



Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Partner Countries

Towards a Common Knowledge and Innovation Space

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Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Research and Innovation 2012

Research and innovation play a major role in promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth and job creation – a top priority in the European Union’s response to the Arab Spring. The development of a Common Knowledge and Innovation Space (CKIS) linked to smart growth and the EU's Innovation Agenda is one of the aims spelled out by the EU’s new [Neighbourhood Policy](#) strategy of May 2011. The CKIS is meant to cover policy dialogue, national and regional capacity-building, cooperation in research and innovation, increased mobility opportunities for students, researchers and academics.

It is in this context that the [Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Research and Innovation 2012](#) will take place in Barcelona on 2 and 3 April. This high-level conference is being organised by the European Commission's [Research and Innovation Directorate General](#) in cooperation with other departments, the European Parliament, EU Member States and the Southern Mediterranean countries. The main objectives are:

- To define the objectives and main elements of a **medium to long term agenda** of Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in Research and Innovation based on the views of leading scientists and senior policy makers as well as the experience gained from ongoing initiatives.
- To promote a process of **coordination between the European Commission, EU Member States and Southern Mediterranean policies and programmes** with the aim of enhancing the scientific capacities of the Southern Mediterranean countries, increasing the impact and coherence of initiatives in the region as well as underlining the values of mutual respect, reciprocity and partnership.

Research and Innovation – a key axis of cooperation

As part of the [Barcelona Process](#) launched in 1995 as the framework for relations between the EU and its Mediterranean partners, a [Monitoring Committee \(MoCo\)](#) for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation was created in 1995 to monitor and promote cooperation in research, technology and

development. This cooperation was given new impetus at the Paris summit in 2008, at which the [Union for the Mediterranean](#) (UfM) was launched. It was decided to focus relations on six main axes, one of which is [higher education and research](#).

In terms of bilateral relations, the current EU policy dialogue with the Mediterranean countries is framed within the [European Neighbourhood Policy](#) (ENP), which was established in 2004 with the objective of strengthening relations with southern and eastern neighbours. The ENP was reviewed in 2011 to adapt it to the changes in the southern Mediterranean region. In May 2011, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission published a [joint communication](#) presenting a new approach to strengthen the partnership between the EU and the neighbourhood countries.

In this communication, the Commission says: *“The EU will propose to neighbouring partners to work towards the development of a **Common Knowledge and Innovation Space**. This would pull together several existing strands of cooperation: policy dialogue, national and regional capacity building, co-operation in research and innovation, and increased mobility opportunities for students, researchers and academics. In parallel co-operation in the area of **higher education** will be expanded through increased support for **student and academic staff mobility** within university partnerships (under Erasmus Mundus) and structured cooperation for university modernisation (through Tempus).”*

In 2008, the European Commission issued a Communication entitled '[A Strategic European Framework for International S&T \(Science and Technology\) Cooperation](#)', which identifies general principles and specific orientations for action:

- to strengthen the international dimension of the [European Research Area](#) (ERA);
- to improve the framework conditions for international S&T cooperation;
- to promote European technologies in the world.

In that context, the EU has concluded bilateral [S&T \(scientific and technological\) cooperation agreements](#) with Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, which focus on strengthening policy dialogues between the EU and those countries and promoting science, technology and innovation (STI) cooperation.

In addition to the bilateral policy dialogues with individual partner countries, the [Monitoring Committee \(MoCo\)](#) plays a key role as a regional policy dialogue platform, bringing together senior officials from European and Mediterranean ministries for scientific research, stimulating Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in **research and innovation** and helping to help open up the European Research Area to Mediterranean partner countries.

The EU's 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7) and the European Research Area

Research Framework Programmes are the main instrument at EU level aimed specifically at supporting research and development. They have two major strategic objectives: strengthening

Europe's scientific and technological base and supporting its international competitiveness and EU policies, through research cooperation among Member States and with international partners.

