

# THE EU'S SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS IN LEBANON

IN THE CONTEXT OF SECURITY CONCERNS

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## **Abstract**

This bachelor thesis addresses the question *What are the strengths and weaknesses of the European Union's support to human rights organizations in Lebanon in the context of security concerns, and how is the impact of the policy perceived by local actors?* by combining a qualitative mixed-method design of policy document analysis and semi-structured interviews. This research seeks to explore how the diverse composition of normative and rationalist interests in the EU's foreign policy is reflected in its policies in support for human rights organizations (HRO) in Lebanon, thereby adding to the scholarly debate about the 'Normative Power Europe.' There are two instruments designed to support HROs, the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights* and the *European Endowment for Democracy*. The substantially bigger European Neighbourhood Instrument is criticized by Lebanese HROs to be unsuited to support their work due to high funding requirements and a clear focus on security and economic development. The EU's impact is perceived as both positive and negative; the EU's political support is highlighted as a strength, while a lack of coherence among policies poses a risk to the EU's human rights agenda. Normative interests are undeniable, but rationalist interests seem to dominate the EU's agenda.

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## List of Abbreviations

ANND	Arab NGO Network for Development
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CLDH	Lebanese Center for Human Rights
CSA	Civil society actor
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSO	Civil society organization
DCI	Development Co-operation Instrument
EED	European Endowment for Democracy
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
HRD	Human rights defender
HRO	Human rights organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPE	Normative Power Europe
SSF	Single Support Framework
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Problem Description & Societal Relevance

Arbitrary detention and torture by the security forces are daily fares in Lebanon. Discrimination against women is determined by law, as they cannot pass their citizenship to their children. That the Mediterranean republic, which suffers from significant democratic deficits is still listed as the fourth most democratic Arab country by the Democracy Index is due to its comparably high-scoring civil freedoms (Freedom House, 2019). These freedoms allow its vibrant civil society, including around 8,000 civil society organizations (CSO), and various civil society and protest movements, to challenge such human rights violations despite prosecution and police violence (Beyond, 2015: 73). Regardless of its small size, the country of 6 million inhabitants is quite meaningful for the Middle East, not only as a cultural hub and an arena for regional power politics but also as a refuge for 1,5 million Syrian refugees. Including the longstanding Palestinians, more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the population are refugees and face severe restrictions in access to work and property. Especially Syrians are vulnerable to exploitation, since 74% of them don't have legal status and therefore no legal access to employment, education, and health care. (Human Rights Watch, 2019) A possible economic or humanitarian crisis would not only have a deteriorating impact on the country's human rights situation but might also cause another influx of more than a million refugees to Europe. Thus, this topic is of societal relevance from a normative, human-rights concerned perspective, as well as from a security-concerned perspective.

The European Union (EU) considers both its security as well as the protection and promotion of human rights, at the heart of its foreign relations (Art. 21 TEU). However, one might wonder whether universal and indivisible human rights are consistently pursuable and conform to the EU's security interests. For example, the EU granted the Lebanese security sector, namely the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces a support of € 46,6 million via its European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) in 2018 (Commission, 2018a), although both agencies are accused of using torture, e.g., by Human Rights Watch (2019). Nevertheless, human rights are an "overarching theme" throughout the EU's support via the ENI (Commission, 2017a: 4). This raises the question how the EU supports human rights in its neighborhood in the light of its security concerns, especially the control of 'irregular migration,' which is a significant driver of the EU's foreign security policies in its southern neighborhood (Del Sarto, 2016). To address this question, we analyze a country that a) has a robust

civil society that the EU can work with in its promotion of human rights, and b) that holds a large number of refugees which might cause some inconsistency between the EU's human rights and security concerns. As civil society is oppressed in many Arab countries, one might think of Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon as countries in the EU's immediate neighborhood (and therefore benefiting from the ENI) with a functioning civil society. Among these three, Jordan and Lebanon both have a very high number of refugees per capita. According to Forbes, Lebanon hosts with 173 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants considerably more than Jordan with 89 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants (McCarthy, 2017). In comparison to Jordan, Lebanon is situated at the Mediterranean and less than 300 km away from the closest European country, Cyprus. If security concerns curtail the EU's human rights support, the case of Lebanon will show. Therefore, this thesis seeks to analyze how the EU promotes human rights protection in neighboring Lebanon.

The security aspect addressed in the above paragraph motivates the choice of the topic of this paper and the country. The assumed conflict between the EU's human rights (normative) and security-driven interests in its foreign policy receives attention in the theoretical framework and accordingly in the analysis. These two paradigms are employed to explain the EU's means of support to human rights organizations (HRO) in Lebanon, and how local actors perceive this support. The focus on local HROs is chosen since the EU identified civil society as an essential stakeholder in the promotion and protection of human rights (Council, 2015: 8). HROs are part of civil society and consist of human rights defenders (HRD) who are considered "indispensable allies for the EU in the worldwide promotion and protection of human right" (Commission, 2011: 9). Human rights defenders include anyone that promotes human rights in a non-violent way (European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, n.d.: 2). The term 'human rights defenders' is used in this paper as it is the term employed by the EU. HROs spread awareness, publicize human rights violations using 'naming and shaming' and engage in lobbying operations (Donnelly, 2017: 504-505).

## 1.2. State of Research

Most publications on the EU's external human rights policy are from before the Treaty of Lisbon (Brandtner & Rosas, 1998). Newer research with a focus on the southern neighborhood can be found in research on democracy promotion, which is treated interlinked with human rights (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2011). Another academic focus lies on the EU's interests driving its policies in its neighboring countries, with scholars identifying the EU either as a normative, human rights-driven actor (Manners, 2002) or as a realist, security-driven actor (Schumacher, 2018; Seeberg, 2009). Most research draws its conclusions on the prospects of democracy and human rights promotion from

studying the *European Neighbourhood Policy* (ENP) (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2011). Other foreign instruments, like the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights* (EIDHR), receive less attention. That also reflects the focus on the overall normative component of the EU's foreign policy, while there is less research on specific human rights policies and country cases. Several authors studied the civil society including human rights organizations in Lebanon (Haddad, 2017; Nagel & Staeheli, 2015) and their reliance on international (financial) support (Altan-Olcay & Icduygu, 2012). However, besides Peter Seeberg's (2009) contribution on EU democracy promotion in Lebanon in which he detected a focus on the EU's security concerns, Lebanon has largely been neglected as a country to study the EU engagement in general and let alone their support for human rights.

### 1.3. Scientific Relevance

Whether the findings by Seeberg (2009) still apply ten years later and with a focus on human rights, this paper seeks to show. It aims to contribute new insights to the on-going scholarly debate on the EU's normative interests abroad and expects to find how both, normative and realist interests, are reflected in the EU's foreign human rights policies. Therefore, it aims to fill shortcomings of the existing body of research by adding new study with a specific country and policy context, and by looking at all foreign instruments that can be utilized to support HROs. To do so, the theoretical framework will summarize the scholarly debate on the 'Normative Empire Europe,' which was coined by Manners (2002), in regard to their relevance for this paper. Further, it introduces and compares a constructivist and a rationalist approach to the assumedly conflicting foreign interests affecting the EU's foreign human rights policies, leading to the assumption that normative and realist interests do not have to be treated as a dichotomy, as often done in existing research.

### 1.4. Research Question

This thesis seeks to address the following research question:

*What are the strengths and weaknesses of the European Union's support to human rights organizations in Lebanon in the context of security concerns, and how is the impact of the policy perceived by local actors?*

The EU's support to human rights organizations is considered strong if it serves the EU's general human rights objectives if the EU instruments indicate coherence of their programs and commitment to their objectives in the policy documents and if the support is employable by HROs. Vice versa, the



EU's support to HROs is considered weak, if the support does not serve the human rights objectives (or on the contrary, harm the human rights objectives), if the analyzed documents that show the instruments' strategy and objectives are vague and incoherent, and if it is not employable by HROs. The term 'medium' describes the support if it serves the human rights objectives only partly, if the analyzed documents show some vagueness and incoherencies, and if restrictions of the employability of the support exist. In support, three sub-questions guide through this paper, each addressed in a separate chapter. As a foundation to analyze an instrument's ability to serve the human rights objectives, the first chapter of the analysis seeks to examine the Lisbon Treaty, and relevant policy documents addressing human rights support abroad to answer the sub-question:

*1) What are the general EU human rights objectives in Lebanon?*

To assess the strengths and weaknesses, it is essential to look at the current support. The EU uses different instruments to support human rights organizations. The second question aims to create an overview of these instruments and to understand how these instruments are employed in Lebanon by analyzing relevant documents of crucial foreign instruments such as the *European Neighbourhood Policy* or the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights*. Since the instruments are more supportive if they are well-designed and backed with the political will to employ it, the second question includes an assessment of strength:

*2) Which instruments does the EU use to support human rights organizations in Lebanon, and how can they be assessed in terms of strengths and weaknesses?*

The second part of the research question asks for the impact of these instruments. That is important to assess how these instruments are applied in reality and whether they serve the EU's human rights objectives. Because an impact evaluation exceeds the feasible possibilities for a bachelor thesis in terms of time and data availability, the last sub-question asks how local actors perceive the impact. This question gives an impression of what a more detailed impact evaluation might find and is not generalizable.

*3) How is the impact of the EU's support perceived by the local actors?*

To take the context of security concerns into account, the conclusion will analyze the findings of each sub-question through the lens of constructivist and rationalist theory, which are introduced in the next chapter. The conclusion also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the applied methodology and give policy recommendations based on the findings. To sum up, this research aims to contribute to

the academic debate by adding a qualitative case study on the human rights dimension of the EU foreign policy.

## 1.2. Theoretical Framework

This section introduces the theoretical base of the approach to answering the research question. A brief overview of the debate on the EU's normative interests, here called 'Normative Power Europe' (NPE) debate, shows why security concerns are attributed a significant role when analyzing the EU's human rights policies. Although this debate mainly revolves around the ENP, it can be treated representative of the EU's overall foreign policy and sheds light on the complexity of EU foreign interests. Even though 'security' is a reference point in the analysis, this paper does not assume that the EU is a purely normative or realist actor, but that different interests (both normative and realist) shape its foreign policy. That is why this theory section suggests using the toolbox of international relation theories to combine constructivist and rationalist expectations when approaching this topic. The chosen methodology does not allow to test these theories; their purpose is to be the guiding approach when answering the sub-questions and the research question.

Other complex dimensions might affect the EU's support to human rights organizations, such as the relationship between civil society and state actors. For analysis between civil society and state actors in Lebanon, I recommend Haddad (2017). Her main argument is that the scope of work and the freedom of action of CSOs is linked to the political, economic, and social development of a state. In Lebanon, the ambiguity of the law (in itself as well as in its implementation) poses problems to the functioning of associations, which is why Haddad concludes that Lebanon still lacks the legal framework for CSOs to function efficiently. That calls attention to the fact that there are numerous reasons for an inefficient civil society and that the EU's success to support civil society should maybe not be measured by the success of its beneficiaries.

### 1.2.1. Normative Power Europe

The term 'Normative Power Europe' was coined by Manners (2002) who argues that

“the EU can be conceptualized as a changer of norms in the international system; a positivist quantity to it – that the EU acts to change norms in the international system; and a normative quality to it – that the EU should act to extend its norms into the international system.” (Manners, 2002: 252)

Over time, scholars have detected an increase in the importance of the role of human rights in the EU's external policies, visible by the inclusion of human rights clauses in agreements, technical or financial assistance programs, and trade agreements since 1995 (Brandtner & Rosas, 1998). Yet, many authors associate the EU's engagement with its southern neighbors via the ENP and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with notions of instability and insecurity (Del Sarto & Schumacher, 2005; Seeberg, 2009), and consequently there are many critical voices against Manners' perspective of the EU as a normative power driven by normative interests. Seeberg (2009: 95), for example, argues that the ENP Action Plan with Lebanon of 2007 was launched as a "normative enterprise" but contains a clear focus on the EU's own security and particularly on preventing and combating terrorism. He hence argues that the EU is a "realist actor in normative clothes" (Seeberg, 2009: 95).

Accordingly, when the latest ENP Review of 2015 set "stabilisation" (Commission, 2017b: 3) as the main priority, stabilization was not perceived according to the EU's definition as founded on human rights (Commission, 2017b:11), but as "realist-rooted considerations of fear and survival" (Schumacher, 2018: 48). Even though securitization logic continues to characterize the ENP, Schumacher (2015: 395) argues that the "normative duty narrative [...] enjoy[s] considerable discursive dominance and are powerfully employed in particular in the fields of security, economics, and trade". However, not all of the EU policies are coherent and mutually beneficial with this discursive action (ibid.: 396). In general, the revised ENP abandoned its incentive-based conditionality and shifted its normative focus on democracy promotion, which had been characteristic for the previous ENP of 2011, towards a pragmatic focus on transactional relations (Schumacher, 2018: 59). As a result, we find 2015 to be an important moment in which – at least for the ENP- the opinions whether human rights or securitization prevail in the EU's relationship with its neighbors, clearly shifted to securitization. That is why the role of security concerns are taken into account when analyzing the EU's support to HROs in this thesis.

