



Union pour la Méditerranée
Union for the Mediterranean
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1.2. HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH: IMPROVING YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY AND STUDENT MOBILITY

Overall strategic objective

The UfM Secretariat is committed to deepen cooperation and integration in research and innovation (R&I) among UfM countries and to consolidating the role of the UfM as a regional platform, facilitator and driving force of cooperation between Higher Education Institutions, whose contribution to counteracting radicalization, promoting a Euro-Mediterranean identity for new generations of students and equipping them with the skills needed in the region is central and needs to be further supported. The activities of the UfM Secretariat in the area of higher education and research aim to contribute to the global development agenda, and in particular to the Sustainable Development Goal 4: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*

To that effect, the UfM Secretariat has prioritised the following areas of work:

- Regional policy dialogue,
- University cooperation,
- Vocational training,
- Research integration,
- Higher education regional centers.

2017 specific objectives

- Increasing the contribution of the UfM Secretariat to existing regional dialogue fora on higher education and on research and innovation;
- Building a new regional strategy on university cooperation and youth mobility;
- Fostering regional initiatives and projects in the field of vocational training;
- Consolidating regional centres for Euro-Mediterranean Education and Higher Education, in particular the newly established Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes;
- Facilitating Scientific Research integration across the Mediterranean.

i. PROMOTING REGIONAL DIALOGUE

The UfM Secretariat will strive to play an active role in enhancing synergies, complementarities and good articulation between the different existing regional and sub-regional policy dialogue fora, platforms and networks in order to improve overall coherence, avoid overlapping of efforts and resources, and increase impact for the youth.

➤ Conference on Strengthening Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation Through Research and Innovation (Malta, 3-4 May 2017)

The UfM Secretariat will be closely associated to the preparation of the Conference on Strengthening Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation through Research and Innovation, scheduled



for 3-4 May 2017, under the auspices of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The second day of this Conference will bring together Research Ministers of the UfM countries. The UfM Secretariat will participate in the meetings of the Euro-Mediterranean Group of Senior Officials on Research and Innovation (EU-Med GSO) where the UfM Secretariat foresees in particular to share the outcomes related to Research and Innovation of UfM sectoral dialogue fora and platforms.

➤ **Policy dialogue on higher education with Southern Mediterranean countries**

Building on its active participation in the policy dialogue of the EU on higher education with Southern Mediterranean countries, the UfM Secretariat will work towards increasing synergies with the European Commission in this field and endeavour to provide concrete contribution to follow-up this dialogue. The UfM Secretariat will also actively contribute to the preparation process of the 4th policy dialogue foreseen in 2018.

Participation in the 6th annual high-level meeting of the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training organized by the European Commission with relevant countries at Ministerial level could also be foreseen in 2017.

➤ **Sectoral Dialogue 5+5**

The UfM Secretariat will further contribute to the preparation of the *5+5 Ministerial Conference on Higher Education, Research and Innovation (HERI)* hosted by Tunisia on 30-31 March 2017 through active participation to the meetings of the Group of Senior Officials. The UfM Secretariat will closely follow-up on the implementation of the Action Plan to be adopted at that occasion with the objective to foster interactions with its actions in this sector.

ii. **PROMOTING REGIONAL PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES**

Building on its active participation to these regional dialogue processes, as well as on continuously strengthened interactions with relevant partners and stakeholders, the UfM Secretariat will work towards implementing its labelled projects as presented below and advancing its pipeline of projects in the fields of higher education and research, academic mobility and vocational training.

1.2.1. Building a UfM regional strategy on university cooperation and mobility

The UfM Secretariat will establish a regional dialogue among UfM countries on university cooperation and academic mobility issues. One meeting is foreseen in 2017 gathering representatives from UfM countries, the European Union, as well as relevant stakeholders. The objectives are to build a common vision on university cooperation and mobility of students and young researchers within the Euro-Mediterranean region, make recommendations, identify



common priorities, facilitate mutual consolidation of data and knowledge at regional level, enhance exchange of best practices and nurture reflection on future mobility schemes and programmes for 2017 and beyond.

This dialogue process will be supported and developed through a study with two objectives:

- 1) provide a consolidated state of play of existing mobility schemes and university cooperation specifically targeting the region, focusing on North-South and South-South flows;
- 2) propose a UfM regional strategy to enhance university cooperation and students and young researchers' mobility in the Mediterranean and recommend concrete actions.

