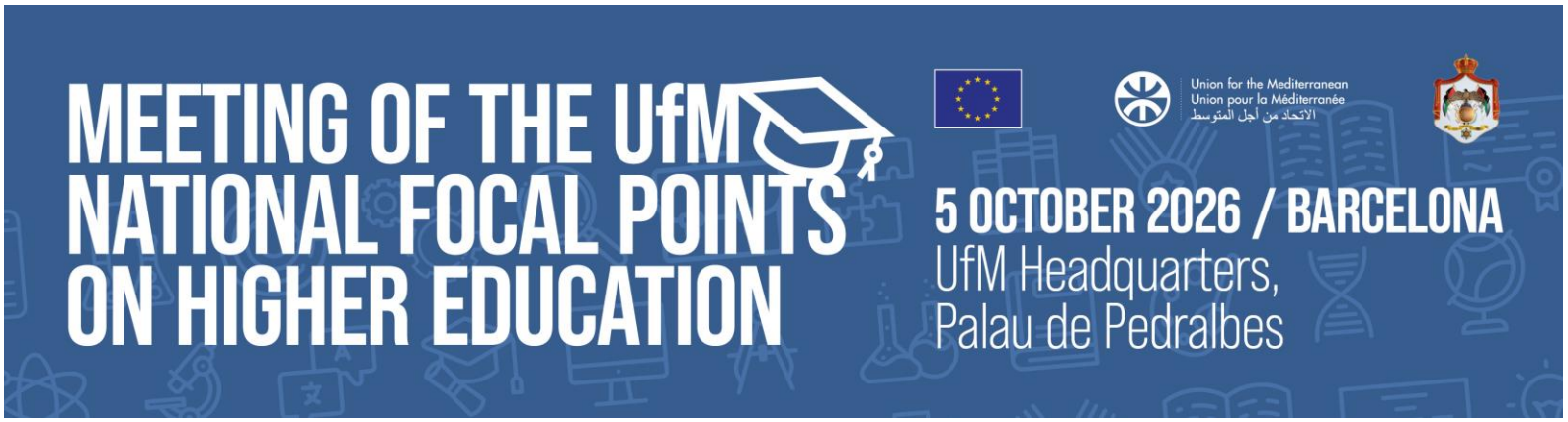
Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط

UfM HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH WEEK

5 – 7 OCTOBER 2026 / BARCELONA

UfM Headquarters, Palau de Pedralbes

AGENDA



Music Room (for Members States and Observers on invitation only)

13.30 Registration & Welcome Coffee

14.00 **Welcome Address** by the UfM Secretariat
Petra Kežman, Deputy Secretary General for Human Development

Opening Remarks by the UfM Co-Presidencies
- *Mohammad Albatayneh, Deputy Ambassador of Jordan to Spain*
- *Tine Delva, Deputy Head of Unit International Cooperation, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission*

Co-chaired by the Jordanian Co-Presidency: Mohammad Albatayneh, Deputy Ambassador of Jordan to Spain:

14.15 **The 2026 UNESCO Report**
Transforming higher education: global collaboration on visioning and action
Presentation by Noah Sobe, UNESCO Chief of Section for Higher Education
Debate

14.45 **Updates from the UfM Secretariat & Observers:**
Transforming higher education through regional initiatives
- Euromed Initiative for Climate Action (UfM Secretariat & UNIMED)
- Women Leading Change (UfM Secretariat & Téthys)
- From Degrees to Ventures: UfM Employment Forum 2026 (UfM Secretariat & EMUNI)
- Arab-European Integration Initiative for Joint Scientific and Academic Mobility (ALECSO)
- Mediterranean Student Summit (ESN)
- (…)

15.30 **Towards the First UfM Ministerial Meeting on Higher Education: announcement of date and discussion on draft declaration**
Presentation by Petra Kežman, Deputy Secretary General for Human Development, Union for the Mediterranean
Debate

16:30 **Coffee Break** (Throne Room)

Co-chaired by the EU Co-Presidency: Tine Delva, Deputy Head of Unit International Cooperation, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission:

16:45 **The Next Erasmus+ programme** (2028-2034)
Presentation by Tine Delva, Deputy Head of Unit International Cooperation, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission
Debate

17:15 **The Mediterranean University** initiative of the Pact for the Mediterranean
Presentation by Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), Expertise France (EF), and Spanish Foundation for the Internationalisation of Public Administrations (FIAP)

17.45 **Open debate by Member States and invited stakeholders**
Member States and stakeholders are invited to share their recent achievements and challenges, propose actions, and comment on broader regional higher education issues

