

Annex 3: Action Fiche for the ENPI South Regional Programme

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	EUMEDRegNet II (CRIS number 23028)		
Total cost	EUR 9.59 million out of which the EU contribution is EUR 3.79 million It is foreseen that the beneficiary institutions – Southern Mediterranean National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) - will jointly finance around 64.4% of the total cost of the EUMEDCONNECT3 project for which EUR 3.2 million is allocated from the EU funds		
Aid method / Method of implementation	Centralised management, managed by the EU Delegation to Egypt		
DAC-code	22040	Sector	ICT

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

Information Society is among the priorities of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan of each partner country and it has been singled out in the Regional Indicative Programme (2011-2013) under “Supporting the Information Society” as area of intervention with an earmarked budget.

Co-operation in the field of Information Society has been declared essential in order to contribute to sustainability of economic and social development in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The 2005 Dundalk EuroMed Ministerial Conference on Information Society adopted a series of recommendations in order to promote sector reform and development of the Euro-Mediterranean Information Society. These recommendations were followed up by the Cairo EuroMed Ministerial Conference on Information Society in 2008 where a new chapter on Information Society was introduced.

Later in 2008, ministers attending the Marseilles Union for the Mediterranean Conference stressed the fundamental need to ensure an interconnection of research networks in order to support, inter alia, the creation of grid-enabled scientific e-infrastructures. These infrastructures make Information and Communication Technology (ICT) research and development co-operation between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean countries more efficient. Ministers recognised the fundamental role that the EUMEDCONNECT network plays in interconnecting the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in the region and with European counterparts via the GEANT pan-European research network, thus enabling collaboration of high scientific, educational and societal impact in multiple domains. Moreover, Ministers considered it essential to guarantee the initiative's sustainability and promotion.

Scientific research and education have become key elements and significant resources for economic development, technological innovation and knowledge creation also in the Southern Mediterranean region. The practice of scientific research is changing dramatically. Researchers working in isolation no longer contribute to technological innovations or social development. It is only through multidisciplinary collaborations among research centres, industry and public entities, which are often geographically dispersed, possible that knowledge, innovation, and know-how are facilitated. ICT technologies have played a major role in making such collaboration possible.

Today's research imposes new requirements not only in the way it is being conducted, but also in the computational aspects. Therefore, it has become essential to maintain the dedicated EUMEDCONNECT network so as to continue to not only connect research and education institutions but also keep them linked to a globalized world.

To ensure future sustainability and network ownership by the Southern Mediterranean countries, the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) was created in 2010 under the umbrella of the League of Arab States. It is planned that ASREN will play an important role in the EUMEDCONNECT project, while building its own capabilities, and take over the task of managing this network once EU funding runs out in 2014.

Meanwhile, in the electronic communications sector, regulatory reform and harmonisation has taken place through the New Approaches to Telecommunications Policy (NATP) projects funded by the European Commission since 2001. These efforts have identified clear co-operation benefits among regulatory authorities in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Thus, in 2008, following the ideals and principles of the Euro-Mediterranean co-operation set out in the Barcelona Declaration and further elaborated in the above mentioned Cairo EuroMed Ministerial Conference on Information Society, electronic communications regulatory authorities in the Euro-Mediterranean region joined forces to strengthen their co-operation and set up a network that aims to facilitate experience sharing and the organisation of neighbourly co-operation: the Euro-Mediterranean electronic communications Regulators Group (EMERG). This network is up and running efficiently, but further moderate funding is envisaged by the EU in fully exploiting the benefits of this co-operation.

In addition to the above, recently, various areas of the Digital Agenda for Europe have been receiving a great deal of attention at international level, resulting in demand for closer co-operation between the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries. Particularly two areas need to be underlined: e-health and trust in e-business transactions.

2.2. Lessons learnt

The ongoing European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)^o South Information Society regional programme EUMEDRegNet (including EUMEDCONNECT2 and New Approaches to Telecommunication Policy (NATP) 3

projects), is constantly being monitored by its Task Manager and a Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) mission took place in 2009. The lessons learnt are the following:

- The programme is highly relevant. The programme management is efficient and effective and impact prospects are high although they need to be better documented.
- While there is a very strong ownership both at user and government levels, financial and institutional sustainability remains a challenge.
- Sustainability is addressed in the project, but more efforts are needed.
- Evaluation of the impact of project outputs should be integrated from the very beginning.