### 1.2.2. The complexity of interests behind the EU's foreign policies

A shortcoming of this debate is that it mainly focuses on the prevalence of one or the other interest. Thereby, the composition of the interests, and how they reflect on certain policies, such as specific human rights policies, receives little attention. Further, the presence of both normative and realist interests does not need to be treated as a contradiction: Normative action of promoting EU norms such as human rights might serve its economic and security interests (Del Sarto, 2016: 227). This idea links to statements by former Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, who said that "there can be no long-term peace and global security without human security," stressing the need

to focus on the human rights dimensions of EU policies (as cited in Schumacher, 2015: 387). One also needs to keep in mind that the EU's foreign policies are not inspired by one homogenous interest but are results of intergovernmental decision-making of various actors with different – some more normative, some more security-driven- interests (Böttger, 2010: 138).

### 1.2.3. Rationalism & Constructivism

Different international relation theories need to be employed to get an understanding of the complex dynamics/interests that drive foreign relations. Based on the NPE debate that describes the EU as a 'realist' actor (Seeberg, 2009), realism suggests itself as one theory. However, this thesis questions whether realism is suitable to describe the self-interest-driven foreign policy that Seeberg (2009) or Schumacher (2018) describe. According to Legro and Moravcsik (1999: 55), realism is more than the belief in international anarchy and state rationality, but also the "resolution of international conflict through the application of material power capabilities." They criticize that 'realism' has developed to a term used for all rational explanations of state behavior (ibid.: 54). Briefly, realism is rationalist, but rationalist theories are manifold, like liberalism and institutionalism (ibid.: 55). Although the EU is capable of applying its "material power capabilities" (ibid., 1999: 54) the EU is known as a civilian or soft power (Moravcsik, 2010: 207), which refers to its ability to attract and persuade other countries into obtaining the outcomes the EU wants without using forms of coercion (Nye, 2004). Therefore, the broader category of rationalist theory might be more suitable to explain foreign policies that rather serve the EU's security interests than the third country's human rights situation, such as the EU's support to the Lebanese security sector which was mentioned in the beginning (Commission, 2018a). Also, rationalism is the appropriate counterpart to constructivism, the theory that stresses the importance of norms, according to the rationalist-constructivist debate (e.g., Checkel, 1997). Hence, these two theories are guiding this thesis.

Jupille et al. (2003) characterize the two theories as follows: According to rationalism, individuals are the basic units of analysis, and these actors seek action with the best overall outcome. In practice, however, collective agents are often treated as individual agents. Further, the actors follow a consequentialist logic of action, making means-ends calculations. In case decisions are made interdependently, rationalism expects the actors to behave strategically. Constructivism, on the other hand, perceives not only strategic choice to determine actors' behavior, but also social learning: Social norms influence the actor's conduct. Following the logic of appropriateness, dynamics of socialization and complex learning drive appropriate behavior according to Risse (as cited in Jupille et al., 2003:

14). In short, rationalism emphasizes the optimization of outcomes as guiding in international relations, while constructivism stresses the importance of norms.

#### 1.2.4. Combining constructivist and rationalist explanations

Many authors addressing the rationalist-constructivist debates agree that neither of the two theories alone serves to explain EU decision-making, but that a theoretical dialogue is desirable (Jupille et al., 2003; Lewis, 2003; Zürn & Checkel, 2005). Youngs (2004), who assumes a co-existence of power politics and normative dynamics, offers a theoretical approach to the EU's foreign human rights policies that incorporates such a theoretical dialogue. He analyzes the rationalist dimension to EU normative policies and finds that the ideational dimension in the EU foreign policy has become more notable but that "security-driven choices hav[e] been selected within the overarching human rights framework." (Youngs, 2004: 431). His recommended approach to the EU's foreign human rights policies is a combination of rationalist and constructivist explanations. He argues that the idea of rationalist bargaining between national interests does not capture the normative, value-driven aspects of the EU's foreign policy (Youngs, 2004: 416). Rationalist self-interests are undeniable either (Youngs, 2004: 419). According to Youngs, constructivism, which focuses on understanding how long-term values influence actors' interest-based strategies, helps to transcend the traditional perception of the dichotomy between ideational and instrumentalist dynamics.

One can expect to find the EU's support for HROs fitting into the NPE debate, namely by finding a trade-off between normative and security-driven interests. However, this thesis does not focus on the internal decision-making of the EU and the existence and scope of such trade-offs, but on the strengths and weaknesses of the EU's support to HROs in the context of security concerns. Here, the constructivist and rationalist theories are utilized. The findings of each sub-question will be put in the 'security context' by analyzing the sub-questions' findings through a rationalist as well as a constructivist lens. If security concerns curtail human rights support, the findings of a sub-question should be explainable by rationalism. If the findings show that normative interests drive the EU's support, the constructivist theory is most suited to explain this. Yet, it is to expect that both theories can explain different parts of the findings. Whether these two theories serve well to explain the results of this thesis will be evaluated in the conclusion.

### 1.3. Methodology

This chapter explains the methodology used to answer the research question *What are the strengths and weaknesses of the European Union's support to human rights organizations in Lebanon in the context of security concerns, and how is the impact of the policy perceived by local actors?*. An explorative qualitative research approach is employed due to the limitedness of existing research on the topic. Using mixed-methods, the main body of this research consists of policy document analysis complemented by six semi-structured interviews. This approach allows the disadvantages of the individual methods can be counter-balanced.

A benefit of an explorative approach is the openness towards the topic, e.g., towards the various ways the EU instruments can *support* human rights organizations. This research does not restrict its analysis to the distribution of financial support but aims to create an overview of different forms of support that directly affects or involves HROs. Examples of such support can be capacity-building programs, information exchange, or the inclusion of HROs in the evaluation of the EU's human rights instruments.

#### 1.3.1. Analysis of Policy Documents

To investigate whether the EU's support to HROs is strong in terms of their suitability to serve the EU's human rights objectives, the first sub-question to ask is

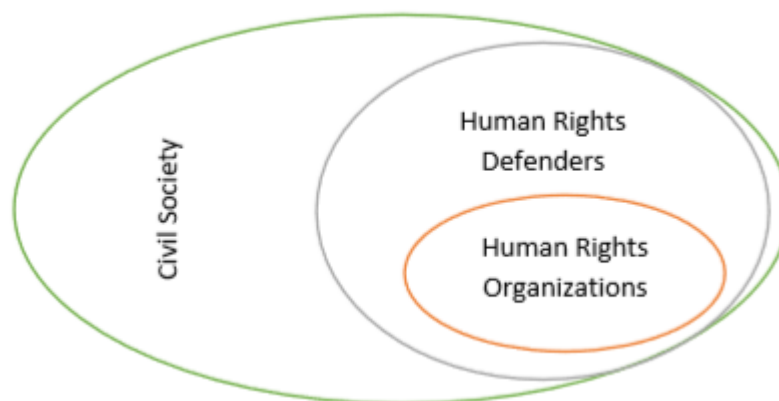
##### *1) What are the general EU human rights objectives in Lebanon?*

That requires searching for the EU's general human rights objectives in the founding treaties, and consequently, in a human rights specific EU document relevant for the EU's relationship with third countries (*EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy*) and more precisely with Lebanon (*Single Support Framework, 2017-2020*). 'Human rights' are the central keyword to search the documents. Even though the sub-question aims at Lebanon, the listed documents for the second step are not explicitly designed for Lebanon. The document analysis will show whether the objectives are generally applicable for the EU's foreign relations, or whether (and how) Lebanon-specific documents deviate from the general foreign human rights agenda. This step also includes a brief overview of the EU's external competencies that are crucial to pursuing its human rights objectives.

##### *2) Which instruments does the EU use to support human rights organizations in Lebanon, and how can they be assessed in terms of strength and weaknesses?*



This sub-question requires two steps. The first step aims to give an overview of the main characteristics of an instrument (such as its legal basis, its objectives, budget, and functioning). Therefore, the instruments the EU uses to support human rights organizations shall be detected. As a start, research on official EU homepages by the European External Action Service, the European Parliament, and the European Commission shall serve to find general EU policy documents on human rights in non-EU countries. There, the *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy* and the *European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders* provide information on the available instruments that support human rights organizations. Next, the founding documents of the instruments the EU uses for HRO support are analyzed, e.g., *Regulation 235/2014* that establishes the EIDHR. Eventually, EU policy documents on EU-Lebanese relations will be analyzed, focusing on the *Single Support Framework (SSF) 2017-2020*. Central keywords to detect the instruments to support HROs are ‘human rights,’ ‘human rights organizations,’ ‘human rights defenders,’ ‘civil society.’ This selection is based on the observation that the EU mainly uses the terms ‘human rights defenders’ (e.g., *European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders*) and civil society, which are both related to HROs. This graphic visualizes how the three terms are associated:



**Figure 1: Embeddedness of Human Rights Organizations in Civil Society**

Compiled by the author

In the second step, each of the instruments will be subject to a policy document analysis to assess the instruments’ strength. For this analysis, multi-annual frameworks are used, if available, to get an overview of the instruments’ programs. One can think of different aspects to measure an instrument’s strength. In the light of the theoretical framework, in which the multiple, partly conflicting interests driving the EU’s foreign human rights policy were highlighted, I conclude coherence and a real commitment to the objectives and to implementation of evaluable measures as significant facets

of measuring an instrument's strength. Similarly, Manners (2010) suggests studying the EU's normative power by analyzing the ideational aspects of the EU's principles, actions, and impact of a policy. Based on his approach, the following aspects are derived to which the relevant passages of the keyword search in the policy documents will be linked: 'reference to international commitments' supports the legitimization of human rights compliance and indicates that the instrument is part of a broader human rights agenda. Links to cooperation with other international or regional organizations and the embeddedness of the instrument among other instruments also fall under this point. 'Clear objectives and benchmarks' can be seen as a sign of real commitment to the objectives of the EU. While indirect and direct objectives are at the end of the impact chain and indicate what an organization (here the EU) aims to achieve by its programs, benchmarks are clear measures that indicate whether these objectives are reached. Both aim to detect the coherence and consistency of the human rights objectives. The more coherent and consistent, the stronger the instrument. 'Encouragement of dialogue and participation' can empower human rights organizations, and 'response to country's particular needs' is an opportunity for HROs to participate and shape the EU's policies for Lebanon. The more local actors are included in the policy-making and implementation, the more the policy, or the instrument, meets the local needs and therefore, the 'stronger' it is. Lastly, 'institutionalization' of human rights committees or other dialogue and working platforms, and the usage of 'conditionality' indicate a longer-term impact and therefore a higher strength. The six aspects will be accumulated to the instrument's score on 'commitment and coherence.' (cf. Manners, 2010)

Additionally to the aspects derived from Manners (2010), the employability of the instrument by HROs based on key information such as the eligibility criteria, the procedure to apply for funding and the requirements and the size of the fund is analyzed. Lastly, the instrument's objectives are compared with the EU's general human rights objectives to determine to what extent the instrument serves these general objectives. For a rough classification, 'low' is used if no references in the document can be linked to an aspect (or first require interpretation to draw a linkage), 'medium' if the references are mostly vague (e.g. objectives and not clearly proposed or already on-going actions), and 'high' if references that link to an aspect are concrete and/or repeatedly mentioned.

### 1.3.2. Interviews with Local Actors

Since most of the analyzed documents are not legally binding, there is a risk of coming to conclusions based on the policy documents that do not correspond with reality. Also, even though positive developments in terms of human rights can be registered, such as the new anti-torture law in 2017, the role of the EU in achieving these developments by direct advocacy work or indirectly by



their support for human rights organizations, is challenging to measure. Therefore, the second part of the research question aims to add an evaluating dimension by including the perceived impact of the support by local actors, meaning the degree in which the applied instruments successfully serve the stated human rights objectives. This thesis does not claim to evaluate the impact of the EU's support to human rights situations but highlights that it only analyzes perceptions. That might give some insights on how *de jure* and *de facto* EU support to human rights organizations diverges and might serve as an inspiration for further research. Therefore, the last chapter of this thesis' analysis addresses the question:

3) *How is the impact of the EU's support perceived by the local actors?*

That is done by using interviews with local actors that were conducted between the 26th of October 2018 and the 26th of December 2018 and that lasted each in average one hour. 'Local' includes actors who are based in Lebanon and whose work relates to the EU's human rights support. The four expert interviews were conducted with three human rights activists and one academic. Additionally, interviews with an employee of the EU Delegation (EUD) in Beirut and a fourth human rights activist published in previous research is used in the analysis. The interviews were semi-structured to shift the focus depending on the interviewee's expertise. The selection of experts was made by snowball sampling, starting with contacts of the Heinrich Boell Foundation Beirut and continuing with recommendations from interview partners. Some of the interview partners asked to stay anonymous. The qualitative analysis of the interviews is done systematically by comparing the statements made by the interviewed experts. Therefore, keywords based on the content of the interviews are selected.

