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# Mediterranean Governance Policy Brief



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## TOWARDS AN EURO-MEDITERRANEAN AREA OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the Cairo declaration, Euromed partners affirmed their commitment to the objective of creating a Euro-Mediterranean area of higher education and research and clearly defined the guidelines for future cooperation among Euro-Mediterranean partners in this area. They also stated that the cooperation in the field of higher education should go hand by hand with research and innovation, technology transfer and information society. This will constitute a reinforcing element to competitiveness and job creation in order to overcome the challenges of globalisation. In this sense, all stakeholders (international organisations, such as the EU, national and regional Governments, local authorities, civil society, private business and universities) should have an active participation and involvement in the process. Nevertheless, it should clearly be stated that European countries have been reforming their higher education and research systems more rapidly than the south-Mediterranean countries given the agenda designed to deal with the Bologna process.

During the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Cairo on 18th June 2007, Ministers underlined the importance of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in supporting development and modernisation processes in higher education, especially through the TEMPUS Programme, as well as fostering research, technology, development and innovation in cooperation with Mediterranean Partner Countries, in particular through the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. They also welcomed the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window and the prospects offered by the Euromed scholarship scheme for university students and higher education staff from partner countries, as endorsed by the Euro-Mediterranean Summit in 2005. All this in addition to the existing funding opportunities offered by both European Union Member States and Mediterranean Partners.

Obviously, there should be cooperation in the field of higher education, research and innovation since they can increase competitiveness in business, help create new job possibilities and prepare countries and regions to meet the challenges of globalisation. In this context, the importance of knowledge as a key element needs to be underlined. Supported by the achievements of the information society, knowledge is the basis for faster development – nationally, regionally and worldwide. In order to take a more active role in strengthening partnership and dialogue, Slovenia launched a specific initiative to establish a Euro-Mediterranean University in Piran. The formal inauguration of the Euro-Mediterranean University took place in Slovenia in June 2008. The main reason for establishing an international institution of this kind was the need to draw inspiration from the cultural, religious and human inheritance of the Euro-Mediterranean area.



Generally speaking, the government's new role in Higher Education may be termed "facilitative" as it attempts to create a viable service provision environment in which it controls the outcomes at a systems level without detailed interference. But here again, new steering devices have been introduced for which output funding and multi - year agreements with the (individual) higher education institutions provide illustrative examples. In effect, governments are not withdrawing from responsibility for higher education systems but are in search for new means of system oversight and performance - based steering of organizations.

Concerning transnational and transregional cooperation, there are few indications that this is emerging on a large scale. In the last years, the consolidation of several Euroregions fostered cross-border and trans-regional cooperation in Europe. Among the different Euroregions, there are several initiatives focusing on Higher Education and Research.

The question one may ask after this review of governance reform and change in the higher education systems of the participating regions/countries is whether it is possible to find a link between governance reform and the overall performance of the systems taking into account the construction of the future Euro-Mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research. The few policy - initiatives taken since 1995 are in general not perceived as being very effective and the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area is far from being closed. As a matter of fact, it is in its initial phase.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

### The Euromed area

At the **first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Cairo on 18th June 2007**, Ministers underlined the importance of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in supporting development and modernisation processes in higher education, especially through the TEMPUS Programme, as well as fostering research, technology, development and innovation in cooperation with Mediterranean Partner Countries, in particular through the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. They also welcomed the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window and the prospects offered by the Euromed scholarship scheme for university students and higher education staff from partner countries, as endorsed by the Euro-Mediterranean Summit in the year 2005. All this should add to the existing funding opportunities offered by both European Union Member States and Mediterranean Partners.

**The Monitoring Committee for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in RTD (MoCo)** is a forum bringing together Senior Official representatives from the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPC) and the EU Member States and Associated Countries, responsible for RTD issues. It has been established in the context of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and of the follow-up of the Barcelona Process, and plays a central role in monitoring and stimulating the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in RTD. Since the Cairo Declaration, it was complemented with the creation of an expert group so as to cover Higher Education. Currently, the functioning of the MoCo is supported by the 'Mediterranean Innovation and Research Coordination Action – MIRA (<http://www.miraproject.eu/>). MIRA is an INCONET type project funded by the 7th EU Framework Programme for RTD, dedicated to the EU – MPC bi-regional policy dialogue and priority setting in S&T. In turn, MoCo acts as Steering Committee of MIRA Project.