From previous analysis the EU also learned that:

- Building awareness and connecting and articulating national and regional initiatives in the same areas could be improved.
- Some degree of implementation flexibility and timely reactions to changes of the environment and the stakeholders' needs are important success factors, in particular in the ICT field.

2.3. Complementary actions

This programme is designed to build on past and current EU programmes and projects in the field of Information Society in the region, namely the EUMEDCONNECT2 and NATP3 projects. It will provide e-infrastructures to ongoing Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) and future Framework Programme (FP8)) projects in the region.

The proposed programme will also focus on promoting a coordinated approach of the national projects (as per the National Indicative Programmes) in all the related fields (research networks and electronic communication regulation).

2.4. Donor coordination

During the EUMEDCONNECT programmes to date the European Commission has been the only donor active in the Euro-Mediterranean region in this field. But there are some other donors becoming active in the Euro-Mediterranean region: in particular, during the last year a high speed link connecting the Egyptian NREN to Europe was donated by Tata Communications. Recently Egypt has been, also connected to the Global Ring Network for Advanced Application Development (GLORIAD) project, an international network supported by the US National Science Foundation since 2003 which has connected the scientific communities of the US, Russia and China and is now interested in connecting additional countries. GLORIAD has no plans to substitute for the support proposed by EUMEDCONNECT3, but potential synergies with these activities will be sought during the EUMEDCONNECT3.

At a bilateral level, there are a few ongoing co-operation projects, financed by the EU or Member States, in the electronic communication field: e.g.: twinnings with National Telecom Authorities (NTAs) in Egypt and Jordan. EU Members States have been briefed on this regional project during the formulation phase.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective of this programme is to support and further improve the Information Society co-operation between the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries and build on the achievements of the 2 ongoing regional projects in the field: EUMEDCONNECT 2 and NATP 3.

Its specific objectives are following:

- Component 1 – main component: ensure long-term sustainability of the research networking e-infrastructure between the EU and ENPI South countries in order to maximise the synergies of bilateral and regional research and education projects;
- Component 2: moderately facilitate the continued development of a harmonized and investment friendly environment in the ENPI South region's electronic communications sector via support to EMERG. At the same time the programme should help to identify what are the regulatory challenges for the Mediterranean region in the field of electronic communications in the light of the strategic initiative of the European Commission, Digital Agenda Europe (DAE) launched in 2010;
- Component 3: strengthen co-operation in some specific applications of information society technologies, namely e-health, and trust in e-business transactions.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

3.2.1. Component 1:

Maintaining connectivity between the shores of the Mediterranean requires an increased share of national funding from the Southern countries and a rationalisation of use. In the short term, connectivity will still be co-supported by the EU. This will be the last extension of EUMEDCONNECT projects with EU funds and will provide enough time for a regional self-sustained and self-managed organization - ASREN - to provide the data networking e-infrastructure between the EU and the ENPI South countries. To ensure the above, the following results are expected from this programme:

- The network is in place providing comparable or faster connectivity and networking services than in the previous phase, with ASREN partially involved in its management.

- Documented usage, research impacts and benefits enable the Mediterranean member countries of ASREN to successfully lobby for national government and possibly other donor funding.
- ASREN's capacity is enhanced to self manage the EUMEDCONNECT network infrastructure and services and sustain interconnection with GEANT.
- ASREN taking full charge of the network.

In order to reach the above results, the following activities are planned:

- Set-up up operational procedures for the EUMEDCONNECT3 network together with ASREN, migrate network and manage jointly day to day operations;
- Conduct a regional interconnectivity feasibility study in order to further rationalise bandwidth use, seek a self-sufficient regional-centric network with connections to GEANT, and with the assistance of the League of Arab States explore the scope for collaboration with other countries in the region;
- Support the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) one by one to redirect and further rationalise national network traffic;
- Support specific actions for financial sustainability in coordination with ASREN, monitoring commitment at government level, and lobbying and coordinating the relevant political actors and potential donors;
- Prepare case studies on network usage and research the impact and benefit on national development;
- Advocate and convince decision makers to increase support to cover all network operation costs;
- Build capacity and conduct trainings in the Mediterranean member countries of ASREN to prepare for takeover;
- Finalise, approve and execute a strategic plan for ASREN to take over the management of the network;
- Transfer of the network from its current management to ASREN.

