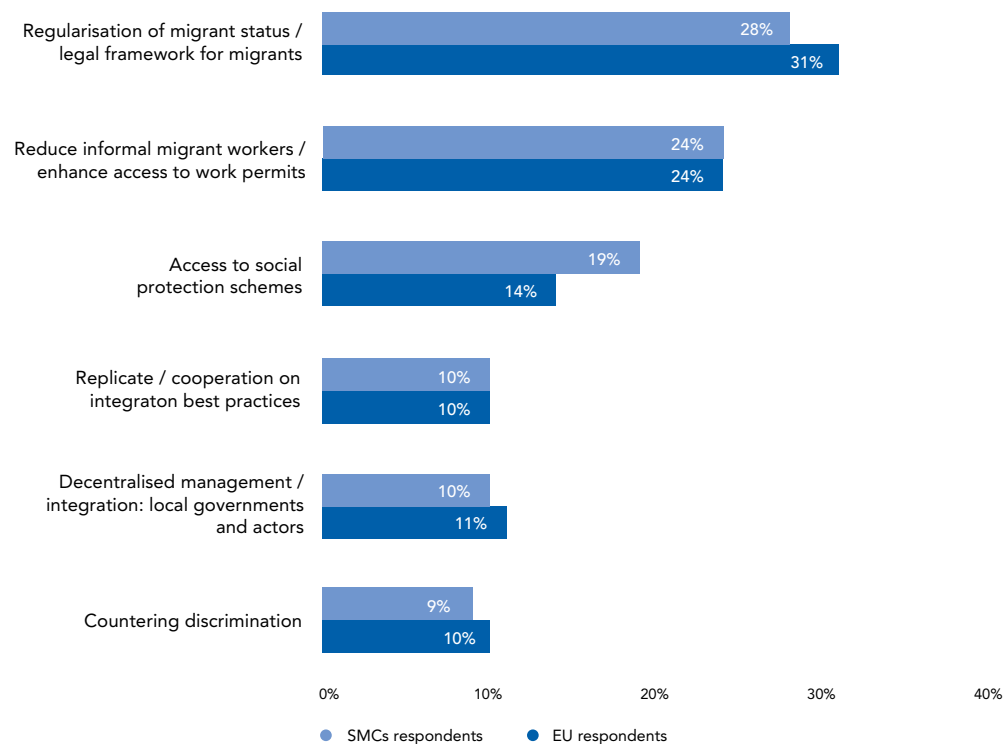
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

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Comments on this question show a variety of arguments and proposals on finding ways to promote the integration of migrants in SMCs:

Migrants should be treated equally among all host communities. Best practice integration methods should be replicated throughout the region, to ensure decent quality of life for all migrants and to reduce the tendency to move from one country to the other.

—— Jordan respondent

Exchange of experiences with communities where immigrants have been successfully integrated and development of NGO capacity-building programmes to develop projects for immigrant and refugee integration.

—— Greek respondent

Unfortunately, in SMCs the social protection systems are often non-existent or non-operational.

—— Lebanese respondent

Provide them a resident status with the associated rights. And of course, continue cooperation to allow the emergence of economic and social projects to promote their integration in the host country.

—— French respondent

It should be possible to cooperate in the legislative field to develop laws that help in this integration, as well as cooperation in the economic fields that open the way for migrants to work.

—— Egyptian respondent

Ensuring a Just Digital and Green Transition

This block of questions looked for respondents' assessment on the challenges for both an inclusive digital and green transition. Questions also invited participants to evaluate EU-SMCs cooperation priorities in these fields. Additionally, it asked respondents to indicate cooperation priorities to increase resilience to social impacts resulting from climate change.

Main findings:

• The lack of digital skills combined with the gaps in digital infrastructure were identified as the main challenges facing the digital transition.

• One third of the respondents considered the access to the internet of the vulnerable population, as the main cooperation priority for an inclusive digital transition.

• When discussing green transition challenges, ensuring that investments respect environmental and social standards, and the lack of green skills were underscored as main concerns.

• Cooperation priorities on inclusive green transition should focus efforts on the enhancement of green skills (through education system reforms, vocational training, and reskilling).

• When it comes to identifying specific actions for EU-SMCs cooperation to foster an inclusive green transition, respondents depicted a combination of three main elements: awareness raising, green partnerships and green technology transfer.

• As far as increasing resilience to climate change impacts is concerned, respondents prioritised protecting food systems by developing agriculture sector resilience and supporting local communities to mitigate scarcity challenges.

Question 17 and **18** were linked, as the first one asked about the challenges related to digital transition and the second asked which cooperation areas should be prioritised. The "Lack of digital skills" combined with the "Gaps in digital infrastructure" obtained the highest percentages (see graph 25). Other challenges underlined were "Territorial inequalities" combined with the "Exclusion of vulnerable groups".