## THE EU SITUATION

The **Bologna Process** aimed to establish a European 'Higher Education Area' by 2010 and the process rapidly achieved a dynamic towards a broader focus: first on reforming study programmes, but then quality assurance, accreditation and degree recognition came into the picture. It should also be emphasized that the **Bologna Declaration and Lisbon Agenda have not been the only influences changing European higher education institutions**. In many (West European) countries a series of reforms already were underway in the 1980s and many current reform initiatives have their origin in this time period.

Though **European university landscape is primarily organized at the national and regional levels** and is characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity that is reflected in its organization, governance and operating conditions, **a growing influence of the European Commission on national higher education policy is observed**: a possible explanation is that higher education policy is currently becoming more intertwined with, and partly dependent on, developments in other policy areas where the European Commission plays a more formal role. The **role the European Commission plays** in the area of research and innovation means that it is also a significant contributor to the emergent European dimension in higher education. Responsibilities that were formerly those of the **state** have thus not only been transferred to higher education institutions but also to other organizations such as research councils, accreditation bodies etc. New actors at the national level (e.g. ministries of economic affairs) and regional level are entering the higher education scene, especially given their interest in the emerging knowledge society and technology transfer. In this respect the state's role becomes one of a network manager and new regimes of governance emerge: we now see a more multi-actor, multi-level governance framework emerging in a number of countries.

Further, **external stakeholders (industry and business)** are gaining influence in national higher education policy. Traditionally, their position has been weak but increasingly efforts are being made to involve them in governmental policy networks and decision-making processes as well as in consultation on institutional profiles and strategies. The role of **Regional Authorities** is progressively increasing as we can see from the experiences of the three countries participating in the Medgov Project.

## THE FUTURE

In June 2005, Universitat Rovira i Virgili de Tarragona (Catalonia) hosted the II Mediterranean University Forum under the auspices of the European Commission, through its Jean Monnet programme and this Forum could gather 60 Euro-Mediterranean universities whose efforts during the meetings gave birth to the Tarragona Declaration. This document recommends the governments, universities and members of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to establish a network in order to export the experience of the Bologna's Process to the EuroMed area. In November 2006 the procedures to register the EPUF in the Brussels registry of associations started EPUF is organised by Working Groups, each one focusing on a particular topic within the broader theme of Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area. These groups are:

- 1 *The Cairo Process*
- 2 *Quality: Harmonization and Assurance*
- 3 *Efficiency and Capacity Building*
- 4 *Participation and Knowledge Society: Development and Promotion*
- 5 *Innovative Methodology and Technology*
- 6 *Mobility*



**Promote and support a common regional research strategy at the Mediterranean scale**

On the base of the Institut de la Méditerranée (IM) researches and interviews for this questionnaire, and IM previous experiences, three possible common actions to build a Mediterranean Lisbon Strategy have been identified:

In this proposal, we suggest that the Regions identify a list of research sectors that are, according to them, particularly relevant for the Mediterranean context. Some specific topics, such as water management, renewable energies, environment, maritime resources, etc can already be imagined. Regions will organise common calls for proposal. Each Region will take in charge the process for its territory (promotion of the initiative, communication, and identification of stakeholders). The territorial stakeholders of each territory will elaborate, in association with their counterparts in other Regions, a common proposal to reply to the call.

