

## INFORMATION NOTE

### **Civil Society Forum Neighbourhood South: 10-12 July 2017, Brussels**

The fourth edition of the Civil Society Forum Neighbourhood South is organised on 10-12 July in Brussels by the European Commission (DG NEAR and DEVCO), the European External Action Service, the European Social and Economic Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The Forum provides the opportunity to exchange views on regional agendas under the umbrella theme of "**resilience and youth**". It will reiterate the EU's commitment to support Southern Neighbourhood civil society and highlight their role in policy-making and in proposing innovative development instruments in a context of increasing instability, inequalities and shrinking space for civil society.

This dialogue should lead to strengthening coherence and establishing a **joint agenda** between regional Civil Society Organisations from the Southern Neighbourhood and the EU and would set the basis for a new mechanism of structured dialogue managed by regional civil society from the end of this year. About 150 participants are expected: representatives of civil society organisations, local authorities, media, academics, think tanks, mainly from the Southern Neighbourhood, EU Member States, partners from the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and international organisations. High level policy makers from the European Union will also be invited to take part.

The Forum in Brussels falls at a time when several initiatives will take place with Civil Society and local authorities. This will therefore be the opportunity to engage strategically with these partners to work on a plan of action for sustainable development and partnerships. DG DEVCO is organising a Partnership Forum for Civil Society on 6-7 July at global level, followed by an event on decentralised co-operation on 10-11 July.

The 2017 edition of the Forum will take the form of four thematic seminars (on migration, security and resilience, human rights and governance, and reducing inequalities), based on the recommendations given by Civil Society during a preparatory seminar held in Tunis from 25-27 April. The outputs for the 2017 Forum will be related with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) priorities and also mirror ongoing discussions with EU Delegations, especially regarding the role of Civil Society at national and regional levels, as well as with regional bodies (such as the UfM, the Anna Lindh Foundation or the League of Arab States).

A South Advisory Group composed of twelve CSO members had been designated at the 2016 edition of the Forum in addition to four thematic facilitators have been providing contributions on the preparation and follow up of the event. A report will reflect key challenges and recommendations set during the Forum for further integration into regional agenda, policies and programmes, for and by civil society and key stakeholders.