



Council of the
European Union

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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: Council

To: Delegations

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Subject: Council conclusions on a Partnership for Research and Innovation in the
Mediterranean Area

Delegations will find attached the Council Conclusions on a Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area as adopted by the Council ("Competitiveness") at its meeting on 5 December 2014.

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON A PARTNERSHIP FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

- The two joint Communications of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean"¹ and on "A new response to a changing Neighbourhood"², respectively of 8 and 25 May 2011, which acknowledged the shared interest in a democratic, stable, prosperous and peaceful Southern Mediterranean, and offered EU support to southern Mediterranean partners through a "Partnership for democracy and shared prosperity" aiming at supporting progress towards deep democracy, as well as sustainable economic and social development;
- That the process towards improved cooperation for Research and Innovation in the Euro-Mediterranean Area has consisted of several political and operational steps, including the creation of the Monitoring Committee for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in 1995 to monitor and promote cooperation in Research, Technology and Development; the European Neighbourhood Policy established in 2004 and then renewed in 2011; the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008; and several EU funded projects and ERANETs, to support the coordination of national research programmes between EU and Mediterranean Partner Countries;

¹ Doc. COM(2011) 200 final

² Doc. COM(2011) 303 final

- The Communication from the European Commission of 6 October 2010 on "Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union"³ which considered ‘The European Union and its Member States should treat scientific cooperation with third countries as an issue of common concern and develop common approaches. This should contribute to global approaches and solutions to societal challenges and to the establishment of a level-playing field’ (commitment 31).
- The "Euro-Mediterranean conference on Research and Innovation" organised by the European Commission in Barcelona in April 2012, calling for a renewed partnership in Research and Innovation that should be based on the principles of co-ownership, mutual interest and shared benefit;
- The Communication from the European Commission of 14 September 2012, "Enhancing and focusing EU international cooperation in research and innovation: a strategic approach"⁴, which establishes a focus on fostering integration into – or alignment with – the European Research Area for the Neighbourhood, thus contributing to the development of a "Common Knowledge and Innovation Space" inter alia postulates that cooperation will be in close coordination with the instruments of neighbourhood policy.
- Its Conclusions of 30 May 2013 on "Enhancing and focusing EU international cooperation in research and innovation: a strategic approach"⁵, recognising that the added value for the Union can be found not only in cooperating with the industrialised countries and emerging economies, but equally so in deepening the cooperation with the enlargement and neighbourhood countries and the developing countries, on the basis of mutual benefit;
- The Communication from the European Commission of 10 June 2014 on "Research and innovation as sources of renewed growth"⁶, in which Research and Innovation are identified as resources for supporting growth and creating jobs and where Member States are invited to focus their efforts on a limited number of key priorities;

³ Doc. 14035/10

⁴ Doc. 14000/12

⁵ Doc. 10318/13

⁶ Doc. 10897/14

1. UNDERLINES that the partnership with our neighbours is mutually beneficial, since stability, prosperity and a sustainable economic development and job creation in partner countries of the Southern Mediterranean benefit the EU as well;
2. RECALLS that as a follow-up to the conclusions of the "Euro-Mediterranean conference on Research and Innovation" held in Barcelona in 2012, the Commission launched "a specific ERA-NET/ERA-NET PLUS action, with the aim of contributing to the preparation of a long-lasting and sustainable coordination mechanism between the EU, its Members States and the Mediterranean countries, such as an Article 185 initiative for the Mediterranean";
3. TAKES NOTE that there was broad support for further strengthening the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in research and innovation during the Cyprus Presidency of the Council, and that several Member States favoured making use of Article 185 TFEU as the most appropriate legal basis to handle a long term strategic cooperation in the Mediterranean Area ;
4. WELCOMES the transparency, the contribution and the open dialogue with the Mediterranean Partner Countries of the initiative "Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area" (PRIMA), which began in 2013 to pave the way towards an initiative pursuant to Article 185 TFEU aimed at improving the cooperation in research and innovation in the Mediterranean Area and creating a stable long-term and sustainable framework on the basis of mutual benefit, equal footing partnerships, co-ownership, co-decision, and co-financing, as well as excellence and added value.