## **2. General EU human rights objectives in Lebanon**

### **2.1. The EU as a foreign policy actor**

In the first chapter of the analysis, the EU's general human rights objectives and the EU's external competencies to pursue these objectives based on the founding treaties are summarized. That is a necessary first step to place the means of EU support in the first step into the context of the EU's overall objectives. Consequently, the EU's human rights objectives for its relations with third countries found in relevant EU documents are analyzed. After consulting the EUR-Lex's overview of summaries of EU Legislation about "Human Rights in non-EU countries" including guidelines and strategies to different human rights themes, the *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy* was chosen as most suitable to display the EU's general foreign human rights agenda. To narrow down the focus on

Lebanon, the ENP's *Single Support Framework 2017-2020* is used to be country-specific. To what extent the human rights objectives for Lebanon converge or diverge with the more general objectives, this chapter will show.

### 2.1.1. Human Rights Objectives and Competences in the Treaties

According to the Website of the European Parliament, the EU is committed to supporting human rights in its external relations by using different policy instruments, and to mainstream human rights in all of its policies. (Lerch, 2018) To do so, the EU requires external competences, and furthermore external competences, particularly on human rights. Both has been the case since the early 1990s. The Treaty of Maastricht (1992/93) established a common foreign and security policy with which the EU turns into a foreign policy actor (Art. 25 TEU) with a common policy that national policies have to conform to (Art. 24(3) TEU). Hence, the Maastricht Treaty introduced universal and indivisible human rights as fundamental for the European Community's foreign policy (Tannous, 2011).

Today, the relevant legal basis for the EU's foreign human rights support is Art. 3 (5) TEU, which states that the EU's founding values, "respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities" (Art. 2 TEU), shall be upheld and promoted in the EU's foreign relations. Security, free and fair trade, and the respect of the UN Charter are also listed. Further,

"It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter." (Art. 3(5) TEU)

According to Art. 6 TEU, "The Union shall accede to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms." Even though the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights refer explicitly only to Union law, it guides the functioning and the policy output of EU's institutions, bodies, and member states, and hence affects the EU's external relations. Art. 21 TEU addresses the EU's external action and lists the "universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms" as a guiding principle. The same article further legitimates the EU to "develop relations and build partnerships with third countries, and international, regional or global organisations which share [these] principles" (Art. 21(1) TEU).

Council and Commission, who is assisted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, shall ensure the consistency between different policies (Art. 21 (3) TEU). Art. 205 TFEU states that the provisions of Section V Chapter 1 TEU (which includes Art. 21 TEU) shall guide the EU's international actions.

This little excursus into the EU Treaties has shown that human rights are fundamental principles for the EU's internal and external action. However, the support to civil society organizations (such as HROs) via the EU's foreign policy is not explicitly mentioned in the Treaties but materializes as an objective in the founding regulations of various instruments such as the ENI and the EIDHR which are analyzed in the third chapter.

## 2.2. EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy

After assessing the human rights objectives in the treaties, this chapter analyzes their translation into the EU's foreign human rights agenda, using the *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy* (from now on short '*Action Plan*'). This *Action Plan* has a mandate from 2015 to 2019; a newer version of the *Action Plan* is not yet available at the time of writing. The *Action Plan* reaffirms the EU's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and the support to democracy in the world. Moreover, it highlights the universality and indivisibility of human rights and close cooperation with partner countries, international and regional organizations, and civil society. The list of human rights addressed in the *Action Plan* are too broad to be reiterated here but includes political, civil, social, cultural, and economic rights. The EU takes actions to promote these rights on a bilateral level with third countries' governments, by the promotion of dialogue among different stakeholders, awareness raising, opposing human rights abuses, monitoring legislation and strengthening the human rights aspects of specific policies and EU actions. Repeatedly mentioned and therefore specifically highlighted are the aim for a strong partnership with local institutions and a close dialogue with and support to civil society actors (CSA), such as human rights defenders (Council, 2015: 5). The following paragraphs shall summarize how the *Action Plan* envisions to defend and to support HRDs. (Council, 2015)

Human rights defenders are emphasized as key contributors to "peace and security, stability and prosperity" (Council, 2015: 8) that receive support via the EIDHR. The EU recognizes HRDs as threatened and pledges to intensify its financial as well as political support (ibid.: 12). Civil society and HRDs are highlighted as important partners in developing and implementing the EU's human rights policy since the EU describes "a vigorous and independent civil society" as an essential element for

democracy and human rights (ibid.: 12). To make its human rights policy successful, the “EU places great value on its regular dialogue with civil society both inside and outside the EU and is profoundly concerned at attempts in some countries to restrict the independence of civil society.” (ibid.: 12)

In terms of protection, the EU seeks to address threats to civil society space, e.g., by supporting legislation aiming at the protection of HRDs, or by monitoring and opposing restrictions towards HRDs publicly or non-publicly (Council, 2015: 21). On this matter, *Action Plan* promises to

“Rais[e] cases of at-risk HRDs including during high-level visits, dialogues and missions; addressing impunity in cases of violations against HRDs; increasing burden sharing and co-ordination between EU Delegations and Member State Embassies on HRD protection activities; sharing best practices on relevant mechanisms including temporary shelter schemes and emergency visas; continuing to support and cooperate with UN and regional mechanisms for the protection of HRDs; enhancing support for multilateral initiatives on HRDs and civil society space, including at the UN and regional organisations.” (ibid.: 20)

Another focus point of support is dialogue. Dialogue is not only striven for between the EU and civil society, but also between third country governments and civil society. Governments are to be encouraged to engage in dialogue with their civil society, and civil society to hold their governments accountable (Council, 2015: 20). Actions aiming at the improvement of dialogue are the share of best practices, capacity strengthening, improved quality of EU consultations, encouragement of multistakeholder dialogues, and the EU-CSO dialogue (ibid.: 19-20). The *Action Plan* also commits to an improvement in public diplomacy, more coordination among EU instruments, an increased coherence between policies, and better communication on human rights actions.

In terms of the content of the work of the HRDs, special attention is paid to HRDs working on LGBTI and women’s rights and rights of people belonging to marginalized groups and increased outreach to rural areas (Council 2015:20). A second thematic focus is on the support to HRDs working on social, economic and cultural rights, especially labor rights, and the rights of indigenous peoples, in the context of climate change and land grabbing (ibid.: 28).

In summary, the *Action Plan* attributes a crucial role to human rights defenders and pledges political and financial support to protect HRDs and to support them in their work. Even though the *Action Plan* never speaks of human rights organizations, the attention to both single human rights defenders as well as CSO indicates clearly that these objectives are valid for the CSO of the human

rights defenders, which are human rights organizations. Two findings need to be highlighted: First, the general *Action Plan* already prioritizes some human rights issues over others, especially women's rights, are reoccurring.

Secondly, when paying attention to the EU's security concerns in the region, one can notice that migration receives a proportionately large amount of attention. The introduction states that "it is key to mainstream human rights into all the EU's activities and policies (including migration and asylum, counterterrorism and trade), and to increase the coherence and synergies between our internal and external policies." (Council, 2015: 6). A reason that three areas are specifically highlighted might be that these are the areas which receive the most criticism for their inconsistencies with human rights. The rationalist lens suggests itself when looking at the actions of the objective "Migration/trafficking in human beings (THB)/smuggling of migrants/asylum policies" (ibid.: 37). Based on the basic assumption that the objectives are formulated needs-based, the call for an "introduction of human rights training elements in capacity-building projects with immigration and border agencies" suggests that the EU is aware of human rights abuses within third countries' immigration and border agencies which are often cooperation partner or receiver of EU support (ibid.: 37). Even though it is laudable that the EU seeks to address this, the term 'introduction' or the phrasing 'integrate into discussions' sound like first steps and not like an on-going and therefore fruitful practice.

Also, phrases such as 'address human rights issues' with partner countries are not hinting at conditionality whatsoever and instead make it questionable to what extent the EU is willing to find ways to sanction partner countries for human rights abuses and to guarantee human rights standards in the border agencies it supports. Indeed, two actions clearly aim at keeping refugees in their countries of origins (and thereby out of Europe): One aims at the engagement with diaspora communities to raise awareness for the human rights abuses migrants in transit countries are subject to (Council, 2015: 38) and to address human rights violations in countries where they serve as a push factor for migrants (ibid.: 39). Even though both actions aim at improving the human rights situation of specific groups or in particular contexts, when looking at the indirect message of these actions, this part of the *Action Plan* rather speaks in favor of a rationalist perspective on the EU's human rights objectives by aiming at keeping refugees out of Europe.

### 2.3. Human Rights in the 'Single Support Framework for EU support to Lebanon'

The *Single Support Framework for EU support to Lebanon* is a Lebanon-specific programming document of the European Neighbourhood Instrument by the Commission. Generally, the numerous

objectives of the *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy* should guide all of the EU's external actions, including this SSF. In contrast, the SSF is not human rights specific. Nevertheless, human rights are repeatedly mentioned. Therefore, scrutinizing the SSF for 'human rights' shows which objectives are of particular interest for EU-Lebanese relations.

There are three main priorities of the SSF, which are 'promoting growth and job creation,' 'fostering local governance and socio-economic development,' and 'promoting the Rule of Law, enhancing security and countering terrorism.' Migration and mobility are mainstreamed in these areas (Commission, 2017a: 4). On first sight, human rights are not listed among the priorities. However, it is stated that "[t]he promotion and protection of human rights is an overarching theme through the three priority sectors" (ibid.: 4). For example, human rights are mainstreamed in the assistance to security agencies by providing human rights training (ibid.: 13).

That already indicates that human rights play a role in connection to the security objective, which reflects the specific attention to this in the *Action Plan*. Indeed, also in the SSF are human rights repeatedly mentioned in that context: The objective of the priority 'promoting the Rule of Law, enhancing security and countering terrorism' is described as the consolidation of the rule of law and strengthening and protection of human rights (Commission, 2017a: 6). The security sector reform promoted in the SSF must occur in full respect to human rights; a specific objective of the SSF is to strengthen the oversight bodies to ensure the security agencies' human rights compliance, especially regarding the access to justice and a fair trial (ibid.: 12). Besides that, mentioning of human rights can be found within regional cooperation which aims -among other aims- at promoting the participation of Lebanese civil society by e.g., contributing to regional agendas on human rights (ibid.: 6).

Lastly, human rights receive some attention under 'Measures in favour of civil society,' which receive 10% of the total budget (Commission, 2017a: 7). These measures aim at supporting "civil society to contribute to the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes, including for the promotion of human rights, especially gender equality, women's rights and labour rights, as well as the rights of vulnerable groups" (ibid.: 14). The specific human rights highlighted are the same as in the *Action Plan*. Secondly, it aims at capacity building for CSOs in order for them to "exercise their watchdog and support role" (ibid.: 14).

## 2.4. Conclusion EU Human Rights Objectives

All in all, human rights are attributed a major role in the treaties and receive attention in EU strategies, guidelines, and action plans guiding their foreign policy. In the *Action Plan*, human rights



defenders and civil society are highlighted as essential for a functioning democracy and the implementation of human rights. Hence, the document states diverse forms of direct and indirect support to human rights organizations by protecting and politically as well as financially supporting human rights defenders. As the objectives and actions suggested in the Action aim at strengthening democracy and human rights, it rather confirms the constructivist theory that (social) norms are important and motivate foreign policy agendas. That looks slightly different on the country level. Overall, the SSF 2017-2020 states that human rights are overarching throughout various policy fields (Commission, 2017a: 4). Yet, they are not explicitly mentioned in two out of the three priority sectors, which together make up 60% of the budget.

When comparing the focus of the *Action Plan* with the one of the SSF, the total absence of attention to human rights defenders suggests that the EU holds up and promotes human rights within its actions of the SSF, but that it might not offer much support to others that do so. Also, the phrasing of the document indicates that human rights might receive more attention in some policy contexts than in others (e.g., security) and that some human rights issue might receive more attention than others (e.g., gender equality), which reminds of the *Action Plan*. In the SSF, the focus on human rights in the security sector is even more extensive than in the *Action Plan* and hints at security, rationalist interests. However, with respect to the variety of existing human rights issues, it seems logical that the EU has to prioritize its awareness campaigns to a limited number of issues. However, if this results in the prioritization of HROs addressing specific human rights issues over others, this might harm the sustainability of Lebanese HROs as well as human rights protection, since all issues need to be continuously worked on. The next chapters might shed light on these issues.