**Creation of a common regional forum on competitiveness and SME**

The financing will be, after approval, given by each region to its own territory stakeholders; We propose to create a forum gathering the Regions and promote intensive experiences exchanges and analysis on innovation and SME (long term approach). Such a forum could be very operational, gathering all regional agencies that play a role in innovation and technologies transfer for SME. It could be even possible to create a network of opportunities for the Mediterranean stakeholders and SMEs: a SME in one region could benefit from the support provided by an agency present in another region (information about local stakeholders and research centres, support to create a subsidiary company on the other regional territory, etc.);

**Creation of a common structure on European fund management and use**

It can be possible to create a common structure (network), conceived as a common think-tank and know-how data-base about European funds (structural funds, framework program, and all relevant programs to fulfil the objectives of the Lisbon strategy). This structure could gather regional innovation stakeholders, and keep up with European programs as well as stakeholders' needs, so as to identify the most relevant European programs.

The target has of course to be SMEs and innovation process.

### THE THREE COUNTRIES OF THE MEDGOVERNANCE PROJECT PARTNER

**France**

***In France the national policy framework for research and innovation have evolved over time*** from a centralised system to a more decentralised one, with the creation of a new national innovation framework, oriented towards competitiveness and a knowledge based economy, with strong incentives for innovation and technologies transfer, innovative SMEs development, research results commercialisation, but also through important reforms of the public research and academic sector. It is a system where each level can play a role, according to its material compulsory competences and its willingness. Regulation is made through a contractual process, especially through the "state-region contract", which sets for 5 years the joined State and region policy and financing for the regional territory. This process includes in principle the provincial and municipal levels, but relationships between these levels remain complex.

**Considering the Regional policy framework, we can say that the French State is represented in every region by its regional services trough ministries acting towards innovation have regional services.** The State also implements "structuring projects" of research in the PACA Region, like the Cancéropole, Genopole and ITER. The Regional Council made two strategic plans that take into account innovation: one about economic development ("Schéma Régional de Développement Economique"), the other about research and higher education ("Schéma Régional pour l'Enseignement Supérieur et la Recherche"). The regional and local actors of the regional innovation system are very



numerous in the PACA Region and the Region is working on the creation of a regional innovation network to articulate and create synergies between the 230 regional organisations. **Five technological centres** provide assistance, services and support for the SMEs development, they associated themselves for the Solaris Project, to build a coherent network that gathers technology transfer organisations. **Two Innovation and Technology Transfer Regional Centres (CRITT)**, respectively specialised in “food processing and research” and “chemistry, plastic and material”. **Six Technology platforms** to facilitate the SMEs access to new technologies. **Three incubators** benefit of the Research Ministry label: the inter-university Incubator Impulse in Marseille, the PACA Est. Incubator (Nice and Toulon), and the Multimedia Incubator in la Belle de Mai (Marseille). The regional science parks are Agroparc in Avignon (food research and processing), Mediterranean Europole in L’Arbois (environment), Château Gombert (engineering sciences) in Marseille, the Technologic and Science Park of Luminy (biology and life sciences), Sophia Antipolis (NICT, multimedia and biotechnologies) and the project of Toulon Var Technologies (marine sciences and technologies). In addition, the Region has other “pépinières d’entreprises”.

The Mediterranean zone is becoming a concrete reality and not only a political priority, since the Region became Managing Authority of the Med program. The regional executive always recalls on the importance of the Mediterranean, and strongly disagrees with the notion of “neighbourhood” in the Mediterranean space, considering the Mediterranean as a whole. Accordingly, all regional directions and services received a strong incentive to implement projects and actions in the Mediterranean context.

## Italy

The **governance of innovation policies is particularly complex in the national policy framework of Italy** as it touches different bodies and ministries at different administrative levels (national and regional level). The design and implementation of innovation and research policies is largely performed at national government level, where the main national strategic priorities are identified in coherence with the broader framework of Community guidelines and orientations. Universities are the heart and the pivotal point of the Italian research system: they are the main reference point of research. Universities enjoy a great autonomy in setting their own research goals and fields especially for what concerns basic research, even though over the past few years a portion of public funds for has been earmarked for *focused or mission oriented* basic research, covering strategic research fields. From the **point of view of Regions** we must consider that new power has been granted to the regions in the field of scientific research and technological innovation policy formulation since 2001 constitutional reform. The Italian national state has sole competence for activities in the field of basic research and so national science and technology policy decisions play a strongly shaping role on evolving regional innovation system. The national government also has an interest in innovation policy through the valorisation and exploitation of these investments in knowledge capital.