Graph 25: Q.17 To what extent are the following elements a challenge for an inclusive digital transition?
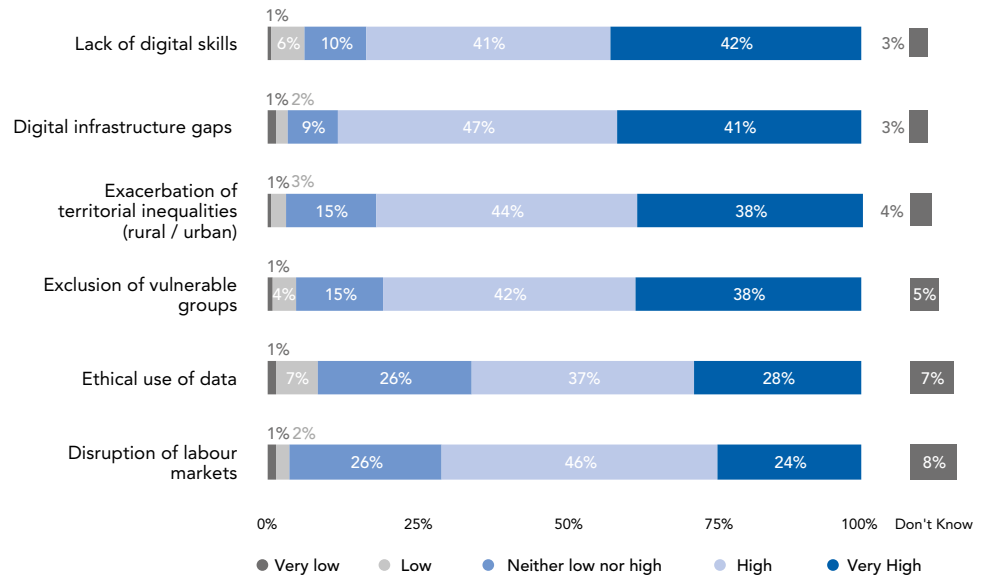
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Results on EU-SMCs cooperation priorities considered the access to the internet of vulnerable populations (35% of the answers) as a key issue followed by the need to develop digital skills (22%). As in former questions, cooperation priorities were differently evaluated when looking at the geographical breakdown of answers (see graph 26). SMCs respondents considered that together with the "Access to internet for vulnerable population", the "Adoption of e-services" and the "Development of digital economy" should also be important priorities for cooperation. As for views from the EU, respondents clearly underlined the importance of the "Internet access for vulnerable groups" while the second priority brought forward was "Digital skills development".

Graph 26: Q.18 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority for an inclusive digital transition?
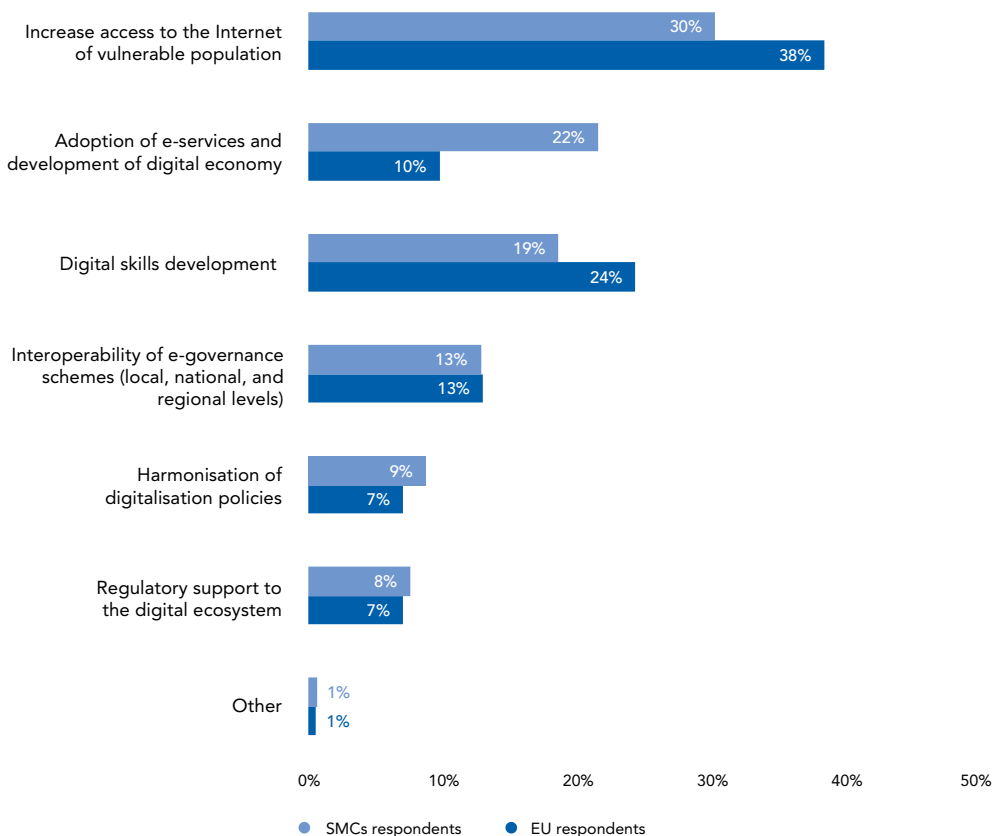
Some of the open comments highlighted the challenges of digital literacy as well as the importance of regulating the governance of digitalization:

Poor digital infrastructure and lack of digital skills are linked with the inequalities between rural and urban areas.

—— Romanian respondent

Digital skills are not easy to acquire if the person is poorly educated or barely literate. High priority should be given to education.

—— Moroccan respondent

Cooperation provided by the EU in exchange for a guarantee of non-interference by local authorities in the way the public in SMC uses the Internet.

—— Italian respondent

Update of the legal system on digitization, including the protection of personal data, the protection of vulnerable groups and children during their use of the Internet, and the fight against fake news.

—— Algerian respondent

Governance of digitalisation should be put first: data protection, fight against digital surveillance and accessibility of services.

