



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**RECH 184
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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	<i>Preparation of the Council ("Competitiveness") of 26 May 2014</i> - Euro-Mediterranean Science and Technology and Innovation renewed partnership - Policy debate

I. POLICY CONTEXT

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership has been a long-standing process. In line with the European Council Conclusions in Lisbon in 1992, the Union initiated the Barcelona process aiming at establishing an area of peace, stability and prosperity, supporting dialogue among cultures of the region. This process was further strengthened in Paris in 2008, with the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean, and in 2011 when the Union neighbourhood countries were acknowledged as key partners.

Since the outset of this process, cooperation in research and innovation has been considered of significant importance.

In 1995, the Monitoring Committee for a Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation (MoCo) in Research, Technology and Innovation was established.

In 2012, the Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Research and Innovation in Barcelona confirmed the political support to a strengthened and renewed Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in R&I and was the basis for ERA-NET actions contributing to the preparation of such long-lasting and sustainable coordination mechanism between the EU, its Member States and the Mediterranean countries such as an Article 185 TFEU initiative for the Mediterranean.

In July 2012, the informal Competitiveness Council held in Nicosia reasserted the broad political support from Member States for a renewed and reinforced partnership in research and innovation with the Mediterranean area that would cover the whole chain from research to innovation, mobilising universities, public and private institutions, industry, research- and innovation-driven enterprises and SMEs. Moreover, Ministers considered an Article 185 TFEU initiative as a concrete basis for strengthening R&I cooperation on key societal challenges of mutual interest to the countries of the Mediterranean rim, such as to water and food quality, energy, health, transport and the marine environment.

II. TOWARDS A STRUCTURED PARTNERSHIP IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

As an immediate follow-up to the aforementioned informal Competitiveness Council in 2012, a group of Member States joined by Mediterranean Partnering Countries (MPC's) launched an initiative (PRIMA)¹ aiming at establishing a long-term structured partnership in research and innovation in the Mediterranean area in line with the principles of co-ownership, mutual interest and shared benefits and building on the multiple bilateral and multilateral research and innovation activities in the region.

The Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in research and innovation was the focus of the informal Competitiveness Council held in Athens on 13 May 2014.

¹ The PRIMA initiative stands for “Partnership in Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area”.

The meeting demonstrated that the technical work developed by PRIMA is mature enough, which can allow proceeding with the preparation of a dedicated programme. In the last two years, the PRIMA initiative has worked intensively with a balanced leadership and participation of EU Member States² and MPCs³ with a view to preparing the building blocks of a programme for the Mediterranean adding evidence-based value to and federating the results of existing initiatives. A core group met frequently in order to supervise the process and plan the way forward. Five working groups analysed key aspects of such a programme, such as: thematic research fields, mapping of existing initiatives including bilateral and multilateral actions, financial aspects, legal issues and the implementation roadmap.

The meeting also marked strong and wide political support for a long-term structured cooperation in research and innovation in the Mediterranean area on equal footing, that is, in line with the principles of co-ownership, mutual interest and shared benefits, building on the multiple bilateral and multilateral research and innovation activities in the region. Such a cooperation, which is of strategic importance for the Union as a whole, should continue along the path undertaken by PRIMA preliminary work, taking stock of existing ERA-Net and JPIs actions underpinned by the establishment of a large-scale public-public partnership programme on the basis of Article 185 TFEU funded by and abiding to the principles of Horizon 2020. Such a programme should have an integrated thematic approach focused on food systems and water resources within an integrated and flexible approach to tackle the evolving Mediterranean challenges such as those linked to energy, environment, transport and health.

There was also support regarding the immediate next steps. It was argued that time is ripe for Member States to consolidate all findings and to prepare a comprehensive proposal for a dedicated programme in 2014. The incoming Italian Presidency indicated its strong political will to organise these next steps. It is expected that this could be promptly complemented by a Commission proposal on the basis of Article 185 TFEU following the ex-ante impact assessment procedure and in accordance with the aforementioned characteristics.

² Listed in alphabetical order the EU countries, involved so far, are: Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain.

³ Listed in alphabetical order the Mediterranean partner countries, involved so far, are: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey.

III. POLICY DEBATE

In the light of the overall context described above, the Presidency would like to invite Member States to focus their interventions on the steps bellow, and indicate whether they could support this approach:

1. The Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in Research and Innovation significantly contributes to peace and prosperity in the region. Therefore, it should be consolidated through a long-term structured public-public partnership programme on the basis of Article 185 TFEU and funded by Horizon 2020 in line with its principles. Moreover, it should have an integrated thematic approach and be focused on food systems and water resources and on their interplay with Horizon 2020 societal challenges, notably energy, environment, transport and health.
2. The programme should be established in line with the principles of co-ownership, mutual interest and shared benefits of both Union Member States and Mediterranean Partner Countries, building on the multiple bilateral and multilateral research and innovation activities in the region. It should, therefore, be open to the financial participation of any Union Member State, Mediterranean partner country and country associated to Horizon 2020.
3. Given the advanced level of maturity of the PRIMA initiative, the latter should be the basis for the prompt establishment of such a programme starting with a proposal by Member States and the Mediterranean partner countries in the coming months, on which basis, by December 2014, the Council could invite the Commission to assess the participation of the Union to this programme on the basis of an Article 185 TFEU.