### **3. EU instruments to support human rights organizations in Lebanon**

Before this chapter proceeds to summarize and analyze the financial instruments by the EU that could be employed to support human rights organizations, one needs to be made aware that the EU's support to HROs might also be of an indirect or non-financial nature as this is relevant for answering the research question.

#### **3.1. Forms of non-financial support: Working towards a common goal**

The EU's interest to ensure coherence and complementation of its own and its member states programs is repeatedly stated in statements or joint communications (Commission, 2011). The same applies to the UN, with whom the cooperation is already outlined in the Treaties (Art. 21 TEU). A

better coherence and coordination of what the need and supply of funding might be beneficial for HROs in the long term.

Secondly, the EU and the HROs work towards a common goal, which is the protection and promotion of human rights. The EU can use its diplomatic and economic power to sanction human rights violations and to incentivize human rights compliance. These positive and negative measures are also often called ‘conditionality.’ The EU has adopted several guidelines on human rights that guide the EU’s actions in concern to human rights, such as the death penalty or women rights. The Commission describes the EU’s human rights efforts as follows: The EU raises human rights issues with third countries “in a growing number of human rights dialogues and consultations, at political meetings, in diplomatic démarches and publicly” (Commission, 2011). Also, it advises and supports the strengthening of human rights and democratic institutions and imposes restrictive measures in case of serious human rights violations (*ibid.*).

Examples given of such restrictive measures are asset freezes, arms embargoes, or visa bans (Commission, 2011). Such negative measures (e.g., suspension of agreed-upon deals or programs) have benefits and disadvantages in comparison to the usage of positive measures (additional rewards), as elaborated e.g., by Simma et al. (1999). In regard to the EU’s overall foreign policy with Lebanon, one needs to keep in mind that the EU is not the only provider of funding for the Mediterranean country. Besides international organizations like the UN, support is also given via bilateral aid by nation states, among which some might be less pursuant to human rights. For example, Saudi Arabia, who seeks to strengthen its role in Lebanon vis à vis Iran, deals with far more significant investments than the EU or even the UN. The kingdom had promised a \$3 billion aid package for the Lebanese army in 2013, although it was suspended in 2016 (Reuters, 2016). When it comes to funding for public authorities and public programs, the EU’s efforts to work towards the promotion and protection of human rights could come to a halt, if the Lebanese government turns to funders with less human rights requirements. That would leave the EU with no leverage at all. One can conclude that there are different ways to promote human rights diplomatically, but that it is in many ways dependent to the local governments’ goodwill and therefore limited in the extent it can push for human rights.

### 3.2. Direct, non-financial support to human rights defenders

Thirdly, human rights organizations can be supported by the EU in direct contact, but of a non-financial nature. For example, the EU can use digital diplomacy to support human rights defenders in the provision of support and information to each other and to communicate with their supporters



globally (Commission, 2011: 18). On the social media outlets or the homepages of the EU Delegations, one can find e.g., videos about human rights defenders. The EU can also facilitate dialogue among different actors and speak up about specific human rights violations, which might have a positive effect on particular human rights issues the HROs are working on. However, the partnership between civil society and EU is not a one-way street, but beneficial for both sides, as the EU can “draw on [civil society’s] expertise and alternative channels of communication” (ibid.: 9). As local experts on the ground, HROs get consulted on human rights policy and get supported via the provision of networks and dialogue. They also have a stake in the review of EU action, e.g., via the annual EU-NGO forum on human rights. (ibid.: 9)

Human rights defenders receive particular attention from the EU. They are described as “indispensable allies” (Commission, 2011: 9) and receive political as well as financial support (via the EIDHR). The *European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders* “provide for interventions by the Union for human rights defenders at risk and suggest practical means to support and assist human rights defenders” (European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, n.d.: 1). The guidelines suggest several measures that the EU Mission can take to support and protect human rights defenders. These measures cover close coordination and information sharing with HRDs, the maintenance of suitable contacts with HRDs (by visiting or inviting them), the provision of “where appropriate, visible recognition [...] through the use of appropriate publicity, visits or invitations”, and the attendance and observance of trials of HRDs (ibid.: 1). For the maintenance of close contact, a specific liaison officer could be appointed (ibid.). It must be noticed that this list presents possible options from which the EUDs can choose the actions they consider appropriate.

As examples for practical support, there is the support to human rights defenders through capacity building and public awareness campaigns, the encouragement, and support of the establishment of national human rights bodies, or the establishment of networks of HRDs (European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, n.d.). An example of the establishment of a national human rights body in Lebanon is the National Institute for Human Rights, which was founded in 2017 but remains dysfunctional, according to Amnesty International (2018).

Based on the *EU Guidelines on HRDs*, their primary interest appears to be the defense and support of HRDs via information sharing and using the EU’s diplomatic contacts and publicity for their cases. Security concerns do not seem to intervene with the EU’s support to HRDs, as the Guidelines promote public support to HRDs despite the risk of angering the partner government, e.g. if the supported HRDs criticize their agencies. That speaks in favor of the EU’s perception that security is linked to human

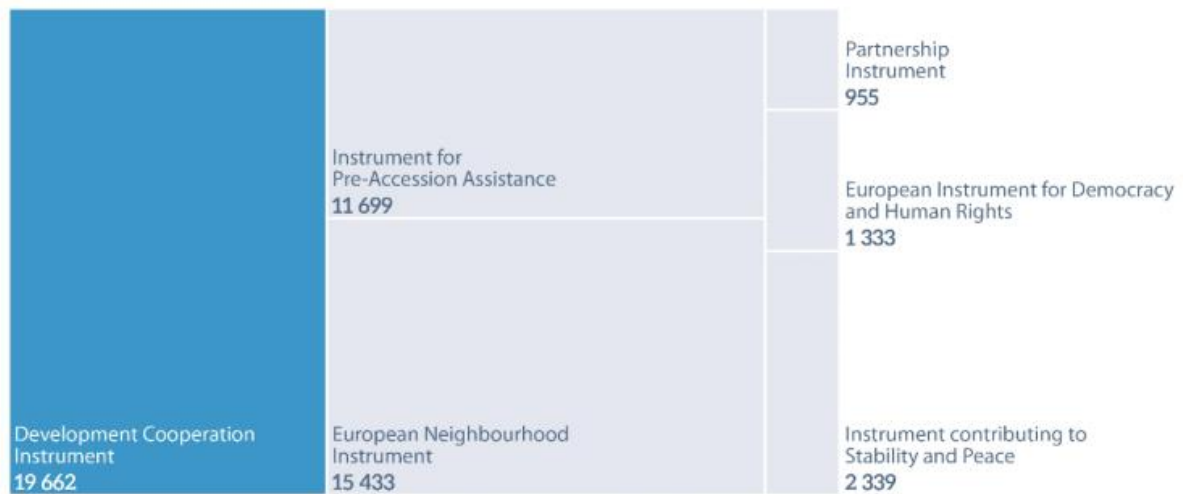
rights, or as stated in the *EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders* (n.d.: 11), “the relationship between international peace and security and the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

### 3.3. Financial support instruments

Finally, the main focus shall lie on the financial support that the EU provides human rights organizations via various instruments. No guarantee is given that this thesis displays all funding instruments that benefit directly and indirectly from EU funding. Instead, the focus lays on the instruments that are most reoccurring in foreign policy literature and EU documents. According to the *Single Support Framework 2017-2020*,

„Lebanon is also [besides the ENI] eligible for support under a number of other EU instruments, such as the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace, EU Humanitarian Aid, Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) measures and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the Partnership Instrument, the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation, thematic programmes under the Development Co-operation Instrument and external actions under EU internal programmes such as research and innovation (Horizon 2020), energy, transport, education and youth (Erasmus+) and culture (Creative Europe)” (Commission, 2017a: 7-8)

Of these instruments, only the ENI, the EIDHR, and the *Development Co-operation Instrument* (DCI) are eligible for the utilization by CSOs *and* on the topic of human rights. They are part of six foreign policy instruments that were created by the Commission for the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020 (Council & European Parliament, 2014c).



Data source: European Commission [DG Budget](#).

**Figure 2: The EU foreign policy instruments: financial envelopes for the 2014-2020 MFF (€ million)**

Source: European Parliamentary Research Service Blog (2017)

Lebanese HROs appear to be eligible for the thematic programs of the DCI (Council & European Parliament, 2014a), but there is no proof that Lebanese HROs actually benefit from the DCI. Therefore, the focus lays on the two instruments that are employed in Lebanon, which are the *European Neighbourhood Instrument* and the EIDHR. As a non-EU funding alternative, which is closely linked to the EU, this thesis introduces and assesses the *European Endowment for Democracy* (EED). Before the assessment, a short introduction of each instrument is given to demonstrate why these three instruments were chosen to be portrayed, and in order to better understand the subsequent assessment. Hence, this chapter summarizes the instruments capacities, objectives and human rights agenda.

### 3.3.1. European Neighbourhood Instrument

The first instrument literature refers to when looking at the EU's neighboring is the *European Neighbourhood Policy*, which shall therefore also be the instrument to begin with here. The ENI is a foreign relations instruments of the European Union based on Art. 8 TEU, Title V TEU, and Art. 206, 207, 216-219 TFEU (Jongberg et al., 2018) that governs the EU relations with 16 Eastern and Southern neighboring states (Böttger, 2011). The ENI is the main financial instrument for the implementation of the ENP. It was established in REGULATION (EU) No 232/2014, with a total budget of €15,4 billion for the period of 2014-2020, of which 315.0 million - €385.0 million are dedicated to Lebanon

(Commission, 2017a). Implementing partners for the EU cooperation are either governments, NGOs, or International Organizations via grants or loans (Commission, 2019).

The objectives for Union support in the light of the ENP after its 2015 revision are outlined in the multiannual *Single Support Framework* by the European Commission, which sets “stabilisation as the overarching objective [...] through increased focus on economic growth and employment, local governance, and a stronger cooperation on security and the rule of law with Lebanon.” (Commission, 2017a: 2) This overarching objective of stabilization is the reason that many scholars in the ENP literature (e.g., Schumacher, 2018) have voiced their concerns about the normative aspirations of the EU in its neighborhood, as explained in the introduction, which also matches the findings of the first sub-question. SSFs are adopted for countries who have adopted a jointly agreed priority-setting document (Art. 7(2) Regulation (EU) No 232/2014), such as EU Partnership Priorities, which were agreed upon by the Association Council in 2016 for four years.

Since the ENI is not an instrument aiming explicitly at the support of civil society and human rights, the role of civil society and human rights in the ENI must be shortly summarized. Civil society, as well as human rights, are repeatedly emphasized throughout the key documents of the ENI as cross-cutting objectives (Commission, 2017a). The ENI Regulation aims to strengthen civil society in order “to play a full role in the democratisation process,” and secondly, as a partner “in preparing, implementing and monitoring Union support” (Council & European Parliament, 2014b: 27). The SSF states that “Systematic civil society engagement shall be considered in all sectors and stages of support interventions and policy dialogue of this SSF” (Commission, 2017a: 4). According to Böttger (2010), the inclusion of civil society has been continuously growing. She lists various reasons for this development, such as the demand by civil society to be included, the reliance on civil society when it comes to the implementation, as well as their essential role in the monitoring process of EU programs. For the timeframe of 2017-2020, 18.6 million - €22.8 million of the 186.5 million - €227.9 million are dedicated to category ‘Complementary support in favour of civil society’ (Commission 2017a: 7).

#### 3.3.1.1. *Strength Assessment of the ENI*

To assess the instrument’s strength, the commitment and coherence of the *Single Support Framework 2017-2020* including its attachment (Sector of intervention framework) are analyzed using six aspects derived from an approach by Manners (2010). The order of the aspects depends on their strength, starting with the strongest, which is based on the number of mention and the concreteness of

its phrasing. The chapter finishes with an evaluation of the instrument's employability by HROs and its alignment with the general human rights objectives.

The most striking aspect that is fulfilled highly in the SSF is the 'response to a country's particular needs.' Many references are made to Lebanon's specific characteristics such as the impact of the Syrian crisis, its large expatriate community, and its fragile economy. Additionally, the response to local needs is highlighted throughout the document, for example, is the geographical focus of intervention supposed to be determined by the assessment, and the "provision of technical and vocational skills matching local needs" (Commission, 2017a: 10). Thereby, the document raises the impression to adjust its priorities to local needs.

In terms of 'institutionalization,' several working groups and subcommittees have become 'institutionalized' according to the document. 'Dialogue' and 'informal meetings' are often mentioned, especially in the context of economic matters. Among the goals in this field are the promotion of interagency coordination and the establishment of further working groups (concerning educational and vocational training, hence also economic). Civil society and human rights receive no attention in terms of institution processes, even though the interview partners, such as the human rights defender Wadih Al-Asmar, reveal that a subcommittee on human rights exists (Al-Asmar, 2018). Hence, the ENI scores high on this aspect.