—— German respondent

In relation to the green transition, **Question 19** and **20** followed the same design as previous questions on digital transition. First, a question on the main challenges for an inclusive green transition followed by a question on cooperation priorities. Respondents considered the need to "Ensure investments in line with environmental and social standards" as the first challenge followed by the "Lack of green skills" (see graph 27). "Participatory approaches to green transition" came in third place and with similar results to "Green technology gaps".
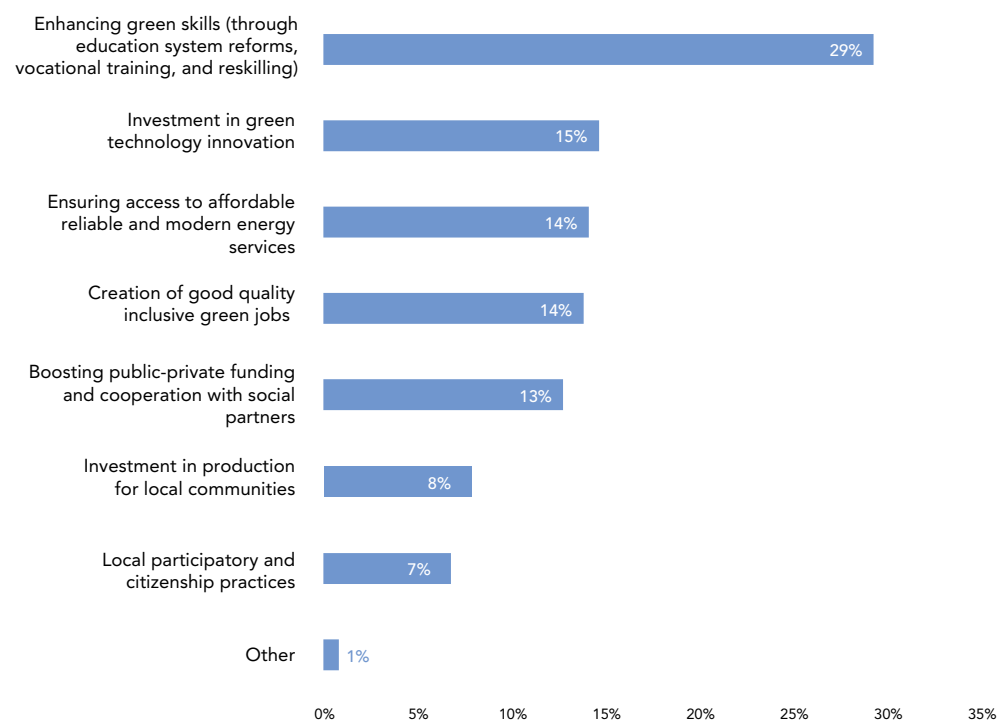
Graph 27: Q.19 To what extent are the following elements a challenge for an inclusive green transition?
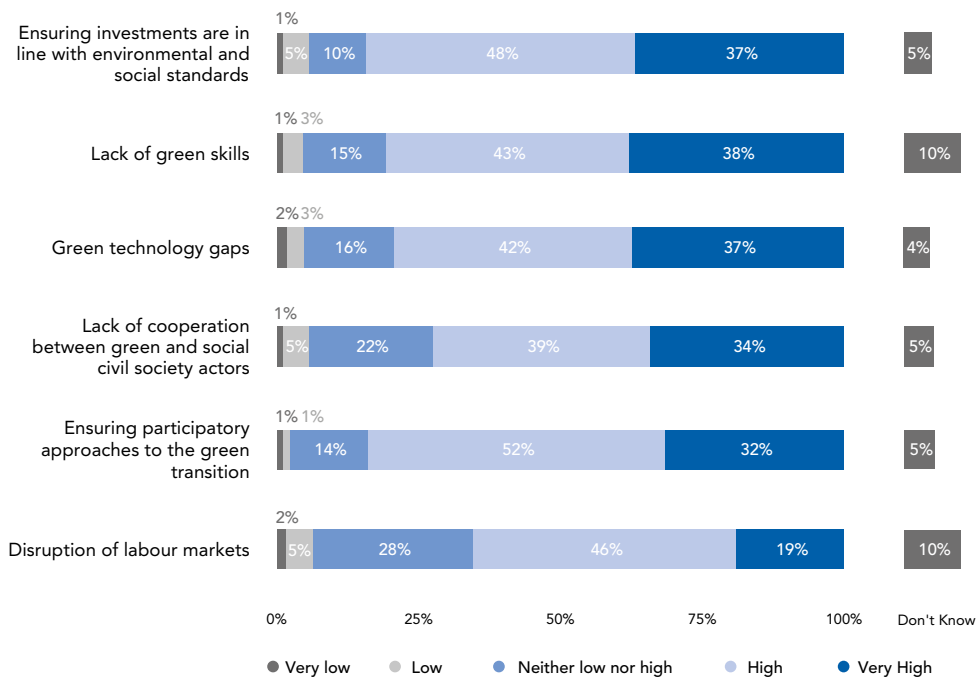
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Results for cooperation priorities indicated that enhancing green skills (through education system reforms, vocational training, and reskilling) is the most pressing matter with a third of the answers, followed by four options that obtained almost the same percentage: cooperation related to green technology innovation, modern energy services, the creation of inclusive green jobs and public-private funding (see graph 28).

Graph 28: Q.20 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority for a green and inclusive agenda?

Category	Percentage
Enhancing green skills (through education system reforms, vocational training, and reskilling)	29%
Investment in green technology innovation	15%
Ensuring access to affordable reliable and modern energy services	14%
Creation of good quality inclusive green jobs	14%
Boosting public-private funding and cooperation with social partners	13%
Investment in production for local communities	8%
Local participatory and citizenship practices	7%
Other	1%

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

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A breakdown by geographical origin allows further insight on this result. "Ensuring access to affordable and modern energy services" showed differentiated results: it was second option for EU respondents and sixth for SMCs participants (graph 29) but further differences were observed when breaking down SMCs respondents between Maghreb and Mashrek answers (see graph 30).