The broad objectives of the [Seventh Framework Programme - FP7](#) have been grouped into four categories: **Cooperation, Ideas, People** and **Capacities**. For each type of objective, there is a specific programme corresponding to the main areas of EU research policy. All specific programmes work together to promote and encourage the creation of European poles of (scientific) excellence.

FP7 is a key pillar of the European Union's aim of building a [European Research Area](#) to improve the lives of Europeans by making Europe a place where scientific research, technological development and innovation thrive and address the major challenges of our times.

Among the Mediterranean Partner Countries, Israel in 2007 signed a [Science and Technology Association Agreement](#) giving it the same rights and obligations as Member States: the payment of a quota to FP7 gives Israeli researchers, universities and companies full access to the Seventh Framework Programme.

All neighbourhood countries can take part in the four FP7 specific programmes ([FP7-Cooperation](#), [FP7-People](#), [FP7-Ideas](#) and [FP7-Capacities](#)), all opened to international cooperation on the basis of competition criteria.

At the end of 2011, more than €40 million had been deployed in direct support of 370 participations by 162 organisations from the southern Mediterranean in 168 FP7 projects, covering research, mobility, research infrastructure, networking, and competence building in research and research management.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

European Research Area-WIDE programme

One of the specific actions of research cooperation with European neighbourhood countries is the [ERA-WIDE](#) programme funded under the [International Cooperation Activities](#) of the FP7 [Capacities](#) programme. Thirty projects under the €15 million call (€6m for Eastern partner countries and €9m for Mediterranean partner countries), entitled '[Reinforcing Cooperation with Europe's neighbours in the context of the ERA](#)', were contracted in 2011, while 15 projects had already been contracted in 2011 under a first pilot €9 million call (€3m for Eastern partner countries and €6m for Mediterranean partner countries).

The objective of the [ERA-WIDE projects](#) is to reinforce the cooperation capacities of research centres in ENP countries not associated to FP7 in areas that are FP7 thematic priorities.

Actions include twinning and networking with research centres in EU Member States in view of exchanging knowledge and disseminating scientific information, identifying partners and setting

up joint experiments, and developing strategies for research centres in order to increase their scope, and enhance their responses to the socio-economic needs of their countries.

Projects range from an action on fisheries and aquaculture in Egypt, aiming to develop the sustainable management of fisheries through exchange of expertise with EU counterparts, to an initiative that aims to stimulate collaboration between Tunisian and EU researchers in the field of non-communicable diseases.

The Mediterranean Innovation and Science & Research Coordination Action (MIRA)

The [Mediterranean Innovation and Research Action](#) (MIRA) is a [coordination action](#) also financed under the [International Cooperation Activities](#) of the FP7 [Capacities](#) programme. It aims at developing a scientific and technological partnership between the EU and its Mediterranean partners, by the use of dialogue platforms, identifying topics of common scientific interest, promoting the creation of an observatory of scientific cooperation across the shores of the Mediterranean, and promoting the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Innovation Space and other joint initiatives with a research component, such as the [Horizon 2020](#) Programme of depollution of the Mediterranean.

MIRA's activities include holding workshops on FP7 opportunities and creating capacities via training activities led by experts.

Horizon 2020 – depollution of the Mediterranean

The overall aim of the [Horizon 2020 Initiative](#) is to de-pollute the Mediterranean by the year 2020 by tackling the sources of pollution that account for around 80% of the overall pollution of the Mediterranean sea: **municipal waste, urban waste water and industrial pollution.**

Euro-Mediterranean governments aim to tackle the main sources of Mediterranean pollution by focussing on the four following main areas, one of which is to use the Commission's research budget **to develop and share knowledge about environmental issues relevant to the Mediterranean.**

The initiative has three components, one of which is dedicated to [Review, Monitoring and Research](#) (RMR). Under the RMR component, the European Commission funds the [European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument- Shared Environmental Information System \(ENPI-SEIS\)](#), which aims to promote SEIS principles in the European Neighbourhood regions, through the development of national and regional environmental information systems in line with the EU approach.