Comparably often found is the aspect 'encouragement of dialogue and participation' which differentiates from 'institutionalization' by aiming at the engagement of civil society. References to civil society participation are repeatedly found in the document but mostly in the context of the EU-civil society dialogue, such as their systematical involvement and consultation "in all sectors of support interventions and policy dialogue" (Commission, 2017a: 14) and the dedication by the EU to target an "enhanced role and involvement of civil society in the policy making processes" (ibid.: 14). It also pledges to bring Lebanese authorities and civil society together, especially on the local level and states "increased political space for public participation and citizenship, including for youth, women and vulnerable or marginalized groups" as a specific objective (ibid.: 11). 'Dialogue' is also repeatedly used as an indicator (ibid.: 21). Based on the high number of mentions, the score is 'high.'

Clear objectives are neatly stated throughout each sector using overall and specific objectives, expected results and indicators, but measurable benchmarks are missing (e.g., percentages, numbers, dates). The only clear benchmarks in the document are found about environmental protection and the Paris Agreement, which works with targets in percent (Commission, 2017a: 4,17-18). In the attachment, one can find a list of indicators and means of verification for the specific objectives. There,

the indicators are quite clear, e.g., does it suggest looking at the numbers of laws or the percentage of a group of people employed in a particular sector. However, the following examples raise the questions of whether the respective means of verification serve the indicators sufficiently. First, in a country like Lebanon where many laws do not get adequately implemented, such as the anti-torture law (Amnesty International, 2018), it is important to clarify where to draw a line between a failed and a succeeded implementation when using ‘number of laws implemented’ as an indicator. Secondly, for many indicators, only Lebanese or EU based reports, statistics, or other means serve as verification. Reports by involved stakeholders might not reflect the actual implementation as sufficiently as independent evaluations, surveys, and civil society reports might do. Also, indicators such as “number of regular consultations between local governments and citizens” (Commission, 2017a: 18) aim at the quantity and not the quality of such consultations, which might lead to pro forma consultations with little or no impact (cf. chapter 4). All in all, one can conclude about this aspect that clear objectives are stated, but that clear benchmarks are missing. It, therefore, scores ‘medium’.

Reference to international commitments’ can only be found once, namely to the Paris Agreement (Commission, 2017a: 4). Yet, international organizations and other EU policies are referred to in the context of policy dialogue, and reports by international organizations such as the World Bank serve as indicators. That speaks for at least an awareness of other international organization’s agendas for Lebanon, and possibly (but not necessarily) embeddedness into an international human rights agenda. Since this is not conclusive, this aspect scores ‘medium’ in strength. References to ‘Conditionality’, no matter if positive or negative conditionality, is entirely absent in the SSF. In the ENI Regulation, however, a so-called “more for more” (Council & European Parliament, 2014b: 27) or “incentive-based approach” is outlined as a reward for a commitment by the partner country (ibid.: 31). According to Art. 4 (3) of the ENI Regulation, this form of positive conditionality does not apply for CSOs and the improvement of human rights (ibid.: 31). This exclusion, as well as the lack of negative conditionality, raises the questions about the consequences of a non-compliance to agreed-upon priorities and actions, and the sincerity of a desired long-term impact. Therefore, a ‘low’ score on conditionality seems justified.

The analysis of the SSF’s suitability to serve the general human rights objectives would be repetition as the SSF has already been analyzed and compared with the *Action Plan* in chapter 2. The findings of this chapter support that the ‘cross-cutting’ issue of human rights might play a minor role in the ENP, e.g., are they only used once as an indicator in the attachment (Commission, 2017a: 20). Nevertheless, the SSF does broadly promise its support to civil society that promotes human rights, yet



without reiterating its explicit support to and protection of HRDs as it is done in the *Action Plan*. Hence, a ‘medium’ score on this aspect seems appropriate.

In terms of employability for HROs, no statement can be made based on the SSF. According to Art. 8 of Regulation 236/2014, which lays down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action, beneficiaries of the EU grants have to be “legal persons which are effectively established in [...] an eligible country” (Council & European Parliament, 2014c: 102). Hence, only registered CSOs can apply for ENI funding, which already rules out organizations that cannot or do not want to register themselves. Plus, ENI money is only granted via calls for proposals for project-themes determined by the EU, which doesn’t respond to the urgent needs of CSOs and individual priorities. As this might be problematic for some HROs to employ the ENI, it scores ‘medium’ on employability.

To sum up, the ENI seems to be designed to address Lebanon’s particular needs. Cooperation between the EU and the Lebanese government as well as its civil society appear to be institutionalized and sustainable, and effort is put into establishing forms of dialogue between the government and civil society. However, the vague objective and the missing conditionality and benchmarks call into question whether the EU is confident in the success of its projects and committed to long-term goals.

### 3.3.2. European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights

According to the *Action Plan* (Council, 2015) and Commission (2011), the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights* is highlighted as the instrument to serve human rights defenders. The EIDHR counter-steers a weakness of the ENI, which only supports NGOs recognized by the third country’s government, which is especially challenging in countries with an oppressed civil society: The EIDHR allows to support civil society without the consent of the governments of the concerned third country (Council & European Parliament, 2014d: 86). As the name of the financial instrument indicates, it aims at “the promotion and support of democracy and human rights worldwide” (ibid.: 85). In Art. 1 of its founding document, Regulation (EU) No 235/2014, the reinforcement of an active civil society in the democratic cycle, and the “protection, promotion, implementation and monitoring, mainly through support to relevant CSOs, human rights defenders and victims of repression and abuse” (ibid.: 88), receive particular attention. Despite a clear focus on the support for CSOs, state agencies and parliamentary bodies are eligible for funding as well (Council & European Parliament, 2014c: 104). Yet, the objectives of the EIDHR are clearly focused on the support to HROs and offers several benefits such as “faster and more flexible administrative procedures” and “a range of funding

mechanisms” (Council & European Parliament, 2014d: 87), e.g. ad hoc grants to non-registered and/or small local CSOs. Hence, although the financial envelope of € 1,333 billion for the period 2014-2020 is only a small amount in comparison to the € 15,4 billion of the ENI, it is not less important for HROs than the ENI (ibid.: 91): Of the ENI funds, only a small portion is available for HROs, and only a fraction of the HROs that are eligible for EIDHR funding are eligible for ENI funds.

For the 2018-2020 timeframe with a financial allocation of € 404,738,000, 13 action programs aim at five specific objectives which are the

“(1) Support to human rights and human rights defenders in situations where they are most at risk; (2) Support to other EU human rights priorities; (3) Support to democracy; (4) EU election observation; and (5) Support to targeted key actors and processes, including international and regional human rights instruments and mechanisms.”  
(Commission, 2018b: 1)

Some of those 13 actions are designed to support the work of HROs financially. As the following overview shows, HROs are eligible as beneficiaries for a majority of the EIDHR budget.





Annex number	Name	Total amount of EU budget contribution in €	HROs
1	Support to HRDs in situations where they are most at risk	019,000,000	X
2	EIDHR Human Rights Crises Facility	010,500,000	X
3	Supporting Human Rights Priorities - Global Calls	064,500,000	X
4	Support to local civil society action through Country-Based Support Scheme	270,788,000 001,800,000 for Lebanon	X
5	7 <sup>th</sup> World Congress against death penalty	000,750,000	
6	Global Programme to improve Indigenous Peoples' participation to UN HR system	003,000,000	
7	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights	013,500,000	
8	Building legal expertise and fostering cooperation – International Criminal Court	003,000,000	
9	Regional human rights instruments and mechanisms	003,000,000	
10	Global network of universities for HR and democracy (global campus)	009,450,000	
11	Capacity development for National Human Rights Institutions	003,750,000	
12	Supporting HR Dialogues and their follow-up	001,000,000	
13	EIDHR Support Measures	002,500,000	

**Table 1: Action Programmes under the Multi-Annual Action Programme 2018-2020 for the EIDHR**

Compiled by the author based on the Multi-Annual Action Programme and its annexes

#### 3.3.2.1. *Strength Assessment of the EIDHR*

The ‘Multi-Annual Action Programme 2018-2020’ for the EIDHR scores high on ‘reference to international commitments’ and ‘encouragement of participation and dialogue’ based on multiple references. For example, each action document relates its objectives to the fulfillment of specific Sustainable Development Goals by the UN. Other actions are specifically designed to support international organizations and offices, such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the support to the International Criminal Court (Commission, 2018b). Other EU programs and commitments such as the *European Consensus on Development* and the *Gender Action Plan* are referred to in most action documents. Therefore, ‘reference to international commitments’ is comprehensively fulfilled.

The same applies to ‘encouragement of participation and dialogue.’ Some actions explicitly aim at the creation and continuation of sustainable dialogue, cooperation, and networks among civil society itself and between civil society and decision makers. For example, the action *7th World Congress against the death penalty* aims to bring together 1500 participants, including politicians and civil society representatives (Commission, 2018c: 2). Via its action to support *a global network of universities for human rights and democracy*, the EIDHR contributes to an academic network and dialogue on human rights, as well as conferences and seminars (Commission, 2018d). Moreover, the EU aims to provide a “space for discussion and cooperation among CSOs themselves” (Commission, 2018e: 7), and to include their expertise in the human rights dialogues between the EU and third-country governments. CSOs are attributed a role in the human rights dialogues between the EU and third-country governments, e.g., via the action program *Supporting Human Rights Dialogues and their follow-up* (Commission, 2018e).

There are also several examples that speak in favor of ‘institutionalization’ which overlaps with the examples given for the aspect ‘encouragement of participation and dialogue’ since they all aim at a continuous dialogue and network. Particular examples of institutionalizations are the support of national human rights institutions and the support to regional human rights instruments and mechanisms such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Commission, 2018b). The EIDHR supports the continuation of existing programs and institutions, which indicates higher sustainability of these programs than newly founded ones but also contributed to the institutionalization of new ones such as ProtectDefenders.eu (Commission, 2018f). Therefore, ‘institutionalization’ scores high.

‘Clear objectives and benchmarks’ are set individually with each action; while a few actions are lacking an ‘indicative logframe matrix’, most have one included which ranges from specific objectives

and mostly diverse means of verifications (e.g. UN reports and data, HROs, media, project partners) to set baselines and clearly formulated targets. However, the largest component of the EIDHR, which is the country-based support schemes, does not include an indicative logframe matrix. Since it is country-based, a standard evaluation frame would not be feasible. Nevertheless, the overall objectives are stated in the Annex. Some indicators can be criticized as vague or ambitious. For example, the indicator “number of countries where human rights defenders are able to contribute to the promotion, protection and realisation of human rights” (Commission, 2018f: 17) raises the question how the threshold of this ‘contribution’ is defined, and how this evaluation can be realized in regard to the relatively small budget of € 2,5 million for the “preparation, follow up, monitoring, evaluation and audit activities directly necessary for the implementation of the EIDHR” (Commission, 2018g: 3). Nevertheless, the instrument scores ‘high’ on this aspect since clear objectives and benchmarks are in most cases in place.

The aspect ‘response to a country’s particular needs’ is difficult to analyze as the instrument’s actions are mostly applicable worldwide. Yet, the largest share of the multi-annual budget, € 270,788 million, goes to the *support to local civil society action through country-based support scheme* (Commission, 2018h). Alas, the ‘Country-Based Support Scheme’, which allocates € 1,8 million to Lebanon (ibid.: 19), is not included and the aspect must, therefore, be left unclassified. Even though the instrument cannot be embedded in country-specific needs, several of its characteristics indicate that the instrument seeks to respond to the civil society’s particular needs, e.g., by its flexibility or the involvement of CSOs as grant-givers via the ProtectDefenders.eu (Commission, 2018f: 7).

In terms of ‘conditionality’, the documents refrain from suspension clauses and only state that the Commission analyzes the evaluations and decides on follow-up actions and adjustments (Commission, 2018i: 14), which indicates an impact of the beneficiary’s performance on future funding.

Based on the available information, the instrument seems to be employable by HROs: According to Art. 11 Regulation 236/2014, entities without a legal personality are eligible for EIDHR funding, which adds a possible target group in comparison to the ENI (Commission, 2014c: 104). Therefore, HROs, whose government denies them a legal status, are nevertheless eligible. Also, Art. 6 allows the direct award of low-value grants to human rights defenders and for actions in the “most difficult conditions” (Commission, 2014c: 101). Hence, small grants on an ad hoc basis can be provided to HRDs for the urgent protection of their needs (Commission, 2018f: 4). That may materialize as physical protection and urgent relocation, training courses or legal support (ibid.: 3). Thereby, HROs do not have to wait for a call for proposal and go through the application process but can apply for funding in

emergencies. Generally, however, the instrument works with calls for proposals and allows direct grants only in such emergency cases. Nevertheless, these characteristics are beneficial for a quick and feasible grant application for HROs in need. Therefore, the EIDHR's employability is classified as 'high'. (Commission, 2018b)

Lastly, the EIDHR seems to address all of the general human rights objectives stated in the *Action Plan* and therefore scores 'high'. Both the *Action Plan* and the EIDHR's Multi-Annual Framework give much attention to HRDs and dialogue mechanisms. In comparison to the *Action Plan*, human rights in the security sector do not receive more attention in the EIDHR's Multi-Annual Framework than other sectors. In general, security concerns do not seem to play a significant role in the set-up of the EIDHR.