Graph 29: Q.20 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority for a green and inclusive agenda?
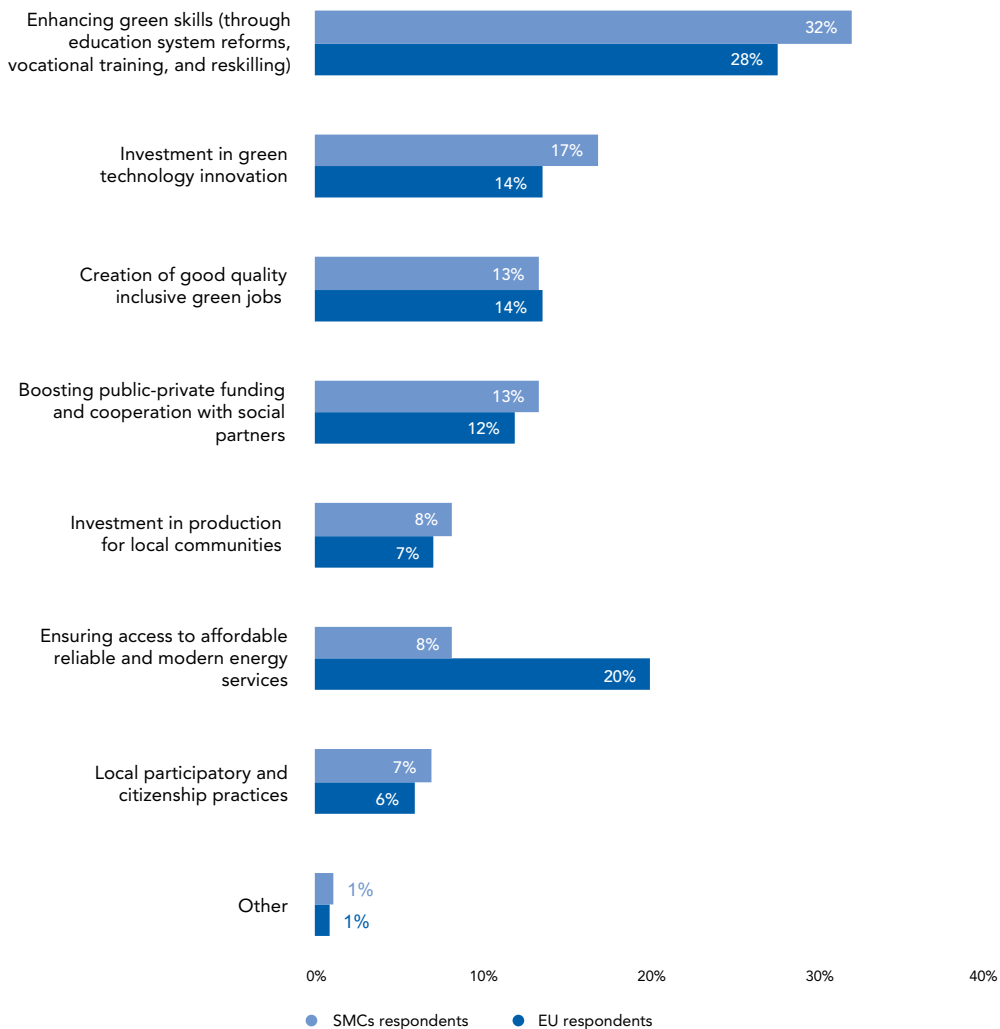
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Mashrek respondents depict a similar pattern as previously described, while Maghreb respondents display a more irregular pattern; "Green skills enhancement" was the top choice for a significantly larger percentage compared to Mashrek respondents (see graph 30). It is worth mentioning that the importance perceived for "Ensuring access to affordable and modern energy services" and for "Creation of good quality inclusive green jobs" is higher among Mashrek respondents than Maghreb ones.

Graph 30: Q.20 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority for a green and inclusive agenda?
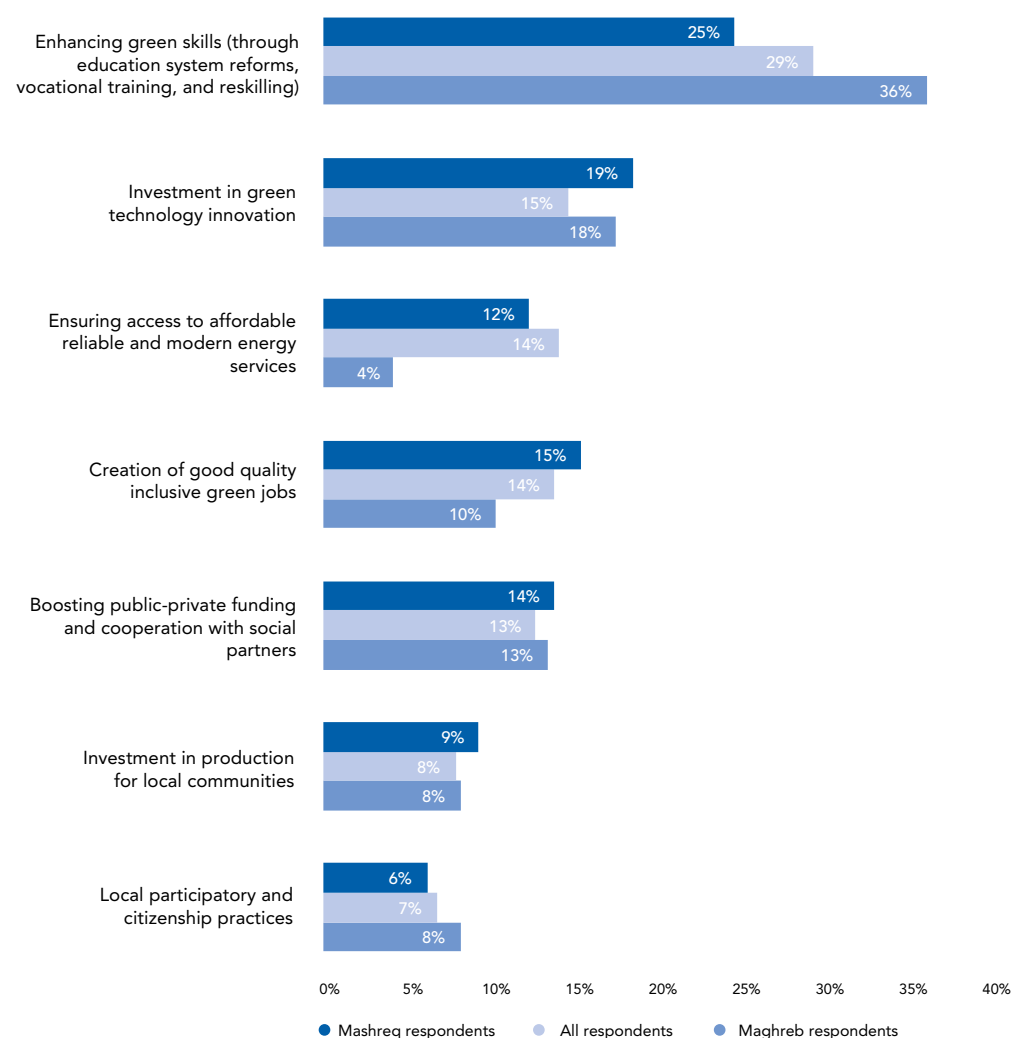
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Open comments elaborate on the role of green technology transfer and access and on managing the green transition:

