

1.3. Southern Neighbourhood Countries

1.3.1. *The Southern Neighbourhood Countries⁸ as partners of the EU*

The EU response to the changes in the Arab world was articulated in 2011 when the EU offered its Mediterranean partners 'A Partnership for democracy and shared prosperity' in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The partnership focuses on three elements: democratic transformation, a partnership with people and civil society, and sustainable and inclusive growth. With regard especially to the last of the above elements, the EU has launched a number of initiatives with its Southern neighbours in the sphere of research, technological development and innovation.

Research and innovation play a crucial role in ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth and science diplomacy is a key tool within the region to address pressing societal challenges that are common across the Mediterranean. As a result, the EU's regional policy in research and innovation cooperation focusses on identifying joint cooperation priorities in order to align, integrate and step up efforts in science as a means to address large-scale and long term challenges.

Important developments have recently been recorded in the region, such as the association of Tunisia to the Horizon 2020 programme. Tunisian research institutes, universities and individual researchers will now have access to all opportunities offered by Horizon 2020. Tunisian SMEs and businesses will also be able to benefit from increased support to develop new ideas and bring products and services to the market.

These achievements also result from effective synergies between EU Research and Neighbourhood policies and instruments in addressing the region's needs in terms of strengthening local scientific and technological capacities and contributing to the emergence of an innovation-friendly environment. These links are crucial to enable the region to be in a position to fully benefit from its cooperation in research and innovation with the EU; they should be pursued and enhanced further in the future.

1.3.2. *Priorities for S&T cooperation*

A comprehensive approach is envisaged in the area of migration that could encompass broadly related drivers for long-term migratory trends including climate change and sustainable development, but also other areas such as relief and aid-related actions, crisis and disaster management and societal reintegration of displaced populations.

In this context, the link between water provision and food security is a challenge of primary concern to EU-Southern Neighbourhood cooperation, exacerbated by climate change. As a result, water resources and food systems are the cornerstone of the PRIMA⁹ proposal. With this initiative from the Participating States, the EU and the Southern

⁸ Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia.

⁹ The "Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area" (PRIMA) is a proposal for the participation of the Union in a joint research and innovation programme, through Article 185 TFEU, submitted by nine EU Member States on 22 December 2014, following adoption of Conclusions by the Council on 5 December 2014. The proposal focuses on the development and application of innovative solutions for food systems and water resources in the Mediterranean basin.

Mediterranean are expected to take steps to align and integrate joint research and innovation priorities by seeking more structured cooperation. The Commission proposal for the participation of the Union in the proposal for a joint programme under Article 185 TFEU to be supported by Horizon 2020, with a view to establishing EU-Mediterranean cooperation at a sufficient scale is in its final stage. In parallel, the process is advancing for the conclusion of international agreements with third countries not associated to Horizon 2020 to allow for their participation in PRIMA. Meanwhile, a dedicated coordinated and support action is foreseen in 2016 in support of the work towards a jointly designed Strategic Research Agenda with appropriate governance and implementation structures.

Marine environment and resources efforts will be directed to research and innovation actions addressing the observation and mapping of the Mediterranean basin. Coordination and support actions in backing the BLUEMED initiative as well as demonstration projects aimed at developing and scaling innovative processes and measures for coast and sea clean-up will be deployed.

In the area of violent radicalism and religious fundamentalism, Horizon 2020 will support research and innovation actions that seek to enhance the knowledge base about scope, origins and root causes of radicalisation. The influence of sustained inequalities and discrimination will also be addressed with a view to supporting policy development in these areas and favouring de-radicalisation.

In the area of security research, the Commission is promoting reinforced cooperation with the Mediterranean region in the context of the Horizon 2020 Secure Societies Work Programme (WP) 2016-2017. With the aim to enable a joint network concept for border protection and other security and disaster-related tasks, entities shall share information, collaborate better, and establish joint border surveillance scenarios.

The EU will support staff exchanges amongst SESAME, the Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East. It will also upkeep the European Light Source Infrastructures through a dedicated coordination and support action that will be launched at the end of 2016.

Transport cooperation currently focusses on the area of port and hinterland connectivity amongst other infrastructure-related themes. Planned research and innovation actions will address the design, engineering, construction and operational technologies solutions in the design of ports and wider ports. Support actions focusing on the identification of key performance indicators, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms linked to port infrastructures will also be launched.

As an input to the EU's commitment in implementing the Paris Agreement as a follow-up to COP21, the EU and the Southern Mediterranean have also agreed to pursue cooperation in the area of renewable energies, possibly in solar energy as well as in wind power and Mediterranean-specific biomass as a means to meet significant forecast increases in energy demands in the region while transitioning to low-carbon energy and improving energy security and efficiency.

In the area of health, potential areas for cooperation include rare and infectious diseases, and non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancer and obesity. A number of multi-lateral initiatives including the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness (GloPID-R) and the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) may provide the right setting for cooperation with Southern Mediterranean countries. Egypt has expressed interest in GACD and other countries from the Southern Mediterranean may follow.

In the area of seismology, the need to improve knowledge on data, methods, and seismic hazard assessments, in order to better quantify the uncertainties in the region, has been identified.

1.3.3. Framework conditions

Framework conditions are mostly relevant to bilateral aspects of cooperation with Southern Mediterranean countries rather than at regional level. Issues such as the protection of intellectual property rights, competition rules or the liberalisation of public procurement are addressed in bilateral association agreements that the EU has established with Southern Mediterranean countries.

While mutual access to research and innovation programmes may still need some improvement, progress has been made in opening national research programmes in Southern Mediterranean countries to European researchers. For example in Morocco, a 2013 call for scientific projects funded by the National Support Fund for Scientific Research and Technological Development was open to non-Moroccan researchers and attracted applications involving 153 foreign institutions from a total of 396 proposals.