### 3.3.3. European Endowment for Democracy

Despite its stated goal to be a faster and more flexible instrument, criticism for the EIDHR's bureaucratic process remain (Dillon, 2013). Even though direct grants are available under certain circumstances (such as emergency grants to HRDs), calls for proposals are the standards process (Commission, 2018b). In contrast, the *European Endowment for Democracy* (EED) works with direct grants only and offers an important alternative for HROs. The EED is not an official EU instrument but a private law foundation under Belgian Law. Nevertheless, its operational costs are covered by the European Commission, and 23 European countries make the contributions to the program budget to date (European Endowment for Democracy, 2019). It was launched in 2013 by EU member states and the European institutions as a response to the Arab spring and the rigidity and slowness of existing EU mechanisms to support pro-democracy actors. Among the Board of Governors are member states' representatives, MEPs and civil society experts. Since its establishment, €49 million worth of funding has been approved. In 2018, the EED funded 145 projects. Registered and unregistered pro-democracy actors, including human rights activists, in the European neighborhood and beyond are eligible for funding. In 2018, 44 of the 353 supported initiatives were human rights activism and monitoring. According to the homepage, several Lebanese initiatives have been among the supported, at least one being a human rights organization. (European Endowment for Democracy, 2019)

The EED has several benefits in comparison to other EU instruments. For example, the objectives that the beneficiaries of direct funds need to adhere to are quite broad, as the "EED supports groups and individuals, who seek to employ innovative, as well as traditional, means of communication and public expression to raise public awareness, assist observance of fundamental freedom and

human rights and consolidate democracy” (Commission, 2015: 6). The EED provides different forms of support, including core funding, which allows covering the operational costs of initiatives. Also, funding can be received by those that are not eligible for financial support by other donors or EU instruments such as individuals and non-registered groups. Answers are given within 12 weeks, and even faster responses can be given to urgent support requests. Moreover, requests can be submitted at any time and are assessed individually (European Endowment for Democracy, n.d.). All this allows the EED to support civil society and human rights organizations that may not be able to receive support from other EU instruments. (EED, 2019)

This description shows that the EED – although it is not an EU instrument – comes within the scope of the research question as the EED is closely linked to the EU and the EU’s programs. It can be perceived as an attempt by the EU institutions and member states to fund CSOs which are not eligible under any EU instruments. Secondly, this description has already shown that the EED scores ‘high’ on its employability.

#### *3.3.3.1. Strength Assessment of the European Endowment for Democracy*

In comparison to the ENI and EIDHR, no documents comparable to the multi-annual action or strategy papers are available. Secondly, as a result of the EED’s characteristic as a ‘gap filler’ (due to its flexibility and availability for organizations and individuals ineligible under other instruments), the EED has no clear objectives and benchmarks, is not country-specific but grants support within and beyond the European neighborhood. Hence, a lack of publicly available documents poses an obstacle to the strength assessment. To accommodate this issue, I join the information of two sources, which are the Commission implementing decision quoted above and the Annual Report of 2018 by the EED. As the EU document might state what the EU expects the EED to support, and the Annual Report by the EED contain information about what it de facto supports, a higher focus lays on the latter source.

Its most obvious strength is the EED’s ability to respond to the countries’ particular needs by giving direct grants without calls for proposals to CSOs or individuals that might not be able to receive funding elsewhere due to their small organizational size or the political sensitivity. This approach highly responds to a country’s particular needs since CSAs on the ground are free to decide on a project that they consider important in their political environment, instead of the international grant-giving organization deciding on the priorities. It works across different contexts, namely in transitional, restrictive, and repressive environments, and in the conflict-affected area, for which each the EED

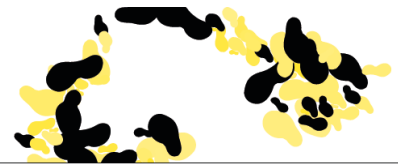
follows a different approach. To ensure that the received proposals are needed on the ground, the EED works with local consultants that identify, accompany, and support grassroots actors. (EED, 2019)

This flexible approach does not allow to set clear objectives and benchmarks as the foundation cannot predict what sort of projects will be funded in a certain period. Priority areas like women and youth remind of the *Action Plan* and the two EU instruments. Interestingly, the EU document that grants operational support to the EED states more priority fields than the Annual Report, involving environmental issues, the defense of people with disabilities and the needs of people in remote areas (Commission, 2015: 11). The formulation “two themes emerge from EED’s support in Armenia” (EED, 2019: 29) shows that the support comes first, and then the EED realizes its support pattern. That could be understood as an argument in favor of the EED’s independence from the EU and the EU’s objectives. Nevertheless, the EED scores ‘low’ on ‘clear objectives and benchmarks.’

‘Encouragement of dialogue and participation’ can be found among the EED’s activities. Primarily, the EED participates in fora for dialogue and expands its networks, but it also benefits its grantees and other democracy actors as the EED “facilitated the exchange of good practices and experiences among democracy actors, and helped partners expand their networks and build capacity for the implementation of their initiatives” (EED, 2019: 19). The EED itself organizes events like conferences, networking events or closed-door coordination meetings which serve to create new partnerships and an exchange of the “latest developments in democratic activism and realities on the ground” (EED, 2019: 19). Hence ‘encouragement of dialogue and participation’ in the sense of exchange between beneficiaries and beneficiaries and (potential) donors exists and can be allocated a ‘high’ score.

In terms of ‘reference to international commitments,’ one can say that these are not present. Only the complementary character of the EED and the cooperation with the EU and the EU instruments are highlighted in both documents. The “EED uses its network of contacts and extensive links with EU institutions, other donors, embassies and international organisations working in the European Neighbourhood to identify most promising actors.” (Commission, 2015: 10). It participates in donor-coordination meetings (EED, 2019: 19) keeps the EU Delegations “systematically informed of EED action and training activities in order to ensure coherence and efficiency between their respective actions.” (Commission, 2015: 7). However, this is according to the EU document, not sufficiently the case (Commission, 2015: 10). Since the ‘reference to international commitments’ does not exist in a literal sense, and also the cooperation with the EU is criticized from EU-side, the score attributed to this aspect is ‘low.’



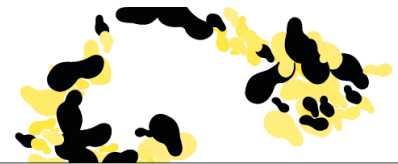


‘Institutionalization’ of dialogues with the countries’ governments (like through the ENI) does not exist, but as described above, the EED organizes and participates in events that reoccur on a regular basis and are therefore somewhat institutionalized. In comparison to the two EU instruments whose funding is ensured by the EU, the EED needs to be discussed in terms of its sustainability. Since the EU member states were involved in the set-up of the EED (EED, 2019: 2) and have declared their support (Commission, 2015: 10), and since the EU Commission is financing the operating costs and the EED’s activities, the overall sustainability of the EED is not at risk. Still, securing “predictable, reliable and regular voluntary funding from donors” is a challenge (Commission, 2015: 9). As a result, ‘institutionalization’ scores medium.

Lastly, ‘conditionality’ is not explicitly addressed and scores ‘low.’ One can assume based on the attention spent on monitoring and evaluation that the performance of a project and the management of the money has an impact on future funding. As already stated, the EED scores ‘high’ in its employability due to its flexibility. On the downside, the instrument’s flexible set up does not allow to allocate a score on its alignment with the *Action Plan*’s general human rights objectives.

### 3.3.4. Conclusion

To answer the sub-question *Which instruments does the EU use to support human rights organizations in Lebanon, and how can they be assessed in terms of strengths and weaknesses?* one can list three significant funds for HROs in Lebanon, which are the two EU instruments ENI and EIDHR, and the autonomous EED which finances its operational costs via the EIDHR. The table below provides an overview of the individual instruments’ scores on the analyzed eight aspects. For the final score on ‘commitment & coherence,’ the average of the six aspects was used. I caution against translating these ‘low,’ ‘medium,’ and ‘high’ scores directly into strengths and weaknesses. As the example of the EED has shown, the low score on ‘clear objectives and benchmarks’ is a byproduct of one of the instrument’s major strengths, its flexibility. Also, the different characteristics of the instruments make a comparison of the instruments’ strengths difficult, e.g., their scope and their target groups differ. Therefore, to answer the sub-question, this conclusion evaluates each instrument’s strengths and weaknesses individually, using the scores of the strength assessment as guidance.



Aspect	ENI	EIDHR	EED
<b>Commitment &amp; Coherence</b>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>medium</i>
Reference to international commitments	medium	high	low
Clear objectives and Benchmarks	medium	high	low
Encouragement of Dialogue and Participation	high	high	high
Response to a country's particular needs	high	-	high
Institutionalization	high	high	medium
Conditionality	low	low	low
<b>Employability</b>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>high</i>
<b>Fulfillment of general HR objectives</b>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>	-

**Table 2: Analysis strength assessment based on policy documents**

Compiled by the author

The ENI is the ‘strongest’ instrument in terms of financial capacity (€ 15,4 billion). In contrast to the other two instruments, the ENI has country-specific priorities and budgets, which can be perceived as a strength in terms of transparency, predictability, and response to a country’s particular needs. Of the 186.5 million - €227.9 of the country-specific budget for Lebanon in 2017-2020, 18.6 million - €22.8 million are dedicated to the *Complementary support in favour of civil society* (Commission 2017a: 7). However, the ENI does not have a clear focus on human rights, and it is unclear how much of this money eventually supports HROs. Also, the ENI has some weaknesses regarding its employability: It only funds registered CSOs that apply via the calls for proposals for project-themes determined by the EU. That excludes CSOs that cannot or do not want to be registered, e.g., due to their thematic focus. It also requires CSOs to wait for the proposals and to stick to the topics that are on the EU’s agenda. As a result, one can argue that CSOs might either diverge from their regular priorities or that they are not eligible for funding. When looking at the calls for proposals, one notices that the minimum of funding is €1 million (e.g., EEAS, 2019). While receiving a large grant via one application might be beneficial for large CSOs, small CSOs are most likely to lack the human resources and projects to make use of such a sum. (Commission, 2017a)

The EIDHR is the ‘strongest’ instrument in terms of its thematic focus on human rights and the support to HROs. In terms of its financial envelope, it is much smaller than the ENI (€ 1,3 billion vs. € 15,4 billion for 2014-2020), but in comparison, much of this money benefits CSOs instead of state-actors (yet, state-actors are also eligible). However, the EIDHR is a worldwide instrument, and no



information is available to reconstruct how much of its budget supports Lebanese CSOs or, more specifically, HROs. However, it has an apparent strength in its employability: In contrast to the ENI, it can also fund unregistered CSOs. Besides calls for proposals, which are the most commonly used procedure, there are also direct grants such as emergency grants and different forms of support such as medical or legal assistance, training courses or temporary relocation (Commission, 2018f: 3). Those direct grants under the EIDHR Human Rights Crises Facility set a maximum of €1 million (Commission, 2018j: 10). That shows that smaller grants than via the ENI are available, which makes the EIDHR more employable by smaller HROs. (Council & European Parliament, 2014d)

The EED is the ‘strongest’ instrument in terms of its employability: The EED fills the gap that the other two instruments leave by supporting (among others) “un(der) supported thematic activities” and “core funding” (EED, 2019: 15). Core funding, for example, allows the financing of operational costs without having project deliverables such as several events or publications as a funding requirement. Funding is provided to non-state actors only, including individuals and unregistered organizations and those implementing their activities in difficult environments where other donors are not funding due to security concerns, political sensitivity or the absence of sufficient monitoring possibilities. Also, all of its support is done via direct grants, which is more feasible for small CSOs in need of support than answering to a call for proposals. Again, the only information about the size of the grants can be received by averaging the € 49 million with which 722 initiatives were funded in 2013-2018 (EED, 2019: 11). That means that the EED has averagely spent €67.867 per project, a much smaller sum than the two EU instruments can provide. Even though the sizes of the grants are easier to employ for a small CSO, the overall budget is minimal compared to the other two EU instruments. That suggests that even though every project is assessed individually, the low budget forces the foundation to use some kinds of setting priorities to allocate their funds. (EED, 2019)

Moreover, since the EED has a geographic focus on the extended European neighborhood, only a fraction of this comparably small sum could have benefited Lebanese HROs. To conclude, the EED is the most flexible of the assessed instruments, followed by the EIDHR, but also has some major weaknesses such as its comparably small budget, the unsecured sustainability of this budget and its limited visibility. Also, in the result of its autonomous functioning, the EED shows a comparably lower capacity to coordinate support with the EU and other regional or international actors.