All of the above options are relevant, but without proper development of and wide access to effective green technologies it may remain rather unrealistic to expect effective results.

—— Swedish respondent

Work on the transfer of green technology in the North-South Cooperation Framework is the first step for a successful, effective and equitable transition.

—— Algerian respondent

We should ask the question "could the green economy techniques support the employment or unemployment rates?" and we should have realistic answers especially in SMCs which have the highest indicators of informal sector workers.
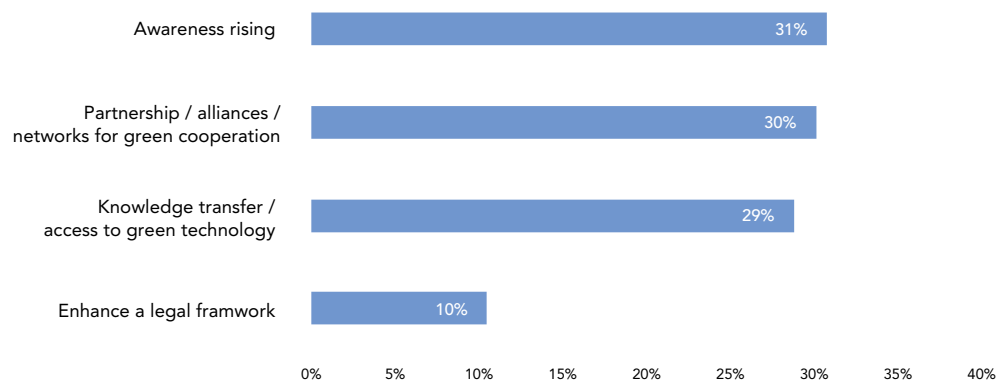
—— Danish respondent

We need to create successful models that help to get government and popular support as well as investment to overcome the difficulties in the transition to digitalization and a green economy.

—— Libyan respondent

The open-ended **Question 21** aimed to grasp respondents' suggestions on concrete actions for the EU-SMCs cooperation to foster inclusive green transition. Categories developed from open-ended answers showed the importance of measures combining three main elements: awareness, green partnerships and green technology transfer (see graph 31).

Graph 31: Q.21 What concrete actions should EU-SMCs cooperation prioritise to foster an inclusive green transition? (Categories developed from open-ended answers)

Awareness rising — 31%
Partnership / alliances / networks for green cooperation — 30%
Knowledge transfer / access to green technology — 29%
Enhance a legal framwork — 10%

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

A geographical breakdown illustrates a significant difference in the order of priorities. According to survey results, EU respondents considered actions related to awareness raising as a main concern, whereas SMCs respondents prioritised concrete actions (partnerships, alliances, networks) for green cooperation (see graph 31bis).

Graph 31bis: Q.21 What concrete actions should EU-SMCs cooperation prioritise to foster an inclusive green transition? (Categories developed from open-ended answers)

- SMCs respondents   ● EU respondents
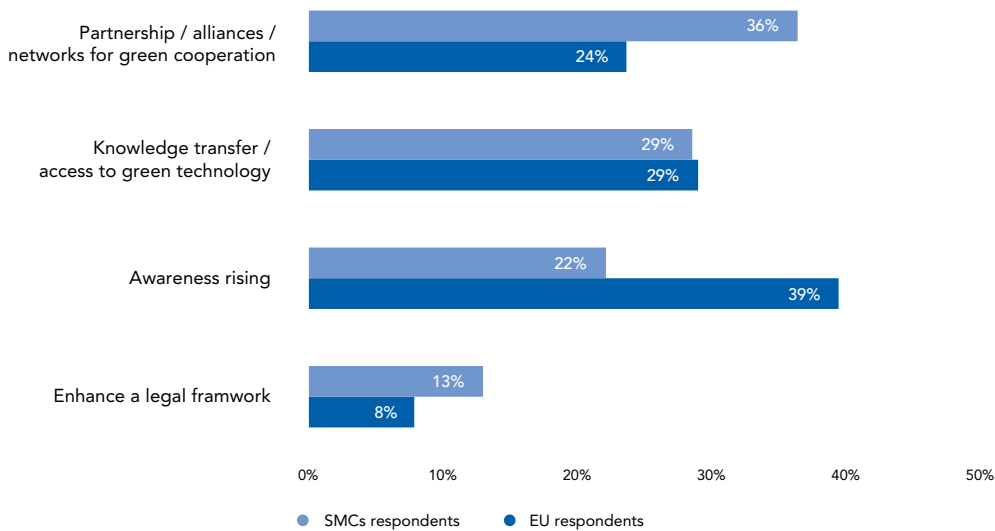
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Ensuring that the cost of transition for economies of SMCs, especially for vulnerable groups, is minimal, such as labour market disruption or diminished competitiveness.