The **Latium Region** adopted in 2008 a new comprehensive legislation on research and innovation for the “Promotion of Research and Development, Innovation and Technology Transfer”. This is an effort to re-organise and unify previous legislation on the subject by creating a “regional research area”. The main political body within **the Lazio Region** in charge of designing and coordinating research and innovation policies is the Research, Innovation and Competitiveness Unit within the Directorate general for Economic development, research, innovation and tourism. It represents the regional institutional reference point for regional organisations with responsibilities in this field, such as: i) FILAS, Financial Regional Development Agency, ii) Sviluppo Lazio, iii) the Business Innovation Centre Latium (BIC LAZIO), iiiii) the Regional Agency for Development and Innovation in



agricultural sector ARSIAL. It should be added that other Regional Directorates contribute to the development of innovation and research policies, according to their specific competences. In the Lazio region there are many types and forms of international academic cooperation in creating research networks between Euro-mediterranean universities (e.g. the Community of Mediterranean Universities, the Master Course in Euro Mediterranean Studies organised by Uninettuno or the Master Course for Architecture graduates from Maghreb and Mashrek countries organised by University La Sapienza).

In Lazio as regards research cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area, the document drafted by MIUR in preparation of the National Reference Strategic Framework 2007-2013 acknowledges the central role played by the internationalisation of the research system. The Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs bear the main responsibility for fostering international cooperation programmes and promoting knowledge exchange. Additional information on bilateral agreements in place between Italian universities and research centres of the Euro-Med areas can also be found on the interactive platform managed and hosted by CRUI, the national representative organisation of Italian Universities.

The Region of **Piedmont** is attempting to drive through change at a number of different levels of activity. The way the Regional Law 04/2006 is drafted suggests that there is a good legal foundation of transparency and consistency which should help produce the most effective innovation outcomes for the region. The Piedmont Region participates in transnational projects in the framework of Regional Law 4/2006 about innovation and research and also under the Regional Operational Program. One could mention the National Maritime Technology Platform (PTNM), the PTMB - Technology Platform for Maritime and Marine Research, Innovation and Training in the Mediterranean and Black Seas (proposal submitted under the ENPI CBC MED), the Intelligent Mobile Platform, or Infomobilità. Within the European Regional Development Funds (POR FESR 2007-2013, Priority 1 - Innovation and Production Transition, Regional competitiveness and employment), the Piedmont Region has developed a specific measure for creating a number of innovation clusters (poles of innovation). The Piedmont's regional government has been involved in the MANUNET project, funded under the 6th Framework Programme and possibly extended in the 7th. MANUNET is an ERA-NET action in which national/regional governments develop a cooperation framework to launch joint calls.

## Spain

**Spanish higher education is regulated by an abundant collection** of constitutional rules, organic laws and royal decrees. In addition, the governments of autonomous communities can issue complementary legislation within the framework of their own legal powers. The coordination of the university system is performed by two bodies, the General Conference on University Policy and the Council of Universities. Governance of the university system is decentralised. The Minister of Education together with the General Conference on University Policy, establish the national level regulatory framework with general laws and Royal decrees. This role is complemented with additional legislation established by the governments of autonomous communities. The Ministry's role regarding the finance of universities is limited, for it is the autonomous communities that hold this responsibility with the exception of the national system of student scholarships and part of the investment in research and development.

**Higher education in Spain has strong regional characteristics** and sometimes even major differences between Autonomous Communities to an extent that it is often considered that Spain has 17 higher education systems. In Spain, the regionalisation of universities has been a very fast and far-reaching process. All 17 Autonomous Communities have



their own universities traditionally to cover the needs of the region. In Spain, in spite of the strong state regulation, regions have an important amount of autonomy in designing their higher education systems. The central government holds responsibility of overall coordination of the higher education system, the European and international representation under a unique voice of the Spanish higher education system and the coordination and control of social policies (scholarships and grants), while the rest is under regional regulation, including funding mechanisms and a large part of the quality processes. This has conditioned the performance of the different regions, with some performing at a higher level than others, among these the Catalan higher education system. Each region has the ability to decide in which areas of public policy it wants to prioritise. In Catalonia higher education and research have become a regional priority in recent years. A number of important initiatives have differentiated the Catalan higher education system from other regions in Spain.

