



www.enees.gr

working paper

*Towards
a Euro-Mediterranean
Higher Education
& Research Area*

Dr Nikolaos Lymouris

PhD in International and European Institutions
Panteion University of Athens

- 1 -
2009

Nikolaos Lymouris holds Master's Degrees in the academic fields of European Law and European Administration (Panteion University of Athens, European University Institute, King's College of London). Since 2007 he holds a Ph.D. in European Governance (European Commission Fellow). Since December 1999 he is the Scientific Director of the European Documentation Center of Panteion University and since 2007 Teaching Fellow in the Post-Graduate Program of International and European Studies at the same University. The academic year 2009-2010 he was elected Teaching Fellow in the Department of Political Science and International Relations of the University of Peloponnese.

© Nikolaos Lymouris

© ENEES / Young Researchers Group on European Studies

December 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this paper may be reproduced in any form without permission of the author. If cited or quoted, reference should be made as: Author(s), Title, ENEES Working Paper No./Year, [URL]

Introduction	4
1. The first steps	5
2. The Tarragona Declaration (June 2005)	6
3. The Catania Declaration (January 2006)	7
4. The Tampere Declaration and the establishment of EPUF (October 2006)	8
5. The Alexandria Declaration (June 2007)	9
6. The Cairo Declaration (June 2007)	10
7. Union for the Mediterranean - Marseille Statement (November 2008)	11
8. The special role of Universities – Foundations – Consortiums	12
8.1 Anna Lindh Foundation	12
8.2 Euro-Mediterranean University	13
8.3 Euro-Med Permanent University Forum (EPUF)	14
8.4 Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research (EMCER)	15
8.5 Euro-Mediterranean Academic Consortium Agreement (CREMO – EMACA)	16
8.6 MIRA Coordination Action	17
Conclusions / Proposals	18
References	20

Introduction *

We are living in a deep crisis of North-South relations, with political and economic conflicts aggravated by cultural and religious tensions and misunderstandings. More than thirteen years have elapsed since the launching of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process), which constitutes with its main pillars a unique framework for dialogue and co-operation between the two shores of the Mediterranean, based on coownership and common interest. This partnership aims at achieving a common area of peace, stability and prosperity, as well as ensuring a better knowledge and promoting mutual understanding among peoples across the Mediterranean¹.

The EU universities are aware that the Mediterranean issue is one of the priorities in order to define the political and cultural future of Europe. They are interested in developing a dynamic and functional concept of inter-university cooperation that fits with the growth of efficiency and competitiveness within the European Higher Education system. They can offer the partner countries a valid contribution to acquire a variety of necessary skills for their economic, social and institutional development. The universities of the partner countries simply expect an improvement of the economic and political relations from the Barcelona Process and its outcome, but also an increase in cultural and technological exchange. They shall contribute to the renewal of the European university system by means of encouraging the great cultural traditions and contributing with academic institutions of great prospective growth.

The fields in which the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation are more urgent are uncountable, to be more specific pure and applied scientific research, economics, communication, medicine, agriculture, ecological security, institutional democratization and capacity building and language learning. Collaboration among universities has a key role in the promotion of Information Communication Technology (ICT), distance learning and lifelong learning.

* Paper presented at the Jean Monnet Conference "Euro-Mediterranean relationships: from the Barcelona Agenda to the Union for the Mediterranean", organized by the Department of Financial and Economic Sciences (DI.S.E.FIN.), University of Genoa, in cooperation with the Istanbul Technical University, Faculty of Management, Istanbul 18-21 June 2009.

¹ European Commission (2003), Europe and the Mediterranean: Towards a closer partnership, Luxembourg, p. 5.

Despite the fact that academic cooperation can contribute a lot to creating mutual respect through cooperation and across frontiers, the issue of education and RTDI hasn't accepted the sufficient attention it merits in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership up to now. Only at the Barcelona Summit, Euromed Partners have recognized, for the first time in the Five-Year Work Programme, the crucial role of education for political, social and economic development, as well as the major importance of the research, innovation and Human Resources Development as a key to modernization².