5. REAFFIRMS the broad political support for a long-term structured cooperation in research and innovation in the Euro-Mediterranean Area, as expressed at the Council meeting on 26 May 2014. RECALLS the discussions held during the informal debates organized respectively by the Hellenic and Italian Presidencies on 13 May and 26 September 2014. In this regard, TAKES NOTE that such cooperation aims at the establishment of a public-public partnership programme compliant with Article 185 TFEU.
6. ACKNOWLEDGES that PRIMA, if based on Article 185 TFEU, has the potential to give research and innovation a bridging role between participating countries, to significantly enhance the EU scientific diplomacy with its Southern Neighbors in the long-term, while providing concrete solutions to common challenges facing EU Member States and Mediterranean Partner Countries; and RECALLS that this partnership aims at committing, on a voluntary basis, policy, science, industry and civil society in a long-term structured path to provide a sound framework for free circulation of knowledge and to increase cross-border cooperation. CALLS for a coherent approach towards the complementarity between this type of initiatives and multi-lateral and bilateral activities in the field of research and innovation amongst partnering countries.
7. NOTES that Horizon 2020 aims at achieving a greater impact on research and innovation by contributing to the strengthening of public-public partnerships, where actions at regional, national or international level are jointly implemented within the Union, including through Union participation in programmes undertaken by several Member States in accordance with article 185 TFEU. NOTES that initiatives established under Horizon 2020 have to be in line with the principle of excellence.

8. ACKNOWLEDGES that a Joint Programme proposal, prepared by several EU Members States and Mediterranean Partner Countries, will be presented to the Commission in due time with a view of the participation of the Union in an initiative on the basis of Article 185 TFEU.
9. WELCOMES the analysis conducted by the PRIMA Participating States of both the main common challenges that the Area is facing and the gaps of knowledge and innovation. NOTES that, on the basis of this analysis and of the principles of common interest and mutual benefit, the PRIMA Participating States:
- a) identified, as priority challenge, the need to ensure a sustainable capacity of the Mediterranean Area to produce and provide adequate quantity and quality of safe food and water upon which the populations inhabiting the Area depend on for their health and well being and for their socio-cultural benefits and economic growth;
 - b) identified as the goal of the Joint Programme proposal, the development and the adoption of innovative and integrated solutions for improving the efficiency, safety, security and sustainability of food production and water provision;
 - c) defined a scientific programme based on two specific objectives, namely:
 - i) to enhance knowledge and unlock its innovation potential for food security and water availability through end user-friendly solutions in a context of ecological, demographic and climatic change,
 - ii) to advance existing knowledge and innovations for water and food quality and safety.

These specific objectives will be pursued through operational objectives.

10. WELCOMES the encouraging indicative financial commitments already expressed by a number of Participating States, both EU Member States and Mediterranean Partner Countries in response to the request of the Italian Minister for Education, University and Research. RECALLS that the financial commitments from the PRIMA Participating States have been expressed subject to the use of Article 185 TFEU.
11. NOTES that PRIMA, if based on Article 185 TFEU, could play an important role in reducing existing fragmentation and duplication between national and European programmes in the Mediterranean Area, by achieving a critical mass, thus providing a significant added value for the Union and contributing to the advancement of ERA key priority areas.
12. UNDERLINES that the PRIMA Participating States are of the view that: the dimension of the challenge, the size and importance of the partnership, the planned initiatives, and the wide political commitment, are all elements arguing in favor of an initiative pursuant to Article 185 TFEU, as the most relevant and appropriate instrument to promote stable and long-term financial, management and scientific integration, to be launched by the first half of 2017.
13. Therefore, INVITES the Commission, in full respect of its right of initiative, to assess as soon as possible whether a participation of the Union in the PRIMA Joint Programme on the basis of Article 185 TFEU is justified by the scope of the objectives pursued and the scale of the resources required.