This process will be developed in close linkage with the participation of the UfM Secretariat in the 2017 meetings of the Advisory Group on European Higher Education Area International cooperation, co-chaired by France, Spain and the United Kingdom.

a. Monitoring of labelled projects/initiatives

➤ High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executives Recruitment (HOMERe)

HOMERe aims at improving the skills and employability of Mediterranean high-profile young graduates through setting-up an innovative international internship programme between 9 Mediterranean countries. The UfM Secretariat will support the promoter in increasing the number of beneficiaries and impact as well as in fundraising. Two years after the official launching of the project, the UfM Secretariat will also make an assessment of the results and outcomes of the project in view of formulating recommendations for a possible second phase.

b. Other initiatives and horizontal activities: enhancing University cooperation in the Mediterranean

➤ Euro-Mediterranean community of active stakeholders in the fields of Higher Education and Research

In collaboration with voluntary partner university networks (i.e. UNIMED, EMUNI, AARU, EUA, UNICA, Téthys, etc.), the UfM Secretariat will gather, on a regularly basis, active stakeholders in the fields of Higher Education and Research with the aim to shaping a Euro-Mediterranean community that will provide a sustainable forum for discussion, consultation, and initiation of new projects and activities related to a wide variety of topics of common interests (i.e. e-learning, employability, University-Industry connection, Euro-Mediterranean curricula, etc.).

➤ Partnership with UNIMED

The UfM Secretariat will take the advantage of the renewal of its MoU with UNIMED at the beginning of 2017 to strengthen its cooperation with this network, in particular through exploiting all possible synergies with their ongoing Euro-Mediterranean projects (notably with the Réseau Méditerranéen pour l'Employabilité – RESUME funded by Erasmus+).



➤ **Arab-Euro Conference on Higher Education (AECHE)**

In continuity with its active involvement in previous editions and participation to the steering committee, the UfM Secretariat will contribute to the 4th Arab-Euro Conference on Higher Education (Morocco, April 2017), whose focus will be on Research and Innovation issues. An UfM side event could potentially be planned back to back as one of the sessions of the UfM Higher Education and Research community.

➤ **Mediterranean network of maritime training academies**

The UfM Secretariat will follow-up with DG MARE efforts towards creating a Mediterranean network of maritime training academies under the UfM Blue Economy framework (see page 51).

➤ **Connection of Universities and Research Institutes with Euro-Mediterranean partners**

Following the participation of the UfM Secretariat in the meeting of the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities held in Palma (Spain) in May 2016, it will pursue efforts to connect Spanish Universities and Research Institutes with Euro-Mediterranean partners. In this regard, connections carried out with renowned Mediterranean centres (such as the Campus Mare Nostrum of the University of Murcia) and distinguished Business Schools (such as ESADE, IESE or IE) will be further developed. This successful experience will be further expanded to the region.

➤ **Euro-Mediterranean University Institute (EMUI)**

The UfM Secretariat will also explore opportunities for collaboration with the Euro-Mediterranean University Institute (EMUI), Interuniversity Platform for Research and Teaching, located in Lecce (Italy).

1.2.2. Fostering regional initiatives and projects in the field of vocational training

a. Monitoring of labelled projects/initiatives

➤ **Mediterranean Nouvelle Chance (MedNC)**

The project Mediterranean Nouvelle Chance (MedNC) aims to promote a regional network of accredited centres sharing experiences and best practices in order to boost the employability of young people who have dropped out of school and of unemployed graduates. It currently covers 6 UfM countries: Algeria, Egypt, France, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia.

In 2017, the UfM Secretariat will organize the 6th steering committee of the project, to be held back to back with a meeting of the Spanish partners. The 7th Steering Committee will most probably take place in a Southern Mediterranean country by the end of the year. Building on the work carried out in 2016, a Mediterranean New Chance accreditation, recognized at the



regional scope, will be implemented in the local centres partners of the network with the objective of ensuring the protection of the MedNC brand, assuring the quality of the project and guaranteeing wide visibility. The UfM Secretariat will also further promote the project and will perform an evaluation.

b. Other initiatives, horizontal activities and institutional partnerships

The UfM Secretariat will further collaborate with the Government of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg in the preparation of a multi-partner initiative in vocational training in the Maghreb countries. The initiative aims, under the UfM institutional framework, to develop the supply and increase the attractiveness of vocational education and training by supporting the establishment of regional cooperation networks bringing together selected VET providers and economic actors from both EU-countries as well as Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

Efforts in 2017 will build on the progress made at the steering committee held in July 2016 and follow-up on the reference to the initiative made by Ministers in the *UfM Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour* (Dead Sea, September 2016). A pilot phase could start in three economic sectors jointly identified by the three Maghreb countries for their strong job creation potential: renewable energy, digital economy and paramedical. Once the process is sufficiently advanced a presentation will be made at the SOM for approval.

1.2.3. Consolidating regional centres for Euro-Mediterranean Education and Higher Education

a. Monitoring of labelled projects/initiatives

➤ Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes

The development of the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes (UEMF) will be a high priority for the UfM Secretariat in 2017. In particular, the UfM Secretariat will closely follow the implementation of the ongoing Bachelor and Master programmes and the programmes offered in the framework of the engineering school INSA Euro-Méditerranée. Likewise, the UfM Secretariat will accompany the development and assist in the promotion of the new courses to start in the 2017 (for more information, visit <http://ufmsecretariat.org/the-euro-mediterranean-university-of-fez/>).