—— Egyptian respondent

Implementing (long-term) legislation and policies related to sustainability and green transition; as any initiatives or practices which are individual or from non-state actors have the risk of being short-lived if the legal and political ecosystem is not encouraging.
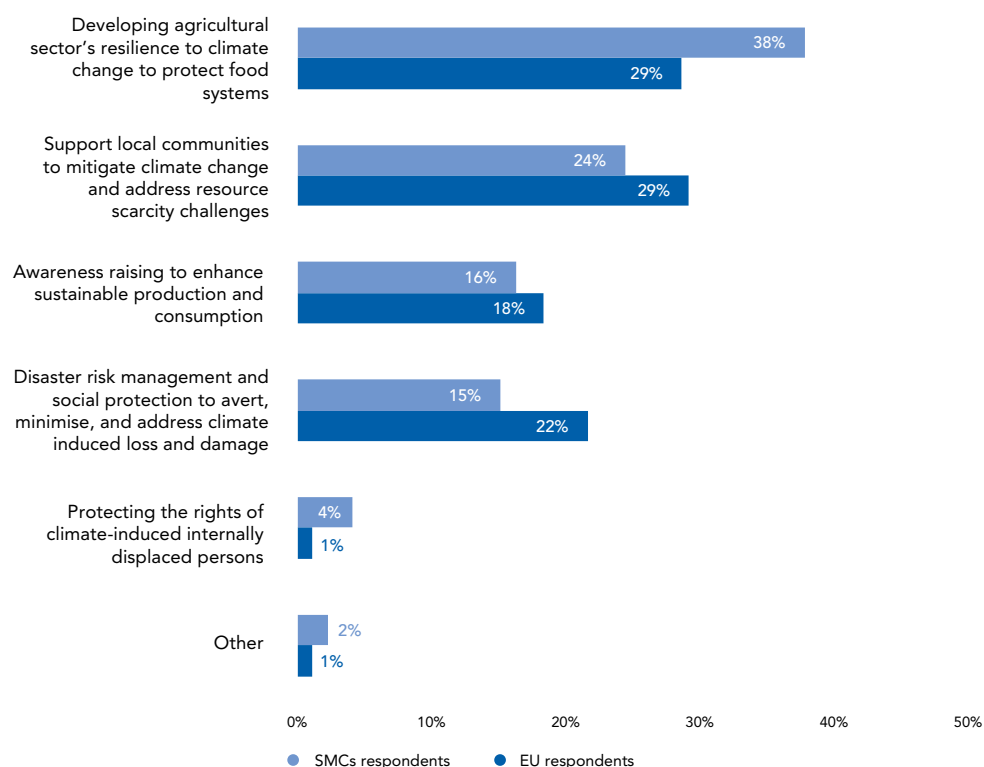
—— Spanish respondent

This transition is as important for the EU countries as it is for the SMCs. Delays are being recorded on both coasts of the Mediterranean.

—— Algerian respondent

Finally, to close this block, in **Question 22** respondents were asked about cooperation priorities to increase resilience to climate change impacts. Overall results showed that the first choice was "Development of agricultural sector's resilience to climate change to protect food systems" for nearly a third of respondents (32%). In second place respondents emphasised "Support for local communities to mitigate climate change and address resource scarcity challenges" (27%).

However, there was a greater tendency among SMCs respondents to consider the agricultural sector's resilience as a priority (38%), while support to local communities obtained a lower percentage compared to the overall results. EU respondents considered both priorities equally important. A third option for EU respondents was "Disaster risk management" with a difference of 7 percentage points compared to SMCs respondents (see graph 32).

Graph 32: Q.22 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority to increase resilience to climate change social impacts?

SMCs respondents   EU respondents

Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

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When looking at the breakdown of answers by type of institution (see graph 33), experts followed the survey average, and policymakers displayed differentiated priorities, particularly with regards to "Awareness raising on sustainable production and consumption" and for "Disaster risk management", with a higher percentage. Conversely, civil society respondents gave these areas slightly less importance.