On the other hand, nobody can deny the fact that private initiatives, like academic cooperation agreements, networks and programmes, in the fields of education and training have contributed to capacity building in the countries concerned and represent a major tool to develop human capital and promote cultural and societal values in the region. For example, the Anna Lindh Foundation illustrates the common commitment to establish dialogue by promoting mutual understanding on cultural issues and by recognizing the essential role of intercultural dialogue so as to promote peaceful coexistence.

In this perspective, this paper will try to examine ways and means of developing co-operation in the field of scientific research, upgrading the quality of higher education and vocational training in Mediterranean Partner Countries. It will also deal with the standards of University Education, focusing on and analyzing some initiatives that took place in the field of Euro-Med cooperation, such as the "Euro-Mediterranean space of Higher Education and Research", the "Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures", the "Euro-Mediterranean University" in Slovenia and its Center for Euro-Mediterranean Studies (Center EMUNI), and finally the newly established "Academic Consortium and Research Centre on the Eastern Mediterranean" (CREMO), which will have its legal residence in Rhodes, Greece.

1. The first steps

The Barcelona Conference in November 1995 left a challenge and opened up a historical opportunity for the people of the 25 member states of the European Union and the 10 partners of the Mediterranean area. The "Barcelona Process", set up by the Declaration of 1995, the Valencia Action Plan and the decisions taken by the EuroMed Committee and the Conference of Ministers³, along with the Neighbourhood Policy launched by the EU, outlined a complex programme of Euro-Mediterranean "co-development" in the economic, political, cultural, environmental and security fields. The governments of the region have decided to encourage dialogue among the cultural traditions, to favour the dissemination of a culture of human rights and democratic citizenship and to promote a sustainable development of scientific and technological exchanges. It was more than clear from the beginning that such a project branched beyond intergovernmental ties,

² Calleya, Stephen C. (2005), *Evaluating Euro-Mediterranean Relations*, Routledge, p. 100.

³ Panebianco, Stefania (2003), *A new Euro-Mediterranean cultural identity*, Routledge, p. 166.

therefore the involvement of the education systems and the civil society was a must.

Nonetheless, out of the three approaches proposed by the Barcelona Declaration (the political and security, the economic and financial, and the human and cultural dimensions) particularly the latter have not yet achieved the envisaged results. At that stage, the participation of the universities to the construction of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership appeared to be much necessary and urgent, given that the most consistent obstacles encountered for the completion of this process are also of a cultural nature.

Undoubtedly, the work of the High-Level Advisory Group on Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures, established at the initiative of the late President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, in 2003, the development of European projects and the Euro-Mediterranean university network and the setting up of Anna Lindh Foundation, which was named after the late Swedish Foreign Minister assassinated, officially established in Alexandria, Egypt, on 30 November 2004 as a major common institution of the Barcelona Process for developing partnership in social, cultural & human affairs, were only the first steps of this process. A long-term strategy was considered that should be elaborated and coordinated together with the institutions at a national and community level in line with the conclusions of the 7th Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers⁴.

2. The Tarragona Declaration (June 2005)

The first Mediterranean University Forum (Fòrum Universitari de la Mediterrània), which took place in 2 – 3 June 2005, at the University Rovira i Virgili in the Spanish city of Tarragona, brought together representatives from 32 universities in 17 countries including various national, regional and European associations such as EUA and IAU (International Association of Universities). The Forum brought together university leaders of the region, in order to discuss and analyse the ongoing changes in higher education across Europe⁵.

The Tarragona Declaration fostered a bottom-up process of construction of a Euro-Med area of higher education. More specifically it was mentioned that “(t)he EU universities are aware that the Mediterranean issue is one of the priorities if the political and cultural future of Europe is to be defined. They are interested in developing a dynamic and functional concept of inter-university cooperation that matches the growth in efficiency and competitiveness within the European Higher Educational system”.