3.2.2. *Component 2:*

Related to facilitating the work of EMERG the programme is expected to achieve the following results:

- A more harmonized regulatory framework and investment friendly environment in the region's electronic communications sector;
- EMERG is self sustainable and strengthened as the main platform of discussion in the region for electronic communications regulation;

- The regulatory challenges of the region are identified and addressed in the field of the infrastructures of electronic communications and for the deployment of ICT services.

In order to reach the above results, the following activities are planned:

- Technical Assistance support to EMERG via finalisation of work plans, execution of benchmarking studies and organising workshops;
- Assistance to Southern Mediterranean member countries of EMERG lagging behind.

3.2.3. *Component 3:*

Related to facilitating the work of EMERG the programme is expected to achieve the following results:

- Awareness is increased in the region of the importance of developing integrated and interoperable eHealth solutions and increased deployment of relevant tools;
- Data and information on eHealth use and is more widely available in the Southern Mediterranean countries;
- A long-term strategy in the field of eHealth in the Mediterranean region is formulated;
- Assessment of the feasibility of the cross-border interoperability for trust in e-business transactions is finalised;
- Common business needs for cross-border transactions and local resources to secure transactions are identified.

In order to reach the above results, the following activities are planned:

- Organisation of seminars on the various areas of e-Health and trust in e-business transactions which will yield position papers;
- Execution of a fact finding study on the use of eHealth applications in Southern Mediterranean countries.

3.3. **Risks and assumptions**

The most important risks are:

- Lack of political support that could lead to a lack of financial resources commitment in the longer term and thus potentially failure. The success of EUMEDCONNECT to date, the moves to establish ASREN under the auspices of the League of Arab States, and the continued commitment of the European Commission by supporting EUMEDCONNECT3 together provide a good basis for a successful outcome of the programme.
- Lack of interoperability between the existing eHealth platforms and national initiatives in the region for trust in e-business transactions.

A slightly less important risk is:

- Lack of (progressively assumed) partner ownership which could be managed with Technical Assistance.

In order to tackle these risks, the programme prioritises activities that target gaining high level political support and strengthen partner capacity.

To ensure ownership and political support the programme responds to stakeholders' needs, articulated via various assessments and evaluations. Another encouraging fact is that ASREN and EMERG (the institutions which are there to ensure sustainability) are already functioning, although currently with EU assistance. The intervention design includes strategies to ensure financial sustainability through strengthening active lobbying capacity for political support.

Finally, another high risk inherent to the region is related to potential social and political conflicts.

3.4. Crosscutting Issues

The programme relates to the EU cross-cutting issues of good governance that will be indirectly addressed thanks to promoting an enhanced political dialogue, co-operation among researchers and the academic community and better public services through e-government. It will empower populations at large with better access and use of ICT tools.

3.5. Stakeholders

Key stakeholders and target groups (direct beneficiaries) of this intervention include:

- National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) of Southern Mediterranean countries and the current EUMEDCONNECT partners in the EU;
- Researchers and educationalists, both across the southern Mediterranean and Europe;
- Science and Research support organisations in the region;
- National Regulatory Authorities for electronic communications participating in the Euro-Mediterranean electronic communications Regulators Group (EMERG);
- Ministries for Health; Ministries responsible for ICT, and innovation of Mediterranean partner countries;
- Operators and providers of eHealth solutions;
- Ministries in charge of electronic signature and identification policies in Southern Mediterranean countries;
- Chambers of commerce and trade associations in the region.

Indirect beneficiaries include many stakeholder categories such as public and private institutions active in research, technology firms, ICT service providers and all kinds of ICT services and ICT-enabled services users.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Method of implementation

Direct centralised management.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question.

Participation in the award of contracts for the present action shall be open to all natural and legal persons covered by the ENPI Regulation. Further extensions of this participation to other natural or legal persons by the concerned authorising officer shall be subject to the conditions provided for in Article 21(7) of the ENPI regulation.

For the EUMEDCONNECT3 project (Component 1 – main component) a direct grant contract is foreseen to be signed with DANTE (Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe, UK), based on Article 168(1)(f) of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation. The reasons for a direct award to DANTE are the following:

- DANTE has operated since 1993 four consecutive generations of pan-European research and education networks, currently the GÉANT network, and has successfully managed the EUMEDCONNECT programme since its inception;
- It is set up as a non-profit organisation and is owned by a group of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs). DANTE acts as the managing partner of the projects for its NREN partners;
- There are currently no alternative organisations capable of developing and operating a regional research and education network for the Southern Mediterranean (though it is foreseen that ASREN will develop to take on this role).

For the activities under Component 2 to achieve a more harmonized regulatory framework and investment friendly environment in the electronic communications sector (EMERG Facilitation) a framework contract is envisaged.

For the activities under Component 3 to strengthen co-operation in some specific applications of information society technologies, namely e-health, and trust in e-business transactions 2 framework contracts are envisaged.

4.3. Indicative budget and calendar

The indicative breakdown is as follows:

- Component 1: EUR 3.29 million for EUMEDCONNECT3 (grant contract with DANTE as per section 4.2) which will be complemented by another EUR 5.8 million from the Southern Mediterranean National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) and other donors or regional organisations.
- Component 2: EUR 0.2 million for EMERG Facilitation (framework contract).
- Component 3: EUR 0.2 million for eHealth and EUR 0.1 million for trust in e-business transactions (2 framework contracts).

The project implementation will be 42 months from the date of signature of the above contracts. The grant contract with DANTE shall be signed on the day of the Commission Decision (summer 2011), the contract for EMERG Facilitation shall be signed before the NATP 3 project finishes (September 2012) in order minimize and gaps in support to EMERG. The 2 contract for Component 3 shall be signed in shortly after the Commission Decision.

4.4. Performance monitoring

The programme will be monitored according to standard procedures. Project management monitoring and evaluation will be based on periodic assessment of progress reports and deliverables.

The following indicators are proposed for monitoring the project (component 1):

The proposed impact indicator at the programme's overall objective level is:

- 10% increase in trade, public and private investments in the information society sector between EU and Mediterranean countries (source: EUROSTAT statistics).

The proposed outcome indicators at the specific objective level are:

- after 3 years, there is a 5% increase in participation in international collaborative research and education projects involving ENPI South countries (source: project reports, DG-INFOS and national databases).

The proposed output indicators at the project results level are:

- The EUMEDCONNECT3 network is up and running at least as cost efficiently as its previous phase (source: project report);
- At least 3 further countries in the region connect to the EUMEDCONNECT3 network and their NRENs join ASREN;
- At least 5 case studies showing the benefits to Southern Mediterranean countries are presented to national governments (source: project reports, case studies);
- At least 3 dissemination events for regional stakeholders including national governments and researchers (source: project reports);

- 100% funding for the continuation of EUMEDCONNECT after 2014 is secured (source: project report);
- ASREN is a fully operational organisation and assumes the full technical and administrative management of the network, through a transition process during the project managed by DANTE that will start immediately the project is launched (source: project report);
- Improved co-operation between EU and Mediterranean partners on eHealth solutions;
- Availability of a comprehensive review of eHealth solutions and needs in Mediterranean partner countries;
- Quality of the position papers yielding from the seminars on trust in e-business transactions, and in particular the workability of the options recommended.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

A final evaluation will be conducted/ensured by the EU Delegation in Egypt at the end of the programme. This process will be entrusted to independent consultants and will be funded from the Global Allocation budget of the respective year.

Expenditure incurred will have to be certified, as part of the obligations of contracted parties in the framework of the implementation of this programme.

4.6. Communication and visibility

The programme will work out a specific communication strategy and develop specific activities dedicated to communication and visibility.

The project will adequately take the “EU Visibility Guidelines for External Actions” into account, in particular as regards to workshops and conferences.