18.45 **Wrap-up and next steps**

- *Mohammad Albatayneh, Deputy Ambassador of Jordan to Spain*
- *Tine Delva, Deputy Head of Unit International Cooperation, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission*
- *Petra Kežman, Deputy Secretary General for Human Development, Union for the Mediterranean*

19.00 End of the meeting

20.00 Dinner (Santa Clara Restaurant, Carrer Jiménez i Iglesias, 11-13)

Boosting the higher education and research partnerships for peace, prosperity and stability – stakeholders' consultation

Music Room (open to UfM Member States and registered stakeholders)

08.15 **Registration & Welcome Coffee**

09.00 **Opening Remarks**

- *Fadi Hajali, Secretary General ad interim, Union for the Mediterranean*
- *Katerina Wolfova; Head of Unit Egypt, Pact for the Mediterranean; Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA), European Commission*
- *Ra'ed Awdeh, Assistant Secretary General, Scientific and Technological Affairs, Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST), Jordan*
- *Andrea Costafreda, Director General for Development Cooperation, Government of Catalonia, Spain*

09.20 **Plenary Session 1**
Higher education, skills, research and innovation in the Mediterranean
Higher Education and Research as a Force for Development and Dialogue

- *Nienke Buisman, Head of Unit, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission*
- *Jens Lie Stokbro, policy officer international cooperation, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission*
- *Abderrazak Ben Saga, Director of Higher Education and Pedagogic Development, Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, Morocco*
- *Rado Bohinc, President, Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI)*
- *Malek Kochlef, Director General of International Cooperation, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Tunisia*

Moderator: Petra Kežman, Deputy Secretary General for Human Development, Union for the Mediterranean

10.20 **Plenary Session 2**
Higher education and research as drivers of resilience and recovery in crisis-affected areas

- *Noah Sobe, Chief of Section - Higher Education, UNESCO*
- *Mohammad Sanad Abu-Darwish, Director of Science and Scientific Research, ALECSO*
- *Kherieh Rassas, President, UNIMED – Mediterranean Universities Union*

- *Biagio Di Terlizzi, Director, CIHEAM Bari*
- *Moustafa Sayem el Daher, Rector, University of Damascus*

Moderator: Giuseppe Provenzano, Project Manager – Higher Education and Research, Human Development Division, Union for the Mediterranean

11.20 **Coffee Break** (Throne Room)

11.40 **Parallel Session 1: Higher Education** – **The Erasmus+ programme** (Banqueting Room)
Erasmus+ programme: presentation on current achievements and plans for the future
Jens Lie Stokbro, Policy Officer International Cooperation, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission

Perspectives from stakeholders:
- *Marcello Scalisi, Director, UNIMED – Mediterranean Universities Union*
- *Anas Al Soud, Executive Director, Association of Arab Universities - AArU*
- *Simone Lepore, President, Erasmus Student Network - ESN*
- *Latifa Dadaaoui, Head of the National Erasmus Office, Morocco*
- *Nesrine Baklouti, Head of the National Erasmus Office, Tunisia*
- *Zeinab El-Sadr, Head of the National Erasmus Office, Egypt*

Followed by an open discussion
Moderator: João Lobo, Project Analyst – Higher Education and Research, Human Development Division, Union for the Mediterranean

Parallel Session 2: Research and Innovation – **The Mediterranean Science Diplomacy Center** (Music Room)
Opening and introduction: objectives of the session and expected outcomes
Petra Kežman, Deputy Secretary General for Human Development, Union for the Mediterranean

Presentation of the Working Group outcomes and proposed concept:
- *Marilena Rossano (CNR, Italy)*
- *Sherine Khattab, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Egypt.*

Perspectives from regional and international stakeholders:
- *Ahmed Zayed, Director, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Egypt*
- *Izaskun Lacunza, Director, Fundación Española para la Ciencia y la Tecnología (FECYT), Spain*
- *Mounir Ghribi, Director of International Cooperation and Research Promotion, National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics (OGS), Italy*
- *Sanaa Zebakh, Director, Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA)*
- *Martin Gastal, Advisor, SESAME*
- *Nourhan Saleh, International Cooperation Officer, League of Arab States*

Moderated discussion: testing and validating the concept of the Euro-Mediterranean Science Diplomacy Centre and conclusions/next steps.
Moderator: Nienke Buisman, Head of Unit, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission

13.00 **Lunch** (Throne Room)

14.00 **Parallel Session 3: Higher Education** - **The Mediterranean University** (Music Room)