EUMEDRegNet

The EU is providing €3.79 million (2011-2013) to the 'Regional Programme to support the development of the Information Society in the Mediterranean Region' (EUMEDRegNet), which aims to support and further improve cooperation between Europe and its Mediterranean

neighbours on Information Society. The programme builds on the achievements of the two ongoing regional projects in the field, [EUMEDCONNECT](#) and [NATP](#), and aims to ensure long-term sustainability of the research e-networking infrastructure between the shores of the Mediterranean, in order to maximise synergies between research and education projects.

EUMEDCONNECT has enabled the creation of an electronic network connecting scientists across the shores of the Mediterranean, allowing Moroccan nuclear scientists to collaborate with their European colleagues on particle acceleration or Tunisian hospitals to treat epilepsy patients with the online help of doctors in France. See ENPI Info Centre feature stories: [A computer network for the scientific community](#) and [A research and education network to tackle the oldest affliction](#).

EMUNI

The Euro-Mediterranean University ([EMUNI University](#)) based in Slovenia is one of the six priority areas of the [Union for the Mediterranean](#), established as international network of universities (179 members from 38 countries). The mission of the University includes approving the quality of higher education through the implementation of postgraduate study and research programmes with a special focus on cultural diversity.

BILATERAL COOPERATION

FP7 Bilateral Cooperation Partnerships

Also funded under the FP7 Capacities category are bilateral [Science and Technology \(S&T\) Cooperation Partnerships](#). Their aim is to strengthen the cooperation partnership between the EU and countries that have an S&T cooperation agreement (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia).

The activities covered are as follows:

- developing national information platforms;
- awareness, dissemination and training activities in the targeted third countries;
- assistance in forming research partnerships.

One example of a project funded in this category is the [European-Tunisian Cooperation project](#), whose overall objective is to foster and boost the involvement of the Tunisian research centres into the European Research Area by building a network, consisting of Tunisian research centres, Universities and SMEs.

ENPI projects

Projects in the field of research are also developed under national Action Plans funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

In Tunisia for example, a €12 million project aims [to support Tunisia's Research and Innovation System](#), providing solutions to key problems along the innovation chain, from business to research unit level, while in Jordan a €5 million project in [Support to Research, Technological Development and Innovation in Jordan](#), aims to increase the capacity of the Research & Technological Development and Innovation sectors in order to foster economic growth and employment.

Twinning

Bilateral research projects can also be funded under the EU's [Twinning](#) mechanism, which sends experts from EU national administrations to partner countries. One example of a twinning arrangement in the field of research involves France, Spain and Morocco, and aims to help create the conditions for the [integration of Morocco's National Research System into the European Research Area](#) by bringing applied research, development and technology legislative, institutional, organisational and methodological standards closer into line.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCH BODIES AND INDIVIDUALS

FP7

Applications are possible from research entities from non EU Member States. [Associated countries](#) (only Israel from among the Mediterranean partner countries) can fully participate and obtain funding in FP7 under the same conditions as EU countries. **Research entities from partner countries not associated to FP7 can participate in all calls, provided that there are also partners from at least 3 different EU Member States and/or Associated countries.**

There are also specific networking opportunities under **FP7-People**, where one of the activities funded is the 'International dimension', which aims among others to attract research talent from outside Europe and to foster mutually beneficial research collaboration with research actors from outside Europe.

In particular, the [Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme](#) under the People Programme aims at strengthening and creating collaborations between European and non-European research organizations, supporting the creation of research collaborations among institutions located in Europe and the ones in third countries having a Science and Technology agreement with the EU and countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Tempus

The Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies ([Tempus](#)) supports the effort of the Partner Countries to modernize their higher education systems and creates opportunities for cooperation among higher education actors of the EU and the participating countries through

joint projects. It also enhances understanding between cultures as it promotes a people-to-people approach and promotes convergence with EU developments in higher education leading to more jobs and growth.