In **Catalonia**, there have been some specific policy initiatives that have stimulated the regional role of universities and at the same time have provided a space for collaboration between universities, the industry sector, the government and the civil society. Among these initiatives two can be mentioned as examples. The first one is the Pacte Nacional per la Recerca i la Innovació (Catalan Agreement for Research and Innovation, CARI). The second policy initiative is the White Paper of the University of Catalonia that includes a strong regional dimension in its vision for the Catalan higher education system and calls upon different stakeholders to accomplish its objectives for the benefit of Catalonia. There is also a differentiation between teaching and research activities, the first more oriented to students of the region and the second more oriented towards achieving excellence and national and international recognition. Catalan universities are playing an increasing role in “third mission” activities in the field of knowledge transfer and relationships with firms. All public universities and the URL, a private one, have a Technological Transfer Office so-called Oficina de Transferencia de Resultados de la Investigación (OTRI). The industry financing of university R&D expenditures is above the OECD average and the R&D contracts between universities and firms have increased. Furthermore, the number of spin-offs and of university patent applications have also increased being the Polytechnic University of Catalonia the first university in Spain in the number of patent applications. In Catalonia, Higher Education is a key element in different regional agreements and strategic plans and there are different regional and local initiatives where the role of the universities is considered fundamental for the development of the region. Among the current agreements and plans, the most important at a regional level are “The Strategic Agreement to Promote the Internationalisation of the Catalan Economy, the Strengthening of its Competitiveness and the Quality of Employment 2008-2011” and “The Catalan Agreement on Research and Innovation” (2009) and, at a local level, “The Strategic Metropolitan Plan of Barcelona” and “The Strategic Plan of the Camp of Tarragona.”

## CONCLUSIONS

The question one may ask is if it is possible the construction of the future Euro-Mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research. The few policy-initiatives taken since 1995 are in general not perceived as being very effective.

This is perhaps the main reason why we currently are seeing various forms of contractual steering arrangements as the preferred way forward for many governments. This implies that the notion of institutional autonomy is increasingly followed by a stronger emphasis on the division of responsibilities and roles between national authorities and higher education institutions. It also implies that hierarchical governance arrangements are being replaced by arrangements more characterised by negotiation and the ‘individualisation’ of policy initiatives taken. This may sometimes result in decentralisation, but an outcome can also



be, as shown in our study, that the state reclaims responsibility in areas considered to be of national or strategic importance. In terms of system coordination we see a growing recognition that governance relationships are not only becoming more complex and dynamic but are also involving more actors from different levels. With respect to governmental instruments and reforms affecting how contractual relationships are designed and used, one could argue that the emphasis on contractual steering arrangements has triggered an interest in the standardisation and integration of available governmental steering instruments. This integration and standardisation provides national governments with benchmarks and more room to manoeuvre when entering negotiations with individual institutions about performance goals and other output measures, but such instruments may also have effects on performance as they open up the possibility of institutional (and introspective) comparisons on a range of issues.

### POLICY RECOMENDATIONS

- 1 – Reinforce the funding for Higher Education and R&D;
- 2 – Reinforce the networking (on regional, national, trasnational basis) of different stakeholders;
- 3 – Have in mind a strong strategic vision of the opportunities of developing a strong Euro Mediterranean Area for R&d;
- 4 – Use Cross Border Cooperation Programmes and other European funds to promote a regional dimension of R&D.

### THI POLICY BRIEF

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### RESOURCES

For bibliographical resources, please refer to **European Institute of the Mediterranean** [http://www.medgov.net/sites/default/files/Medgov\\_innovation\\_report4.pdf](http://www.medgov.net/sites/default/files/Medgov_innovation_report4.pdf)

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