Presentation by
- *Katerina Wolfova, Head of Unit Egypt and Pact for the Mediterranean, Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA), European Commission;*
- *Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI); Expertise France (EF); Spanish Foundation for the Internationalisation of Public Administrations (FIAP)*

Followed by Q&A

Parallel Session 4: Research and Innovation - **Innovation and research centres** (Banqueting Room)

Opening and introduction: objectives of the session and expected outcomes.
Nienke Buisman, Head of Unit, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission

Scene-setting presentations: the Euro-Mediterranean Scalability Strategy and the approach towards Research and Innovation Hubs
Alessandro Calabró Policy Officer, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission

Perspectives from regional and international stakeholders:

- *Krystel Khalil, Research2Business approach and experience in supporting innovation ecosystems (Berytech)*
- *Hamid El-Zoheiry, Co-chair PRIMA*
- *Andy Ramorasata, Director of Partnerships and Development, ANIMA*
- *Camille de Garidel-Thoron, President, Téthys Consortium of Mediterranean Universities*
- *Mario Cervantes, Senior Economist, Science and Technology Policy Division, OECD*
- *Josep M. Piqué, Executive President, La Salle Technova Barcelona*

Moderated multi-stakeholder discussion, including a live scoping exercise to select the pilot thematic area: towards the first Euro-Mediterranean Research and Innovation Hub — identifying opportunities, priorities and possible pilot pathway.
Moderator: Sandrine Borg, Senior Executive (Internationalisation), Xjenza Malta

15.30 **Coffee Break** (Throne Room)

15.45 **Reporting from the parallel sessions**

- *Session 1 (Erasmus+): Anne-Laurence Pastorini, Senior Manager, UNIMED*
- *Session 2 (Med Science Diplomacy Centre): Giuseppe Provenzano, Project Manager – Higher Education and Research, Human Development Division, Union for the Mediterranean*
- *Session 3 (Med University): Rim Filali Meknassi, Head of Euro-Mediterranean Policies Department, European Institute for the Mediterranean (IEMed)*
- *Session 4 (I&R Centres): Heba Gaber, Research and innovation regional officer, European Commission*

15.55 **Closing remarks**

UfM Secretariat – Deputy Secretary General Petra Kežman

16.00

- Visit to PRIMA and the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre (walking-distance guided field trip)
- Mediterranean University Project Coordination meeting (Music Room) – on invitation only
- UNIMED Board of Directors (Banqueting Room) – on invitation only
- EMUNI Knowledge and Innovation Centres Working Meeting (Billiard Room) – on invitation only

18.30 **Cocktail reception**

Music Room (for Members States and Observers on invitation only)

08.30 **Registration**

09.00 **Welcome Address** by the UfM Secretariat
Petra Kežman, Deputy Secretary General for Human Development

09.10 **Introduction and adoption of the agenda by the Co-chairs**
- *Nienke Buisman, Head of Unit, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission*
- *Ra'ed Awdeh, Assistant Secretary General, Scientific and Technological Affairs, Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST), Jordan*

9.30 **Update on implementation plan**
- Updates on implementation plan of the three priorities: health; climate change; renewable energies
- Presentation and adoption of the monitoring, evaluation and learning baseline report - MEL

10.00 **Update on Working Groups – presentation and adoption of final policy papers and action plans outcomes**
- Working Group 1: Mobility of researchers and capacity building and science diplomacy
- Co-chaired by Egypt & Italy
- Working Group 2: Open Data and digitalization - Co-chaired by Jordan & Spain
Discussion on the way forward

10.30 **Regional Scalability Strategy**
- Regional Scalability Strategy – presentation and adoption
- Africa-Mediterranean Innovation Fair – 25 November, Italy

11.00 **Updates from the UfM Secretariat & Observers**
- UfM Research2Business,
- SESAME Symposium "The role of research and technology infrastructure in science diplomacy" - 28 October
Updates from Permanent Observers

11.20 **Coffee break**

11.30 **Towards the 2027 UfM Ministerial Conference on Research and Innovation (drafting session)**
- Policy framework: the Pact for the Mediterranean
- Presentation of the first draft of the Ministerial Declaration
- Collection of input by UfM Platform members
- Timeline next steps

V. 30/09/2026

13.00 **Open debate by Member States**
Member States are invited to share their recent achievements and challenges, propose actions, and comment on broader regional regional issues

13.45 **AOB and Conclusions**

14.00 **Lunch** (Throne Room)

In parallel: UNIMED General Assembly (on invitation only)