In conclusion, one finds an increase of employability with a decrease in funding. On the one hand, the differences between the instruments can be perceived as complementary, as it diversifies the options available for HROs, depending on their need and administrative capacity. The ENI offers the

most considerable amount of funding, and its large grants are most attractive to larger CSOs. The EIDHR provides smaller grants and funds organizations that are not eligible via the ENI. The EED's direct grants are even smaller and can also be employed by individuals and organizations that are neglected by both EU instruments.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the funding possibilities for small and/or unregistered HROs are more limited: First of all, small HROs might not be capable of applying for large ENI grants. Secondly, unregistered HROs are furthermore not eligible to do so. The two instruments they are eligible for have a by far smaller financial volume than the ENI. It is also these two smaller support instruments, EIDHR and EED, that have a clear human rights focus and that can support organizations and individuals in conflict-affected, restrictive and repressive environments where CSOs are often not registered and oppressed. Hence, it is these two smaller instruments that provide support in environments where support is most needed and where the big neighborhood instrument is most likely unable to provide support. In this context, the financial capacity of both instruments (taking into regard their large scope) is little. Assuming that rationalist and normative interests compete with each other in the EU foreign policy, the EIDHR and the EED seem like a compromise reached by the actors with prevailing normative interests, to have instruments that value human rights over the EU's diplomatic and economic relations.

To conclude this chapter with a recommendation, the EIDHR and EED should be increased in their financial capacity. Also, it appears to be reasonable to have funding opportunities like the EED that are not governed by the EU's consensus-driven and bureaucratic character. Therefore, it is essential to ensure sustainable funding by the member states.

#### **4. The impact of the EU's support as perceived by the local actors**

The last two chapters have analyzed the EU's human rights objectives and the strengths and weaknesses of three support instruments for HROs based on relevant EU/EED documents. When analyzing the EU *Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights* and the ENP, arguments in favor of a 'normative' as well as a 'realist' power Europe were stated. That supports the thesis from the beginning, that in the complex decision-making processes of the EU both normative and rationalist interests have contributed to the shaping of the instruments. The EIDHR and the EED form complementary exceptions, as they are of normative nature in their creation, namely as instruments set up to support human rights in different ways. Nevertheless, the document analysis can only show the official vision the EU is pursuing to support human rights and more specifically, HROs. To get an

impression how this support works de facto, this chapter is going to look at the non-financial and financial means of support (as outlined in the last section) through the lens of involved local actors. Due to the financial and academic importance of the ENP, the focus of this chapter lays on the ENI and means of non-financial support.

#### 4.1. Forms of non-financial support: Working towards a common goal

Chapter 3.1. showed that the EU aims to increase the coherence among EU policies and between EU, member states' and UN policies. The interviews highlight that more coherence among EU policies is indeed needed from a human rights perspective. Wadih Al-Asmar (2018), President of the *Lebanese Center for Human Rights* (CLDH) criticizes the EU's support of a Lebanese membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Association Council, 2016: 8): "Europe is pushing in Lebanon some of their economical [...] agenda that for us [...] they are a threat to the human rights in Lebanon, mainly to the economical and social rights." He explains that Lebanon, as the economically weaker country, will suffer from trade liberalization with the EU. That is a good example of how different EU interests clash in their foreign policy, and how human rights compete with economic or security, and hence strategic rationalist, interests.

All of the three analyzed instruments scored low on the aspect of conditionality. For some of the interviewees, the lacking willingness of the EU to coerce the Lebanese government into improving the human rights situation is perceived as a lack of sincerity of the EU's human rights agenda. Al-Asmar would like to see a clear position that the EU

"cannot support programs when you violate human rights. We [the EU] will not give you material for surveillance if you don't have the laws to protect the privacy of people. We [the EU] cannot give you weapons if you cannot ensure that they will not be used against civilians." (Al-Asmar, 2018)

Other interviewees, one from the EUD and one from an HRO (as cited in Stachelhaus, 2019: 7), oppose to too much foreign pressure in respect to the state's sovereignty and believe that the real change needs to come from Lebanese actors. The interviews showed that this topic is highly controversial among Lebanese HRDs.

#### 4.2. Direct, non-financial Support to HROs

The EUD closely follows the *EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders* that describe the EU's support to HRDs according to the interviewees. The EUD staff follows up on cases, attends courts,

meets regularly with HRDs and hold subcommittee meetings, says George Ghali (2018), Executive Director of *alef – Act for Human Rights*, who describes the relationship with the EUD as quite open and honest. That depends a lot on the delegation and the personal relations, highlights Al-Asmar, who believes that the EUD in Lebanon stands out positively, also because they are “one of the few delegations where they have someone in charge of human rights directly on the political field, not only on the programmatic level.” (Al-Asmar, 2018)

In terms of regular meetings, the interviewees confirm a regular exchange of information, and the possibility to meet ad hoc in emergency cases. For the subcommittees, which exist between the EUD and the Lebanese government, the EUD meets with civil society before the meeting, channels questions to the government and debriefs civil society afterward. According to Al-Asmar (2018), there are subcommittees on human rights, migration, security, or women. Formal meetings on human rights topics take place two to three times per year. Even though the EU’s objective to engage civil society is fulfilled, Al-Asmar (2018) and Ghali (2018) see room for improvement of the organizational structure of such consultations or briefings. They criticize that too many people and too many topics are scheduled in one meeting, thereby reducing the quality of outcomes of a meeting.

Nevertheless, the interviews show that there is an encouragement of dialogue and institutionalization of dialogue fora, but only between civil society and the EU, not between the civil society and the Lebanese government. “It’s a two-side discussion”, criticizes Al-Asmar (2018). Multistakeholder dialogues including all three parties (the EU, civil society and Lebanese authorities) as envisioned in the *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy* (Council, 2015: 19) do not exist in Lebanon. In the SSF, the objective of the multistakeholder dialogue is absent, and only dialogue mechanisms between non-state actors and Security / Criminal justice agencies play a role (Commission, 2017a: 21). That shows two things: How normative objectives get lost when being translated from the abstract to the specific country level and into action; and how once again, the topic of security, a rationalist concern, entails attention to the role of civil society while being neglected in other fields of the SSF.

Contact between the civil society and its government exists, but it is the civil society that reaches out to the government and not vice versa. Ghali (2018) describes the relationship as follows: “The Lebanese government knows how to deal with CS by now, they create venues to show that there is interaction, but actually there isn’t. [...] The government has created this layer, so real policy work, you don’t interact with. [...] To cross this layer, it takes a bit more time. And sometimes, project requirements don’t allow us to cross this line.” That reveals that the objective of the *EU Action Plan*

on *Human Rights and Democracy* to encourage dialogue between CSOs and decision-makers is not sufficiently fulfilled, or at least not in the case of HROs. Furthermore, it reveals that requirements connected to funding as offered by the EU might be reinforcing the lack of interaction.

In the *EU Action Plan*, the EU pledges to support HRDs, e.g., when at risk. Even though this objective is not reflected in the SSF, it is reflected in the de facto practice of the EU. According to Al-Asmar (2018), the EU intervenes mostly without officially announcing it, but it takes public positions related to deportations and intervenes publicly when HRDs are attacked. Also, the EU succeeds “to channel [...] some of our demands to the Lebanese government or to obtain from them some intervention on some cases of human rights violations”, finds Al-Asmar (2018). Yet, sometimes he gets informed informally that the EU cannot do anything for a case. One can conclude from these statements that the EU works closely with HRDs and also uses its contacts to the Lebanese government on a bilateral level to raise human rights concerns.

To sum up, the EU follows the Guidelines on HRDs closely, but from their general human rights agenda, not all objectives translate into the EUD’s everyday practice. While the interviewed HRDs confirm that the EU officials use their diplomatic channels to raise human rights concerns, they also agree that this could be improved in terms of success and sincerity. Anna Fleischer, Advocacy Manager at *Women Now For Development*, confirms that gender equality translates from the objectives into the EU’s actual practice, but questions its sincerity. When representing women organization at a meeting, she sometimes feels like a “gender box” that needs to be ticked off. Also, she criticizes that more attention must be spent on checking whether a so-called women organization is indeed managed and run by women and if the organization has sufficient expertise in its field.

#### 4.3. The European Neighbourhood Policy

The criticism that the ENI receives by the interviewees confirms the concerns that were raised in the earlier chapter when analyzing the neighborhood instrument: Bureaucracy, the size of the funds and project requirements pose a hindrance to its employability. The points of criticism can be transferred to the EIDHR and EED only to some extent, thereby highlighting the necessity and the importance of the two smaller instruments. Especially the EED was underlined by two interviewees as a valuable and more feasible alternative to the ENI.

While some interviewees see the ENI’s bureaucracy as a benefit to prevent corruption and to push CSOs to organize themselves better, others see it as an impossible challenge. According to Anna Fleischer, the slowness of the application process does not match the quickly changing realities, and

the sizeable administrative body to manage the application and the fund is often not given. The benefits were highlighted by interviewees working for the EUD or who are funded by the EU, which raises (but does not answer) the question whether this more positive perception is based on loyalty or based on a better knowledge of the actual bureaucratic burden.

Another problem is the large size of the funds, but also the short duration of a funding period. Al-Asmar (2018) refrains from EU funding for his organization CLDH, as the efforts are too high and the negative impact it would have on the HRO's sustainability. The EU fund would become 50% of his HROs budget, which means that 50% of the organization's budget would have to be compensated for after the EU funding ends. That is why consortiums of NGOs, or governmental and quasi-governmental development agencies usually get the EU funding, according to Fleischer, since they have the necessary administrative body and projects to handle the fund. That confirms the assumption of the previous chapter and the findings of existing literature (e.g., Altan-Olcay & Icduygu, 2012: 170) that most of the funding goes to large CSOs with international networks. George Ghali (2018) would prefer "smaller funding but for a longer period of time". Due to the short funding periods, "funding might end, where the results start." He explains this statement using the torture prevention law: EU has been the core funder for torture prevention in Lebanon from 2007 to 2015, but the law was discussed in parliament in the years after. In result, the organizations did not have enough resources to follow up the discussion of the legal reform constantly.

He also criticizes the project requirements that come with an ENI fund: "Maybe I don't want to do a billboard campaign, maybe I don't want to produce a research." According to him, with fewer project requirements, more civil society involvement in policies would be possible, since the CSOs could work on establishing alliances with other CSOs and decision makers, or attend parliament session, instead of working on project deliverables. Therefore, he would prefer more diverse sources of funding, including core funding, as the EED offers it.

This sub-chapter can be summed up with a statement by Fleischer, who says that the bureaucratic requirements that come with the application and management of an EU fund can be so "difficult and ponderous that you can crush local organizations. You can really extinguish local, small organizations or initiatives with too much pressure" (Anna Fleischer, translated from German). Although it sounds like an overstatement, it reflects the concerns voiced by the interviewed actors. To link it back to the relevant sub-question, one can argue that the perceived impact of the ENI cannot be too high, as most actors refrain from this funding due to the voiced concerns.



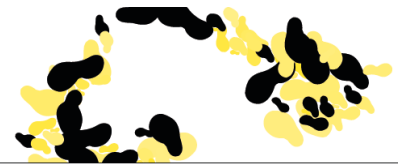
#### 4.4. Conclusion

This chapter sought to display how the interviewed actors perceive the impact of EU support. The result is ambivalent. Not everything the EU does is regarded as beneficial for human rights, sometimes even in the contrary. Examples of that can be the WTO membership or the EU Election Observation Mission, which was mentioned repeatedly in the interviews. Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director of the *Arab NGO Network for Development* (ANND), explains that the EU Election Observation Mission issued a report that the elections went very well, while domestic observers criticized 370 cases of violations. He perceives this as discrediting civil society and criticizes “[o]n the one hand, you are helping, on the other hand, you are harming” (as cited in Stachelhaus, 2019: 6). While Interviewee 1, who had met with some EU observers, interprets this situation as a caused by a lack of understanding of the Lebanese contexts, Abdel Samad interprets it as an EU attempt to appease the Lebanese government. Also, inactivity, in case of human rights violations, including continued support despite human rights violations, are perceived in a negative light. As an example, the EU’s support for Lebanese security agencies can be given (see Al-Asmar in chapter 4.3).

However, interviewees also perceive a positive impact. They agree that the EU follows the *EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders* by supporting HRDs, intervening when they are attacked, and channeling their demands to the government. The HRDs recommend several measures to increase the impact. First of all, most of them spoke negatively about bureaucratic procedures and project requirements. Also, HRDs feel like they would be helped better if the available grants were smaller but available for a longer timeframe.

