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# EASTMED

## Eastern Mediterranean Regional Training Partnership

### Strategic Partnerships



## Eastmed Policy Brief



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## PROJECT INFORMATION

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*The Eastern Mediterranean has existed geographically throughout the ages. However, developments in the 21st century have necessitated viewing it conceptually as a distinct “new” region with specific characteristics. Comprised by Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Turkey, Italy the region is assuming increased significance in world affairs. More specifically, the region of Eastern Mediterranean is currently of vital importance for the EU, due to a number of prospects and challenges, such as migration flows, energy, security and sustainability of the region. Therefore, the main objective of the EastMed project is the development of a HEI-level Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), focusing on the region of the Eastern Mediterranean. The MOOC, entitled "EU and the Eastern Mediterranean: Prospects and Challenges", will give an emphasis to the concurrent refugee crisis and energy security, and will be developed and delivered in accordance with ECTS/ESG.*

## Introduction

Eastern Mediterranean is characterized by a unified historical background, bearing elements of a distinct regional subsystem representing the border between East and West as well as the Western world limit (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2015). Stability and security in contemporary Eastern Mediterranean is drastically affected by an emerging regional complex consisting of state and non-state entities in search of security. Evidently, regional dynamics and challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean have a direct effect on Europe's security as a whole.

Currently, the Eastern Mediterranean is confronted with many challenges, being at the spotlight of most regional players due to the migratory flows and the energy developments (Giannakopoulos, 2016; Dokos, 2016). These two subjects were the main discussion themes of the recent Eastmed Policy Events in which academics and policy makers elaborated their views and proposals. Special attention has been given to recommendations for increasing the EU's capacity for constructive regional intervention.

## Energy Security

Energy security is the association between national security and the availability and access to natural resources for energy consumption (Winzer, 2012). Energy plays an important role in the national security of any given country as a fuel powering the economic engine, but it may also become a source of friction and conflict. States are aware that risk factors including political instability, manipulation of energy supplies, competition over energy resources, as well as terrorism, attacks and damages on energy supply infrastructure can pose serious threats against the uninterrupted and secure flow of energy supplies. As a result, states seek to take measures in order to ensure the undisrupted flow and exploitation of energy resources by reducing the risks associated with external fuel supplies (Dannreuther, 2017). Therefore, states will naturally seek to develop policies and networks that will help them increase control and self-reliance over the costs and availability of energy supplies, reducing the risk of dependence.

Measures to increase energy security centre on reducing the dependency on one single source of imported energy by increasing the number of suppliers and supply routes or by exploiting native fossil fuel, biofuel and renewable energy resources. The discovery of significant oil and gas deposits in the exclusive economic zones of Israel, Egypt, and Cyprus and the alleged deposits in Greece provide an additional energy source outside the former Soviet space and the Middle East proper and therefore **can**

**contribute to the diversification** of Europe's energy supplies (Directorate General for External Policies, 2017; Giannakopoulos, 2016). Large natural gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean have raised hopes that the region could serve the EU's energy needs, helping to fulfil its goals of energy diversification, security, and resilience (Tagliapietra, 2013).

Significant quantities of offshore natural gas were discovered in the area known as *Aphrodite* in Cyprus' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Cyprus demarcated its maritime border with Egypt in 2003, with Lebanon in 2007 and with Israel in 2010 (Tagliapietra, 2013). In August 2011, the US-based company Noble Energy entered into a production-sharing agreement with the Cypriot government regarding the block's commercial development. After the completion of drilling tests, the company confirmed 4.5 trillion cubic feet gas availability in the spot. In 2017 Cyprus has completed its third licensing round, awarding blocks to a consortium including Italian ENI, French Total, Exxon Mobil and Qatar Petroleum – and has signed contracts that are expected to yield faster drilling in a bid to explore the potential of exporting its gas (Giannakopoulos, 2016). Nearby Cyprus' *Aphrodite* gas field lays Israel's largest natural gas discovery, the *Leviathan* gas field: a large natural gas field located off the coast of Israel, at about roughly 130 kilometres west of Haifa.



Together with the nearby *Tamar* gas field, the *Leviathan* field is seen as an opportunity for Israel to become a major energy player in the region. *Leviathan*, discovered in 2010 and set to begin production in 2019, is estimated to hold 18.9 trillion cubic feet. As of 2017, even by conservative estimates, *Leviathan* holds enough gas to meet Israel's domestic needs for 40 years and alongside to the *Tamar* gas field with estimated reserves of up to 8.4 trillion cubic feet, opens up serious prospects for exporting gas (De Micco, 2014).