The UfM Secretariat will facilitate contacts with relevant stakeholders, Higher Education Institutions and Research centres from across the Euro-Mediterranean region to establish double and joint degrees and develop internship schemes and mobility opportunities. A particular emphasis will be put on enhancing collaboration with renown institutions with a regional scope such as the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies linked to the University of Malta, the College of Europe and the EMUNI University with which the UEMF has already a signed Memorandum of Understanding.



The UfM Secretariat will pursue its efforts towards governments to ensure that the diversity of nationalities is well reflected in the UEMF student body. It is foreseen to follow up with the promotor the contacts with relevant financial institutions, including the possible blending of EIB and EC (Neighbourhood Investment Facility) financing.

➤ **EMUNI University**

The EMUNI University is an international network of 125 universities from 33 different countries with a mission to strengthen mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue among Euro-Mediterranean countries by implementing postgraduate study and research programmes.

As member of the EMUNI Management Board, the UfM Secretariat will support EMUNI inter alia in:

- contributing to secure the participation of Southern Mediterranean students in the Master programme in Intercultural Business Communication;
- creating synergies between the EMUNI beneficiaries and other UfM activities, in particular in the field of youth employability;
- contributing to the organisation of the EMUNI Annual Conference and hosting the meeting of the EMUNI governing bodies;
- cooperating on a foreseen publication on the effects of migration, diaspora and brain circulation for intercultural and interreligious dialogue;
- promoting the second edition of the EMUNI Summer School in Euro-Med Studies.

➤ **Eastern Mediterranean International School (EMIS)**

EMIS is a new international boarding school located in Israel, which offers youth aged 16-18 a two-year innovative programme preparing them for the International Baccalaureate Diploma.

Following labelling in 2016, the UfM Secretariat will:

- contribute to enlarging student participation from interested UfM countries,
- assist the promoter in approaching donors for scholarships,
- intermediate with leading universities of the Mediterranean region in view of creating high-level prospects for the students after the EMIS graduation,
- contribute to the preparation of the annual EMIS regional youth conference on peace, sustainability and entrepreneurship (YOCOPAS Conference).

1.2.4. Facilitating Scientific Research integration across the Mediterranean

a. Monitoring of labelled projects/initiatives

➤ **Higher Education on Food Security & Rural Development**

For the third consecutive year, new UfM-CIHEAM scholarships were allocated in 2016 to Southern and Eastern Mediterranean female students participating in Master programmes in



agriculture developed by the 4 CIHEAM institutes. The UfM Secretariat will support CIHEAM in other activities, most notably in improving education and research courses with special emphasis on consolidating the CIHEAM Doctoral Platform, launched in July 2016. The objective of such a platform is to foster communication, dialogue and publication among different partners. In 2017, the UfM Secretariat and the CIHEAM will co-organize a meeting about youth employability in food security and rural development, which would gather relevant stakeholders and experts as well as CIHEAM alumni.

b. Other initiatives, horizontal activities and institutional partnerships

➤ Partnership in Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area

PRIMA (Partnership in Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area) is a long-term integrated research programme under development on sustainable food systems and water resources. The legislative process of a possible co-funding of the programme by the EU is foreseen to be concluded in 2017 which, if favourable, would pave the way for the launching of the first calls for proposals in 2018. Identified as a major partner, the UfM Secretariat will closely support PRIMA participating countries, in particular with regards to the establishment of the Dedicated Implementation Structure of the programme, and further pursue guaranteeing the promotion of synergies with the UfM mandate in the related fields, in application of the decision of Member States.

➤ Cooperation with Academies of Sciences

The “Groupe Interacadémique pour le Développement (GID)” is a network of about 30 Academies of Sciences and other prestigious scientific institutions from across the Euro-Mediterranean region which contributes to bridging the gap between scientific output and decision-making. In the framework of the MoU signed with the GID, the UfM Secretariat will cooperate with the GID for the preparation of their annual Conference (Genoa, March 2017) which will promote dialogue between the scientific community, private sector, government and civil society on “Articulating the growth of port infrastructures with sustainable urban development”.

The UfM Secretariat also envisages participating in the 8th World Science Forum, to be hosted in 2017 by Jordan and organized by the Royal Scientific Society, the UNESCO and the International Council for Science. Hosted in the Southern Mediterranean region for the first time, the theme of the WSF will be “Science for peace”.

➤ The Governance Institutes Forum for Training in the Middle East and North Africa (GIFT-MENA)

The UfM Secretariat will further explore cooperation with the GIFT-MENA network, a consortium of Institutes acting as a platform for the training of government civil servants in the MENA region, whose secretariat (Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan) is based in Lebanon.