Only higher education institutions and other organisations/associations active in the field of higher education in the EU and Partner Countries surrounding the EU can apply for a Tempus grant. Individuals cannot apply themselves directly to the Programme for funding, while proposals with an exclusive focus on research are ineligible. However, research institutes can be partner in Tempus projects provided that they contribute actively to the objectives of the projects. Enterprise development is not covered by this programme.

Erasmus Mundus

[Erasmus Mundus](#) is a cooperation and mobility scheme funding partnerships between EU and Third Countries in the field of higher education, through grants, that is complementary to other EU-funded higher education initiatives. Its target groups comprise students and academic staff from the EU and the Third Countries' nationals, with particular attention to those in vulnerable situation (e.g. refugees, asylum seekers).

The programme is open to both institutions and individuals. Higher education institutions can set up consortia to design joint masters and doctoral programmes. Possibilities exist also for other education-related institutions to set up projects to enhance the attractiveness of EU higher education worldwide. Students, doctoral and post-doctoral candidates, teachers, researchers and university staff may participate in the programme to obtain a degree or credit mobility thanks to the scholarships/fellowships offered by Erasmus Mundus. The programme is open to all countries worldwide.

Cross-Border Cooperation

[Cross Border Cooperation](#) (CBC) is a key priority in the EU's relations with the neighbourhood, aiming to reinforce cooperation between Member States and partner countries along the external borders of the European Union, around four key objectives: economic and social development; common challenges; efficient and secure borders; and people-to-people cooperation.

While there are no grants for individual researchers or students, research organisations or universities in the eligible cross-border areas are eligible to take part in partnerships applying for projects under the defined priorities.

A guide to funding opportunities

The European Commission's new edition of its [Practical Guide to EU Funding Opportunities for Research and Innovation](#) includes comprehensive information about European Union research and innovation funding opportunities available to the 16 European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia).

The guide contains a number of pages of particular interest to ENPI countries, among which sections on **FP7** eligibility, the Lifelong learning programme and international cooperation programmes in the field of education (**Tempus** and **Erasmus Mundus**), and ENPI **Cross-Border Cooperation** (including a checklist that provides information about who and what types of activities are eligible for EU research funding).

Useful links

ENPI Info Centre webpage – [education and training](#)

ENPI Info Centre features – [education and training](#) and [information society](#)

Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Research and Innovation 2012

http://ec.europa.eu/research/conferences/2012/euro-mediterranean/index_en.cfm?pg=home

European Union: Research and international cooperation

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm>

FP7 website – http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

European Commission 'Practical Guide to EU Funding Opportunities for Research and Innovation': ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/practical-guide-rev3_en.pdf

FP7 Research and Innovation Participant Portal:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/page/fp7_calls

FP7 eligible countries

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/who_en.html#countries

European Research Area and international cooperation:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/areas/cooperation/international_cooperation_en.htm

FP7: International cooperation activities - ERA-WIDE

http://www.etcproject.eu/download/Presentation_ERA_WIDE.pdf

ERA-WIDE – Reinforcing cooperation with Europe's neighbours in the context of the ERA

Extract of the call <http://www.etcproject.eu/download/ERA-wide.doc.pdf>

[Activities of International Cooperation Calls: FP7-INCO-2011-6](#)

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.CapacitiesDetailsCallPage&call_id=354

MIRA (Mediterranean Innovation and Science & Research Coordination Action):

<http://www.miraproject.eu/>

The Monitoring Committee for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in RTD (MoCo)

<http://www.miraproject.eu/moco-area>

A Strategic European Framework for International Science and Technology Cooperation
Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European
Parliament http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/com_2008_588_en.pdf

International S&T cooperation (INCO) agreements:
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm?lg=en&pg=countries>

Horizon 2020 <http://www.h2020.net/en.html>

Cross-border cooperation (CBC) / ENPI Programmes
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/regional-cooperation/enpi-cross-border/programmes/index_en.htm

European Investment Bank Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership
(FEMIP) <http://www.eib.org/projects/regions/med/index.htm>