

**Response to the Joint Consultation paper
Towards a New European Neighbourhood Policy (JOIN(2105)6)**

Name of the submitting organization	Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI)
Type of respondent	Higher education and research institution
Location of headquarter	Portorož, Slovenia
Contact details	Prof. Dr. Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry, President EMUNI Sončna pot 20 6320 Portorož Slovenia zoheiry@emuni.si

In response to the Public consultation on the European Neighbourhood Policy, EMUNI¹ offers the following inputs from the perspective of an international network of over 150 universities from across the Euro-Mediterranean region:

II. Lessons learned and questions on the Future Direction of ENP

EMUNI believes that shared ownership of the ENP is key to its success. Should EU's partner countries feel more involved in creation of the policy, the success of joint initiatives will also be more likely. This could be done by supporting joint programming of initiatives such as PRIMA (Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area)² at the level of research and innovation policies. In this view, EMUNI as a unique Euro-Mediterranean institution could serve as a scientific focus point for PRIMA initiative, as well as the centre of expertise and platform for learning and training modules, according to the priorities of all the Mediterranean countries and concerned by sharing knowledge and employability.

Migration in the Euro-Mediterranean area is becoming an ever more pressing issue to address. EMUNI believes that causes for irregular migration can be managed also through mobility schemes for students and academic staff, which work towards avoiding brain drain and allowing for brain circulation in the region. Such mobility of students would in the longer term beneficially influence the economic context and support political and social empowerment of the young generation. In this view, emphasis should be put on strengthening the Mediterranean Recognition Information Centres (MERIC). This aims at promoting information exchange and synergies in the Mediterranean Region and with the ENIC/NARIC networks, those being developed in the Arab states as well as other existing relevant networks, and could be an important tool for facilitating such circulation of in the region. In addition, grants for displaced persons from conflict zones in the Euro-Mediterranean region could be set up to avoid a loss of a generation from the most unstable regions. Such a scheme

¹ EMUNI (Euro-Mediterranean University) was set up in 2008 as one of the six priority areas of the Union for the Mediterranean and has since then become an international institution, currently comprising of over 150 partner Universities, which gathers expert knowledge and experience of the Euro-Mediterranean countries and thus contributes to the creation of a unified, integrated Euro-Mediterranean higher education and research area.

² The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) is a proposal by a number of EU Member States and Southern Mediterranean Countries submitted to the European Commission for funding under the provisions of the Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

was suggested by participants of the [EMUNI conference on Science Diplomacy in February 2015](#). Finally, closer cooperation between the Offices for promotion of international education and academic mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean region as well as cooperation between experts for staff training and technical assistance could positively benefit the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education Area.

Prevention of radicalisation and organized crime in the region should be done by utilizing Europe's soft power such as science and culture. Projects aiming at supporting intercultural cooperation and inter-religious dialogue should be supported by incentives for cooperation between the civil society actors to act as vectors of change. For this reason EMUNI established a Centre for Arab, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (AIMES), which has for its aim to foster religious dialogue and respect for cultural diversity, counter prejudice and allow for mutual learning.

III. Towards a Partnership with Clearer Focus and More Tailored Cooperation

4. Ownership and Visibility

EMUNI believes that the Southern dimension of the ENP should include a strong cooperation among the Southern neighbours themselves. A strong South-South cooperation dimension can lead to enhanced stability and security in the region, thereby allowing the EU to benefit from a secure and coordinated neighbourhood. A stable and secure neighbourhood is a prerequisite for an enhanced bi-regional cooperation between the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean. EMUNI believes that the ENP should rely on bi-regional relations rather than bilateral cooperation between the EU and individual countries in the Southern Neighbourhood as such an approach can create unnecessary divisions in the region and is therefore not sustainable.

EMUNI believes that although cooperation in the framework of ENP should strive towards harmonisation of rules and practices, it should not lead to cultural homogenisation, allowing for long and rich historical and cultural traditions in the region to be maintained, mutually respected and understood as parts of national identities. In this respect the EU can serve as example of intercultural cooperation, having joined under its roof nations that have previously been engaging in armed conflicts for centuries.

To give a new impetus to the Southern dimension of the ENP, EMUNI believes that initiatives in the field of research and innovation policies, such as eligibility of institutions from Southern Mediterranean Countries in Horizon 2020 projects, support to the Association of Tunisia and possible other Southern Mediterranean countries to Horizon2020 and to the PRIMA initiative, should be supported.

Finally, in the field of science diplomacy, EMUNI suggests to institutionalise the current practice in some Southern Mediterranean countries of regular meetings among science attachés of EU Member States' embassies in the country, thereby allowing for a coordinated approach in science diplomacy from the side of the EU as well as facilitating relations with the ENP country at hand.