Even though not explicitly asked, the interviewees stated what interests they think shape EU actions. That helps to put the findings of this paper in the context of security concerns, as posed in the research question. Based on these statements, normative interests play a role (especially on the level of the EUD employees), but sometimes get overshadowed by the objective to maintain stability at all means. According to Ghali (2018), Fleischer (2018), Abdel Samad (as cited in Stachelhaus, 2019) and Interviewee 1, the migration crisis that has brought around 1,5 million Syrians into the country of 6 million is perceived to be having an impact on the human rights agenda. They see an EU interest in improving the life situation of refugees in Lebanon for them to not continue their flight to Europe. Ghali (2018) thinks that the Lebanese government makes use of this interest, since “within the migration crisis, the EU [...] felt that they need to do compromises” and that these compromises were done on the expenses of human rights. Other interviewees define economic (Interviewee 1) and diplomatic reasons (Abdel Samad, as cited in Stachelhaus, 2019: 6) as intervening interests as well. All





of these statements confirm Seeberg's picture of the EU as a "realist actor in normative clothes" (Seeberg, 2009: 95), since rationalist interest in the field of security and economy can compete and even interfere with the EU's normative interests. Even though this conclusion is drawn on personal perceptions, the perceptions do provide the information that those who would benefit from a normative agenda are not completely convinced of its existence. Reasons for that could be unfulfilled expectations or a lack of communication. Despite the various criticism, Abdel Samad calls the "EU [as] one of the most important partners that we have in the region" (Abdel Samad, as cited in Stachelhaus, 2019: 3).

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis sought to answer the research question *What are the strengths and weaknesses of the European Union's support to human rights organizations in Lebanon in the context of security concerns, and how is the impact of the policy perceived by local actors?*. To answer the question, this conclusion combines the information gained via the three sub-questions. The criteria used for the final assessment are the policy documents' commitment and coherence (based on the six aspects derived from Manners), and the employability and suitability of the EU support to serve the general human rights objectives.

First of all, there are different ways the EU supports HROs in Lebanon. There are forms of non-financial, direct support to HROs as outlined in the *EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders*, e.g., by providing them publicity. For financial aid, there are two EU instruments that Lebanese HROs are eligible for, the *European Neighbourhood Instrument*, of which 10% of the budget is provided to CSOs (Commission, 2017a), and the *European Instruments for Democracy and Human Rights*, which is specifically designed to support the work of HRDs in the world (Commission, 2014d). An alternative to the EU instruments is the *European Endowment for Democracy*, which is independent of the EU but whose operational costs are covered by the Commission (Commission, 2015).

	ENI	EIDHR	EED
Commitment & Coherence	Medium	High	Medium
Employability	Low	Medium	High
Human rights objectives	Medium	High	-

**Table 3: Analysis strength assessment combining policy documents and interviews**

Compiled by the author

In terms of the commitment and coherence of the policy documents, the two EU instruments show their strength by scoring mostly high (or medium, in the case of the ENI), while the EED shows mixed results. That reflects three things: The disadvantages of its independence from the EU institutions which causes some problems in terms of the coordination among programs, the challenge of its sustainability, and the logical results of its flexible character that does not allow much programming. A general weakness of the EU support is the lack of clear information on how poor performance or the misappropriation of funds affect the support to the Lebanese government. As elaborated on in chapter 3.1.2., the lack of negative conditionality by the EU can be understood as a lack of sincerity on human rights, but also as a caution to not lose its leverage in Lebanon. Combined with the shared strengths, which are the encouragement of dialogue and participation, institutionalization and the responsiveness to a country's particular needs, the findings of this chapter support the image of the EU as a soft power (Moravcsik, 2010), that values persuasion over coercion.

Most striking is the finding that the employability seems to increase with a decrease of the instruments' financial capacity: Especially the EED was highlighted as the most employable, based on its structure analyzed in the policy document analysis and the interviews (e.g., Fleischer, 2018). Including the interviews, the 'high' employability of the EIDHR and the 'medium' score of the ENI that were concluded based on the document analysis do not seem appropriate to describe the actual feasibility of their employment as perceived by involved actors. The ENI turns out to not be used by the interviewees due to several disadvantages such as project requirements or the size of the grant (e.g. Al-Asmar, 2018), which is too big for the small organizations. The EIDHR, which -unlike the EED- works with calls for proposals and gives direct grants only in emergency cases, was not mentioned as a feasible alternative to the ENI. Just the EED was mentioned in a positive light. That shows that the employability of the EU instruments poses some challenges to Lebanese HROs. This weakness of the EU instruments seems to be known by European decision-makers, as they created the EED to complement the existing instruments (Commission, 2015: 3). Future research might shed light on the employability of the EIDHR.

The last criteria to assess the EU's support is whether it fulfills the general human rights objectives. Most of the EU's human rights objectives such as the support of legislation aiming at the protection of HRDs (Council, 2015: 21) or the promotion of dialogue and women's rights are pursued on the ground via means of financial as well as non-financial support (e.g., Fleischer, 2018). A few differences exist though, for example, the preference of non-public opposition to human rights violations over public ones (e.g., Ghali, 2018), even though the *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and*

*Democracy* envisions both (Council, 2015: 21). That is only one of the examples that let the interviewees doubt the EU's sincerity. On a personal level with the employees of the EUD, close contact, and support exist, as outlined in the *EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders*. Although, in terms of financial means, the EU support to HRDs does not translate fully into reality: Interviewee 1 (2018) and Ghali (2018) sometimes find their organizations' projects ineligible for EU funding as it is not in line with the EU's priorities. That might be the case with the ENI or the action *Global Calls* of the EIDHR, where clear priorities are formulated. Especially the SSF is selective in the human rights objectives it pursues: HRDs were not mentioned, and human rights mostly in connection with security (Commission, 2017a). Hence, the human rights objectives are reflected in the accumulated financial and non-financial support to HROs, but especially the largest foreign policy instrument for the country, the ENI, shows some inconsistencies, which is a weakness regarding the instrument's size and potential.

The EU's strength lies in the non-financial support to HROs, while its financial support poses some challenges in terms of employability, which is automatically also a constraint on its ability to fulfill the human rights objectives, in which the support to HRDs receives special attention. The EED has the potential to counterbalance this weakness due to its flexible grant giving rules (EED, 2019), but its budget needs to be increased to be able to do so. In terms of financial support, one could argue that the EIDHR and the EED are the strengths of the EU support to human rights. The ENI could be rather seen as its weakness, as HROs feel restricted in their work through the project requirements or refrain from ENI funding altogether.

The impact of the EU's human rights policy is described as both beneficial and harmful for the Lebanese human rights situation by involved actors (Abdel Samad, as cited in Stachelhaus, 2019). On the one hand, the diplomatic work the EUD does to push for human rights improvements is perceived as impactful (e.g., Al-Asmar, 2018). On the other hand, restrictions in the employability of the EU instruments reduce their potential impact. Even more, some of the goals the EU pursues in Lebanon are not perceived to be in line with its human rights objectives (e.g., *ibid.*). Although the HRDs call for more public statements and negative measures in case of human rights violations (e.g., *ibid.*), interferences without an in-depth understanding of the situation are perceived to be harmful as well, as the example of the EU Election Observation Mission has shown.

Again, it needs to be highlighted that the evaluations of the EU's impact are based on the perceived impact of a limited number of actors, and on document analyses of EU documents which might not be implemented accurately (as the interviews suggest). Therefore, they do not reflect the

actual impact. To gain information on the actual impact, statistical development data could be compared to the EU's support objectives in future research. Also, the findings can only be seen in the Lebanese context. Nevertheless, this thesis has some strengths, such as the triangulation of data sources, which reduces the risk of bias. As research on this topic is scarce, the data generated through the interviews can be used for future research.

The last step puts these findings in the context of security concerns. As the high prioritization of security in the SSF, and the choice of "stabilisation as the overarching objective" (Commission, 2017a: 2), have shown, security does play a major role at least within the ENP. The next question to answer is whether this prioritization of security has an impact on the EU support to HROs. Based on the documents, there is no trade-off between human rights and security. Instead, human rights are integrated into the support for security. For example, "Strengthened oversight bodies and more accountable security and justice institutions" is set as an objective (Commission, 2017a: 20). That corresponds with Schumacher's statement that the "normative duty narrative [...] enjoy[s] considerable discursive dominance and are powerfully employed in particular in the fields of security, economics, and trade" (Schumacher, 2015: 395).

However, the interviews and existing literature call into question whether security is being pursued without a negative impact on human rights support. Even though human rights are pursued within the security programs, it is evident that if much money is spent on security, less money can be spent on other sectors. Therefore, it would be interesting for future research to look at the development of the priorities and the budget distribution. Throughout the thesis, a mixture of rationalist and constructivist theory has proven helpful to explain the findings in the context of security concerns. Some policies can more easily be explained from the constructivist perspective, which assumes that social norms influence an actor's behavior. Supporting human rights in a third country is a rather normative endeavor, especially when using and thereby endangering the diplomatic relations with the third country's government. An example of that such a support is the close cooperation with and defense of HRDs. Rationalism, on the other hand, assume that the EU's self-interests guide its foreign policy, prioritizing actions that benefit the EU's economic and security situation over the third countries' human rights situation. That is most likely the perspective that the interviewees would agree with since a majority of them criticized that economic or security interests were interfering with the EU's human rights agenda. Also, the close attention to security in the SSF supports this claim.

As this shows, the theoretical approach by Youngs (2004), who assumes a co-existence of power politics and normative dynamics, has proven to be suited for this research. His finding that

“security-driven choices hav[e] been selected within the overarching human rights framework” (ibid.: 431) aligns with the findings of this thesis. The human rights support in Lebanon is a proof that different actors with carrying interests shape EU policies (Bötter, 2010): On the ground, the interviewees suggest that norms drive the individuals working at the EUD in Beirut to maintain close contact with HRDs. Even though this is outlined in the *EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders*, their implementation leaves some room in which the EUD employees’ ambitions can have an effect. Nevertheless, the priorities and strategies set in Brussels seem to restrict the possibilities on the ground and seem to be more affected by European self-interests. Hence, one could argue that when the normative human rights aspirations of the general *Action Plan* are applied to the Lebanese context, rationalist security interests compete with human rights for attention.

### 5.1. Reflection

As a final thought, I raise the question whether the perception of interviewees and existing literature that the EU’s normative agenda is rather weak is partly caused by unrealistically high expectations towards the EU. One of the premises of the NPE debate seems to be that the EU depicts itself as a normative actor that hides self-interests in its human rights agenda. Taking into regard the ENP’s prioritization of stability, and the creation of the ENP as a reaction to changed external borders and markets after the EU enlargement (Casier, 2010), I question whether the EU ever claimed to follow a purely normative agenda in its neighborhood. Also, a post-colonial perspective might be helpful to assess the limitations of the ENP. Is some reservation indeed a weakness? Stefania Panebianco reminds us that “[t]he will of the partners to accept and implement [the EU norms] is essential. Otherwise, this regionalist attitude might be considered “Eurocentric” by third parties.” (Panebianco, 2010: 191) Findings like the absence of conditionality prove some truth in the statement that

“Unless the EU’s partners are willing to “go for democracy”, to defend human rights and implement the required institutional reforms, the EU does not want to “die for democracy and human rights” since political reforms in Arab countries might have destabilizing effects and thus threaten security and stability in the Mediterranean.” (Panebianco, 2010: 193)

Yet, the existence of the EIDHR and EED show that the EU is willing to risk such a destabilizing effect to some extent by supporting critical CSAs in restrictive environments. As both instruments support CSAs independently of their governments’ consent (EED, 2019; Council & European Parliament,

2014d), this also shows that the EU does not limit itself to the third country's acceptance. However, the financial distribution of the money between the ENI and the EIDHR indicates clearly where the EU's focus lies.

Nevertheless, some normative interests are present in a generally rather security-driven foreign policy. Based on the EU's premise that stability is to be "founded on good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights" (Commission, 2017b: 11), both normative as well as rationalist actors should have an interest in developing a human rights strategy that increases the potential for sustainable human rights reforms while decreasing the risk of destabilizing side-effects. As a first step, the EU should work on the coherence among its policies, prioritizing human rights over economic gains. Also, the sustainability of their financial support via the EED and the EIDHR should be ensured, and their budgets increased.

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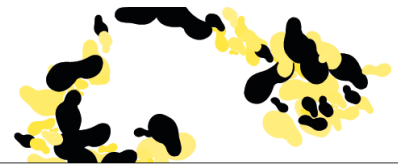
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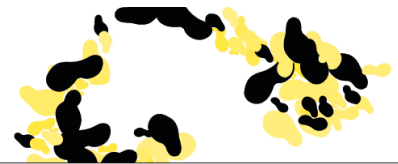
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#### 6.5. Interviews

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- Anna Fleischer, Advocacy and Communication Manager at Women Now for Development, interviewed on 07.12.2018, in Beirut.



George Ghali, Executive Director at ALEF – act for human rights (ALEF), interviewed on 28.11.2018, in Beirut.

Interviewee 1, Lebanese European Law Expert, interviewed on the 03.12.2018, in Beirut.