Graph 33: Q.22 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority to increase resilience to climate change social impacts?
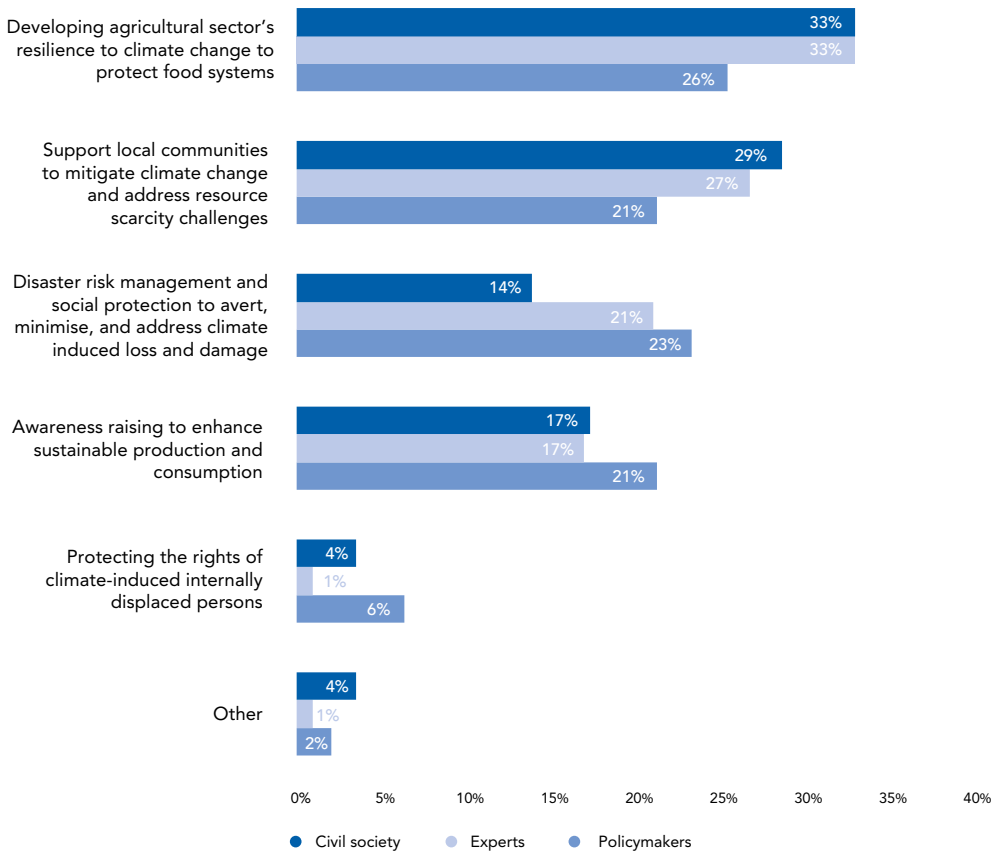
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Government Transparency and Accountability

The last block of the questionnaire explores governance challenges in SMCs and to gather cooperation priorities that could enhance good governance.

Main findings:

• Priorities to improve good governance should first deal with transparency and accountability both in the civil and judicial administration and in terms of legal frameworks and institutions.

• Consistently with the results on good governance priorities, cooperation priorities should be focused on transparency and rule of law (35.7%). Addressing corruption was identified as a main priority by nearly one third of all respondents (29.5%).

Question 23 invited respondents to indicate, among different options, which issues should be prioritised while dealing with good governance in SMCs. The overall results showed that "Fair, transparent and accountable civil and judicial administration" together with "Increased transparency and accountability of the legal framework and institutions" were the main concerns dealing with good governance (see graph 34). Results also indicate that "Promoting fiscal justice" and "Inclusive involvement of civil society in reform processes" are also important.

Graph 34: Q.23 To what extent should the following elements be prioritised while dealing with good governance in SMCs?
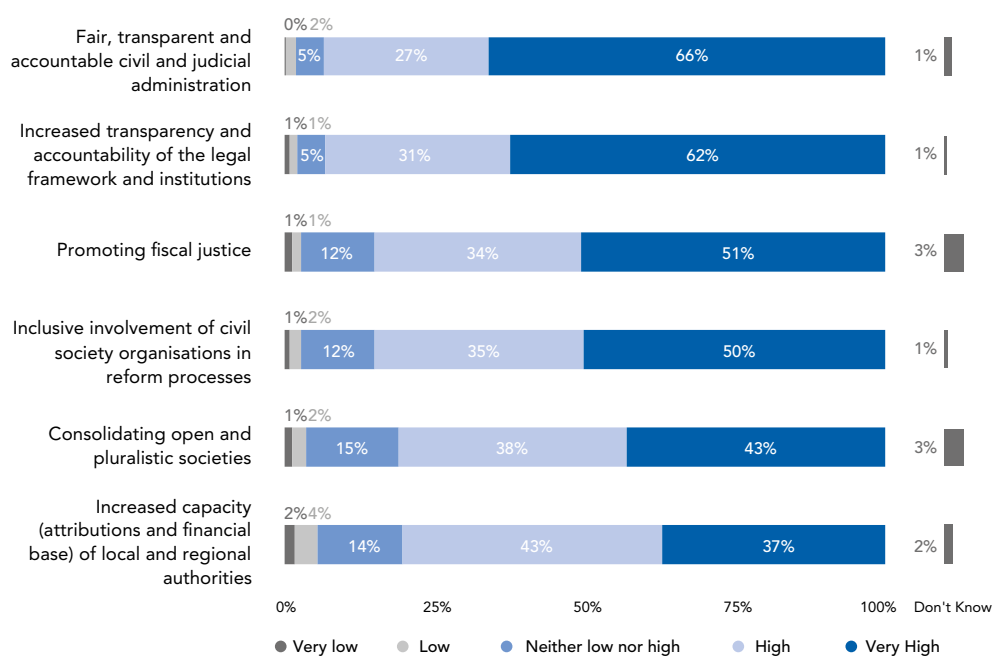
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

A geographical breakdown of results points to some nuances on the key concerns facing good governance in SMCs. Results followed the overall pattern of the aggregated results between the two sub-samples, but EU respondents tended to choose "Fair, transparent and accountable civil and judicial administration" together with "Increased transparency and accountability of the legal framework and institutions" in higher percentages and particularly in the case of "Consolidating open and pluralistic societies" which ranks in third position with 17 percentage points above the SMCs percentage of answers (see graph 35). SMCs respondents gave higher percentages to "Promoting fiscal justice" and "Inclusive involvement of civil society in reform processes".

