# Wider Europe, neighbourhood: a new framework for relations with Eastern and Southern neighbours

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The Council welcomed the Commission Communication "Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours" as well as a contribution by Secretary-General/High Representative Solana. On this basis, it had an orientation debate on the general principles of this initiative, after which the Presidency noted as preliminary elements: - the emphasis placed by several speakers on the principle of differentiation of the relationship (different models to be applied to the different countries considered); - but also the fact that the approach to these countries was guided by common concerns, including the question of basic values (human rights, democracy, rule of law); - the fact that similar issues had to be addressed in these countries (including migration, organised crime, market issues, sustainable development); - the fact that the initiative should be seen as separate from the question of EU membership. The Council tasked its relevant bodies to continue preparatory work on this issue in view of the next General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting on 14-15 April and in the perspective of the enlarged meeting of the European Conference in Athens in 17 April.