Further to the south, lays Egypt's mega-discovery: the Zohr gas field; a huge offshore natural gas field located in the Egyptian sector of the Mediterranean Sea. The field was discovered in 2015 by the Italian energy company ENI and is the largest ever-natural gas discovery in the Mediterranean Sea. The total gas of the Zohr gas field is around 30 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. In December 2017, Italian company ENI began extraction and production of natural gas. Pipelines have been fitted to transport the gas straight to Port Said City (ENI, Press Release, 2017).

Encouraged by recent gas finds in the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece awarded licenses and signed lease for four blocks - one offshore in the Ionia Sea and three on land to a consortium made up of French Total, Italian Edison and Hellenic Petroleum. A consortium made up by Exxon Mobil, France's Total and Hellenic Petroleum has acquired drilling test licence for blocks west and southwest of the Greek island of Crete. Rough estimates based on geological

similarities point to a possibility of reserves up to 30 trillion cubic feet of gas.

### Politics and Energy

Energy has long been a major factor in the formulation of country strategies for the exercise of national power (Karakasis, 2015). The use of energy as a tool to influence neighbours is neither new nor unique. The role of geographic factors and drivers in the political use of energy resources as a tool to influence or coerce is generally known as the “**geopolitics of energy**” (Fernandes and Rodrigues, 2017; Pryke, 2017).

Given the recent discoveries and estimates in the Eastern Mediterranean, states have adjusted their energy policies in order to position themselves in the new energy environment.

**Energy security policy** takes into consideration the security interests, the geographical and political considerations and the actions of states to utilize and protect energy resources, and it is therefore designed in order to help increase their security status (Fernandes and Rodrigues, 2017).

The prospect of supplying the energy thirsty European markets with gas reserves from the Eastern Mediterranean provides a first-class alternative route for diversifying and securing European supplies, while bringing together energy supplies in the region could help increase profit margins and control costs. Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, and Greece have launched a multilevel collaboration, including energy related issues,



known as *Tripartites* (Lerman, 2016; Inbar, 2015). Since 2010, discussions between Egypt, Cyprus, and Israel resulted in the coordination of actions regarding the utilization and transfer of energy resources. In 2013, Greece, Israel, and Cyprus signed a *tripartite energy memorandum* after the completion of negotiations (Lerman, 2016). In 2014, Egypt, Cyprus and Greece held a tripartite summit in Cairo and agreed to intensify the cooperation between the three countries in economy, security, tourism and energy, and later in 2017, parties discussed the development of hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, military collaboration between Greece, Egypt, Israel and Cyprus, intensified to include the joint training of Israeli forces in Cyprus, aeronautical exercises, search and rescue training missions, and general staff level meetings and education. While Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, and Greece intensify contacts, Turkey, an important regional player, has developed its own energy ambitions in the Eastmed area (Giannakopoulos, 2016). However, strained relations with Israel, following the Mavi Marmara incident were further poisoned by Erdogan's rhetoric and actions towards Israeli policy-making, culminating into a growing trust-deficit between the two countries. President Erdogan's support for Egypt's overthrown Islamist government has severely damaged relations with Egypt. Furthermore, the Turkish military occupation of Cyprus and bellicosity against Greece has reduced prospects of cooperation.

### **The Politics of Sea Delimitation**

In the face of such political considerations, the geopolitics of maritime delimitation in the Eastern Mediterranean and the way in which the regional players use and abuse international legal provisions to instrumentally support their policies emerge as significant issues of the region (Constantinou, 2011). Turkey has frequently authorised incursions of survey vessels into Cyprus' exclusive economic zone, and recently Turkish warships have prevented Italian survey vessels (ENI) from conducting gas-drilling tests into Cyprus EEZ using threats and harassment. In 2018, Turkey authorised the undertaking of oil-drilling tests to the waters West and East of the Cypriot coast, claiming that parts of these waters belong to Turkey's exclusive economic jurisdiction. Notably, Ankara does not recognize the legal status of the Republic of Cyprus nor its jurisdiction to utilize resources lying within its designated economic zones. In addition, Ankara does not recognize the agreement between Cyprus and Egypt delimitating their respective economic waters and objects to the nature and extent of Greece's right to delimitate its economic waters in the Aegean Sea. Alongside with Turkey's objections, sea delimitation disputes and outstanding issues have so far continued to affect relations between Lebanon and Israel, and the Palestinian Gaza with Israel. A deeper understanding of international law is required so as to be able to make better judgments about the validity of claims and counterclaims in the region.

The EU will be, sooner or later, faced with broader challenges regarding ‘community resilience’ and ‘sustainability’ in the region’s surrounding areas (Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, 2016). The relation between environmental degradation and migration should be taken in consideration. This is especially important given how the maritime dimension has been a continuous source of tension in the region, and following the offshore discovery of hydrocarbons, negotiated delimitation, rights of use and pipeline routes further creates new strategic partnerships as well as new conflicts (Karakasis, 2015; De Micco, 2014; Karagiannis, 2010). These concepts should be studied and developed through the lens of regional cooperation within the EU framework.

### **Energy and sustainability**

Energy, security and sustainability are vital issues in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Energy developments in the region have attracted considerable international attention while the sustainable development of this “new” region has been a significant issue of discussion. The concept of development can be understood in a multidimensional level. Parallel to efforts of increasing the region’s geo-economic role and capacity, it is necessary to consider the development of inter-generational and interfaced solidarity interventions that build up social and community ties alongside to the implementation of interventions focusing on environmental sustainability and system

care. To achieve broader security objectives, it is necessary to address human concerns such as poverty, socio-economic exclusion, and solve the critical environmental issues threatening the region. The development of intervention models that are attentive to the person as a whole is considered to be a key aspect. Intervention models and strategies need to be flexible because they are characterized by contingencies of ongoing changes.

### **Energy Projects and EU Security**

The EU Treaty of Lisbon presupposes solidarity in matters of energy supply and provides for changes to the energy policy of the EU (Directorate General for External Policies, 2017). In practice, however, many policy competencies related to the energy sector are still at the hands of member states, and progress in policy at European level requires voluntary cooperation by member states. The dependency of the European Union (EU) on energy imports, particularly of oil and gas, is a major policy concern relating to the security of energy supplies. The security of the EU’s primary energy supplies may be threatened if a high proportion of imports are concentrated among relatively few partners.



### **Box1: What are the latest Developments Concerning the Oil-Gas Drilling activity in Cyprus?**

Drilling plans in the Republic of Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone have been proceeding as planned despite failure reaching a negotiated settlement with the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey on the Cyprus Question. Negotiations came to a halt in Switzerland's Crans- Montana resort where UN-mediated talks took place from June 29 until July 8. The government of the Republic of Cyprus authorized the Italian-French ENI-TOTAL consortium to proceed with natural gas-drilling activities in block 11 'Onesiphorus –West 1', which is located at about 180 km off the island's southern shore. Following the arrival of the "West Capella" deepwater drillship on July 12, Ankara, which does not recognize the legal status of the Republic of Cyprus nor its jurisdiction to utilize resources lying within its designated economic zones, has reacted to Cypriot drilling activities considering the Greek Cypriot side's decisions as "unilateral" steps. Turkey has also announced naval exercises in a nearby area west of Cyprus during drilling activities and it has dispatched a frigate to monitor the drillship conducting offshore gas exploration south of the island. More recently, scheduled oil-surveys in Cyprus's Block 6 "Calypso" by ENI-owned drillship Saipem 1200 were interrupted by Turkish military vessels, which threatened and harassed the Italian drillship forcing it to abandon the spot. At the same time, the Turkish seismic survey vessel "Barbaros" has been sailing off the shores of Morphou and across Pafos, after "binding" the sea-area that lies within Cyprus' EEZ neighbouring with Egypt (Turkish Navtex 711/17). Ankara considers that the agreement between Cyprus and Egypt delimiting their respective economic waters is "null and void". The government of the Republic of Cyprus has repeatedly declared that all legal citizens of the Republic of Cyprus, Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike, will have an equal share of the potential profits drawn by the reserves. On a recent note made by the US State Department's spokesperson, it was stressed, "the U.S. policy on Cyprus's EEZ is longstanding and the US recognizes the Republic of Cyprus's right to develop its resources in its Exclusive Economic Zone". The statement added that "the United States administration continues to believe the island's oil and gas resources, like all of its resources, should be equitably shared between both communities in the context of an overall settlement", although at the same time the US "continue to discourage actions that increase tensions in the region." (See: "US State Dept: Cyprus has right to exploit its EEZ resources".

Naftemporiki, Wednesday, 12 July 2017.Av. At:<http://www.naftemporiki.gr/story/1257848/us-state-dept-cyprus-has-right-to-exploit-its-eez-resource>





Since 2004, the EU net imports of energy have been greater than its primary production and its dependency rate exceeded 50.0%. More than 50% of energy products come from external sources. Russia remains the largest supplier of natural gas and oil to the EU, followed by Norway and Qatar. Crude oil is by far the largest imported energy product, amounting 69.0% of total EU energy imports. In 2017, Russia's share in the EU imports of natural gas stood at 37.0% and of oil at 30.9%. The EU's reliance on Russia for its energy has been cited as a strong reason for the importance of an alternative European Energy Policy.

The Energy Union Strategy (2015) coordinates the transformation of European policy on energy supply. According to the Energy Union Strategy Framework, Europe must seek to obtain secure, sustainable, competitive and affordable energy. To do so, Europe's Energy Security Policy aims to i) increase energy security and solidarity among member's states, ii) create a fully integrated European energy market, iii) promote energy efficiency and moderation of demand, iv) decarbonising the economy, and v) invest in research and innovation (European Energy Security Strategy Union Strategy, 2015).

## EU and Pipeline Politics

The Eastern Mediterranean's reserves place the region on the top of potential suppliers to EU and thus the EU encourages regional collaboration (Directorate General for External Policies, 2017). The EU-endorsed EastMed pipeline project concerns construction of a direct energy corridor crossing through the Eastern Mediterranean and through Greece reaching Italy (Directorate General for External Policies, 2017; Tagliapietra, 2013). Technical research on this direct route is promoted and financed by the EU Commission as a Project of Common Interest. The construction of an integrated energy corridor that will gather all energy reserves from the Eastern Mediterranean flowing into Europe and support multiple export options from existing and potential discoveries is central to reducing Europe's energy dependence. The ambitious East Med pipeline project includes the construction of an underwater pipeline connecting the gas fields in the Levantine Basin with mainland Greece, and it is projected to carry 8-14 billion cubic metres of natural gas to Europe. Proponents say this pipeline will strengthen the EU's energy security goals by creating a real diversification of routes and sources. The project is seen as an opportunity to i) increase the ability to supply gas at multiple locations along the line from Israel to Greece, ii) increase regional pipeline interconnectivity with Africa and the Middle East, iii) foster development projects within its borders, iv)



increase energy security, and v) tie together the EU with long-standing partners in mutually beneficial projects. (Directorate General for External Policies, 2017)

The East Med pipeline presents an opportunity for the EU to develop its Southern Gas Corridor further and diversify away from its heavy reliance on Russian gas and Arab petrol. In April 2017, the Energy Ministers of Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Israel, signed, in the presence of the EU Commissioner for Climate Action & Energy, a joint declaration to follow closely the EastMed's development and support its promotion. However, the proposed project has its own complexities: a) it is, compared to other proposed routes, more expensive (about 6 billion euros) and more technically demanding; b) the size availability of gas reserves must correspond to the construction costs and should come in prices affordable to the buyers, that is cheaper than Russian or Azerbaijani oil and gas; c) as it currently stands, Turkey is left out of the project, something that may increase regional friction.

However, the EU can incentivize Ankara by offering Turkey to join the regional cooperation project, including pipelines that connect and benefit all countries in the region without reducing the levels of mutual security over resources.

## Box 2: Policy Recommendations for the EU

- A. **Understand** the Eastern Mediterranean as a regional sub-system (a significant crossroads region) with distinct security dynamics. A strategic territorial block characterised by distinct vulnerabilities, commonalities and differences.
- B. **Encourage** the joint exploitation of Eastern Mediterranean gas resources as part of a long-lasting EU energy diversification strategy.
- C. **Finance** projects that will help increase inter-connectivity between regional states, and between regional states and the EU.
- D. **View** regional collaboration as a means of promoting interdependencies that create conditions for political stability and peace in the region.
- E. **Adopt** an inclusive but principled policy on energy security and cooperation according to the fundamental democratic principles and humanitarian ideals of Europe. Incentivize important regional actors, including Turkey, to join collaborative projects based on shared principles.
- F. **Promote** the creation of an operational EU-led sub-state security system.
- G. **Consider** the environmental repercussions of energy projects at land and sea.

To sum up, the European Union has a vital interest in developing a policy that utilizes energy reserves in the region with the aim to diversify energy supplies, reduce external dependence, and increase energy security (Ruble, 2017). This can be achieved by fostering regional cooperation among EU and non-EU states, providing incentives to potential regional partners to integrate their energy reserves and



pipeline systems, and ultimately, create conditions of mutual security and trust in the region (Giannakopoulos, 2016).

## Conclusion

The Eastern Mediterranean has been a region with distinctive characteristics forming the basis for collaboration and dispute among them. The importance of 'regional interdependence' should be further emphasised so as to reveal the conditions and benefits of security and cooperation in the region and the role of the EU in the region must be further explained and clarified especially as to how the EU helps to respond to the current challenges or exacerbate crises. Innovative methods and approaches should be developed in order to enhance the EU's visibility and impact in the region.

In these days, issues like energy and migration have emerged as main drivers of both cooperation and contention. However, regional cooperation for the management of these issues and relative challenges seem to be the sole solution for effective and sustainable development of the area. Thereinafter, the educational content and teaching approach of the prospective online course should be able to promote a better understanding of the delicate ethno-cultural and religious synthesis of the region, the current challenges and underlying controversies, taking into account the inter-

linked nature of interests and the importance of cross-border affiliations.



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