Graph 35: Q.23 To what extent should the following elements be prioritised while dealing with good governance in SMCs? (% to a very high extent)
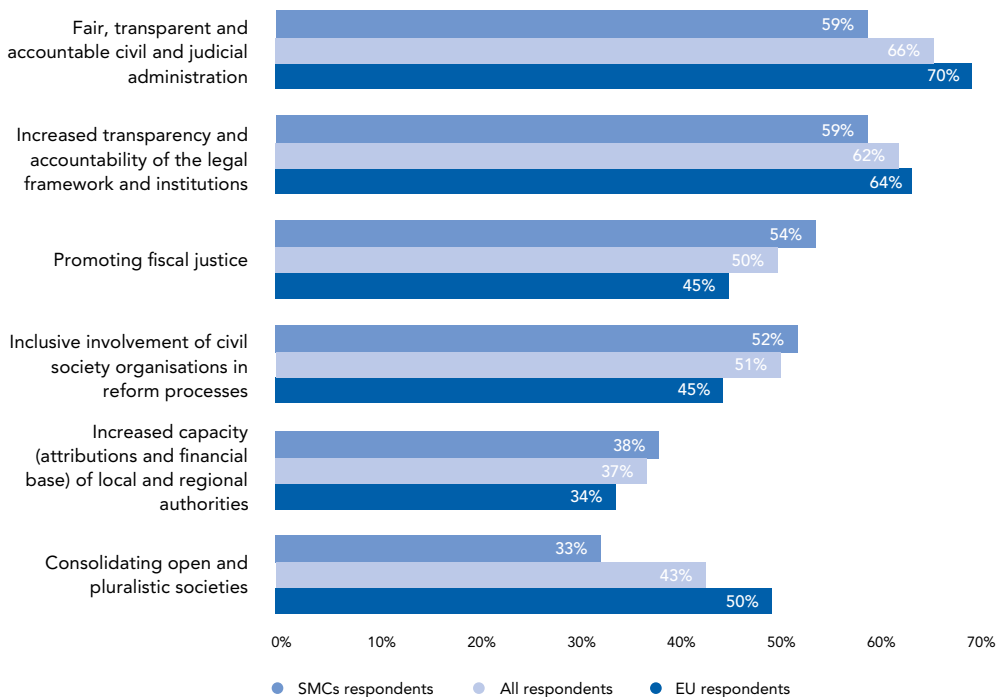
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

In their comments respondents highlighted barriers to good governance:

An enhanced role for local and regional authorities does not guarantee better governance, it depends on local realities.

—— Italian respondent

The implementation of good governance requirements depends on the political will and convictions of the ruling elites and the desire for change.

—— Algerian respondent

Governments of SMCs should build strategies of fighting poverty and youth strategies that are supported by international guidelines.

—— Danish respondent

The open-ended **Question 24** invited respondents to identify what should be the main cooperation priority to enhance good governance. In line with the results in Question 23, transparency and rule of law was the prioritised option (35,7%). Interestingly, the second priority was addressing corruption, mentioned by nearly one third of respondents (29,5%), (see graph 36). A geographic breakdown of results followed the overall pattern of results with no salient differences.

Graph 36: Q.24 What should be the main EU-SMCs cooperation priority for good governance? (Categories developed from open-ended answers)
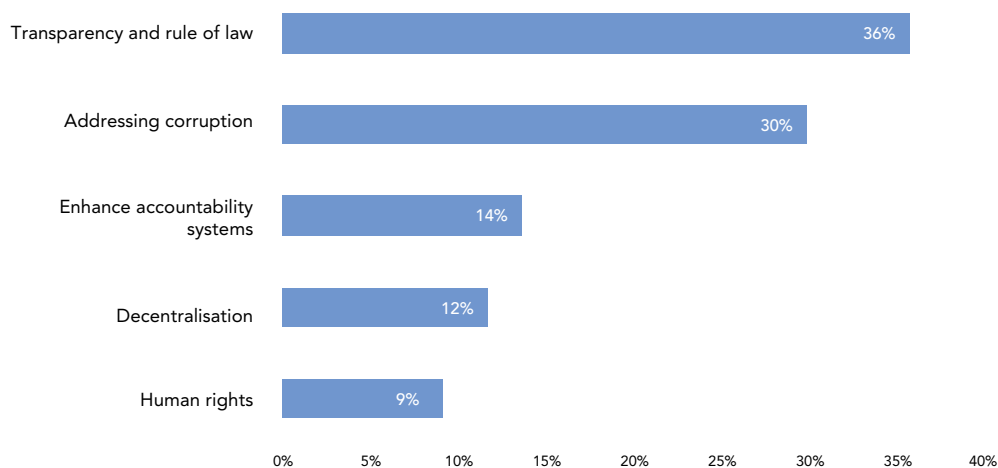
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 13th Euromed Survey

Respondents explained how to further cooperation for good governance:

Set a good example yourself before advocating it for others. Therefore, the "do as I say but don't do as I do" should be avoided. Otherwise, this discourse is incoherent.

—— Belgian respondent

Potential conflicts of interest in government appointments and in links between prominent politicians and the business community have been identified as an issue of concern.

—— Egyptian respondent

The EU must use a great deal of diplomacy and pedagogy to manage both the susceptibilities of incompetence and to provide the experience required for greater consistency in the difficult management of the insufficient means and resources available in societies that are in crisis.

—— Tunisian respondent

Sharing best practices in governance approaches among countries of the region. Particularly, on issues related to accountability and transparency.

—— Jordan respondent

The main EU-SMCs cooperation priority for good governance is to have good accountability measures set in place for EU-funded projects and initiatives, since the latter have been gravely exploited by some informal actors and groups in the region that, in some ways, have a proximity with national governments.

—— Lebanese respondent

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS