



Union for the Mediterranean
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Unione delle Università del Mediterraneo
Mediterranean Universities Union
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The Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Mediterranean: current and prospective trends

Public presentation of the UfM Report
22 June 2021, 10.30– 13.00 CET

Context

The internationalisation of higher education systems goes far beyond academic mobility, as it entails integrating an intercultural and global dimension in the teaching methods and governance. Internationalisation is not a goal by itself, but a process aimed at enhancing the quality and standards of education and research, and at making a valuable contribution to society at large.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) launched a regional dialogue process on the internationalisation of higher education in the Euro-Mediterranean area with the aim of building a common vision of the future of universities. This dialogue contributes to shared knowledge and understanding on internationalisation trends and policies in the region as well as on current mobility flows and available funding schemes. It intends to facilitate continuous peer learning among the UfM countries on policies and practices addressing common challenges and priorities, fostering joint projects and initiatives.

The last regional dialogue meeting took place in Cairo, Egypt, in December 2019, and stressed the need to consolidate comprehensive data on the internationalisation of higher education across the UfM region. It also underlined that in the context of a world-wide trend towards a new generation of universities, a change of scale in the support mechanisms and an ambitious higher education initiative embracing the whole UfM region is necessary, a new impulse that should capitalize on the existing regional networks and collaborations and ensure a transformative impact on the higher education systems and institutions.

The state of play

In an intent to address regional needs and pave the way for a change of scale in the support mechanisms, the UfM launched a study, conducted by UNIMED, the Mediterranean Universities Union, aimed at being an effective tool for policymakers and other stakeholders. Its findings and analysis represent a novelty to understand the importance of the internationalisation of higher education in the Euro-Mediterranean area. The study, while adopting a comprehensive approach regarding internationalisation, presents an overview of the current regional situation in terms of higher education cooperation, mapping key features and patterns specific to the region.

Furthermore, a series of recommendations emerge from the study, both at national and regional level. They were formulated taking in consideration the most relevant existing best practices and initiatives that can be replicated and upscaled in the region. They point out proposals regarding information-sharing mechanisms, the improvement of present regional initiatives and programmes, synergies and complementarities between existing mobility schemes and programmes, and appropriate capacity-development mechanisms for Higher Education Institutions.

A roadmap for change

The study's recommendations are directed towards international organizations, governments, universities, and the civil society, demonstrating that only a joint effort shall guarantee the strengthening of this international dimension of education. They intend to provide stimulus for further joint discussion concerning



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tangible initiatives and projects, generating operational solutions to the obstacles identified in the analysis of the current situation, opening up a roadmap for change.

The study states, for instance, the importance of the Erasmus+ programme, particularly regarding international credit mobility and institutional capacity building. Through the support of the European programme and the existing networks of Mediterranean Higher Education Institutions, the foundations for a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area are being laid. The 2007 Cairo Declaration already aspired towards the creation of such an area. Almost 15 years have passed since then, and the moment has arrived to rethink the new needs and aims of higher education in the Mediterranean, establishing a new policy agenda for the region.

As the Secretary General of the UfM, Nasser Kamel, mentions in his foreword, it seems appropriate to reflect on the opportunity for organising soon a UfM Ministerial meeting on Higher Education and Research. The present event is aimed at introducing the results of the study and at kicking off the preparation of a renewed policy agenda for the region. Representatives of relevant actors participating in this joint effort will give feedback about the report based on their experience and vision of what has been accomplished until now and the needs for future action: the co-presidency of the UfM, ministries of education, higher education institutions and networks, as well as other pertinent stakeholders.



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AGENDA

10.30 Opening remarks

- **Mr. Nasser Kamel**, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)
- **Mr. Marcello Scalisi**, Director of the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED)

10.45 Presentation of the report

- **Mr. Marco Di Donato, Ms. Anne-Laurence Pastorini, Ms. Martina Zipoli**, Research Unit of the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED)

11.10 Session 1

Towards a renewed Strategic Agenda for Higher Education in the Mediterranean

Moderator: Prof. Wail Benjelloun, UNIMED Honorary President

- **Mr. Filip Van Depoele**, Head of Unit International Cooperation, Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission, UfM Co-presidency
- **Mr. Mahmoud Abu-Hussein**, Head of International Cooperation, Higher Council for Science and Technology, Jordanian UfM Co-presidency
- Representative of the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (tbc)
- Representative of the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (tbc)

12.00 Session 2

Capitalizing on the existing regional networks and collaborations

Moderator: Mr. João Lobo, Project Analyst, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

- **Mr. Markus González Beilfuss**, Vice-Rector for Internationalisation Policy, University of Barcelona
- **Ms. Naouel Abdellatif Mami**, Vice-Rector for External Relations, Université Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Sétif 2
- **Mr. Giorgio Marinoni**, Manager of Higher Education Internationalisation Policy and Projects, International Association of Universities (IAU)
- **Ms. Olfa Zéribi**, Director for Western Europe, Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)
- **Ms. Carla Edde**, Vice-Rector for International Relations, Saint Joseph University of Beirut

12.55 Closing remarks

- **Ms. Itaf Ben Abdallah**, Senior Advisor on Higher Education and Research, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)