Moreover, the Euro-Mediterranean universities declared their particular interest in the promotion of the various components of the “Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Heritage”, such as history, philosophy, religious studies, archaeology, languages,

⁴ Agreed Conclusions of the 7th Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs - Luxembourg, 30 and 31 May 2005, <http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/conseil/2005/05/31euromed/euromed.pdf>

⁵ Tarragona Declaration for dialogue and cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean Universities, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona, 07/2005, p. 7. <http://www.epuf.org/media/documents/en/TarragonaDeclaration2.pdf>

literature, law, cultural tourism, environmental and cultural heritage protection, etc., highlighting both their diversity and the humanistic roots shared by all the Mediterranean cultures.

The members of the forum underlined also the fact that it has come the time to create an "Euro-Mediterranean area of Higher Education and Research", to contribute to the promotion of a knowledge society, to encourage the collaboration and dialogue among the educational institutions, to increase their management efficiency, the quality of teaching and research, a non discriminatory education and the involvement of civil society in a knowledge society.

In that point of view they proposed the establishment of a "Higher Education Network", made up of universities and research centers in the Mediterranean, supported by the European Community, national and regional political institutions of the countries involved, in order to foster:

- the development of the competencies, by means of joint research programmes and teaching and training programmes for academic, technical and administrative staff;
- the increase of youth employment in sectors of high levels of cultural knowledge, by means of training and pilot initiatives of entrepreneurial nature supported by the universities;
- the mutual knowledge building among young students, academic staff and researchers, technical and administrative staff, through the increase of exchanges, mobility and communication;
- respect for the Euro-Mediterranean cultural and environmental heritage, by means of text translations, development of Euro-Mediterranean educational modules, twinning programmes and other training and dissemination activities;
- intercultural dialogue and reinforcement of human values deeply rooted in the countries involved, by involving civil society; and
- Academic freedom and independence of the Universities.

3. The Catania Declaration (January 2006)

A few months later, in January 2006, the Ministers of Education from 12 Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey) signed the Catania Declaration⁶. They committed themselves to promoting a rapprochement of the structures of higher education systems, even though preserving each country's individuality, to establishing "common education and training paths based on a system of transferrable credits and on easily readable qualifications and exploitable as well by the labour market".

To achieve this aim, "the criteria and evaluation methods and quality assurance schemes should be shared in order to facilitate the mobility of students, researchers and professors". Before implementing the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in the academic field it is essential to define the standards of excellence and to set up a code for the evaluation of quality. The quality assurance regarding the

⁶ Catania Declaration: "Euro-mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research", 29 January 2006, <http://www.miur.it/UserFiles/2209.pdf>

Courses and the certifications might include also the monitoring of the students' progress and results. It is also necessary that the entrepreneurial organizations be consulted with regard to the effects of the courses on the labour market.

Moreover, they agreed:

- to promote PhD research programmes with a view to encourage scientific and technical collaboration and to promote competitiveness in the region;
- to establish Networks of interlinked Universities and well known Centres for high quality Education and Research; and
- to strengthen a distance learning system, by expanding the results attained through the "Med Net'U" project⁷, in order to encourage the widest possible access to education and training in a perspective of lifelong learning;

4. The Tampere Declaration and the establishment of EPUF (October 2006)

Between the 9th and 11th October 2006, the conference of rectors of the Euro-Mediterranean universities was held in Tampere (Finland). It was organized jointly by the Polytechnic University of Tampere and the Rovira i Virgili University (Spain), under the Finnish Presidency of the European Union⁸.

On October the 11th, 62 universities and institutions belonging to the member countries of the Euro-Med partnership of the European Union constituted the EuroMed Permanent University Forum (EPUF), a network of universities and higher-education institutions from the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The aim of this network⁹ is to create a Euro-Mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research by promoting the knowledge society, collaboration and dialogue between the educational institutions of the European Union, from the east and south of the Mediterranean countries, and the greater quality of teaching and research, as well as guaranteeing the basic education right for everybody.

In other words, the EuroMed Permanent University Forum represents the formal commitment among the universities of the Euro-Mediterranean region for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research that will strengthen bonds and promote joint academic and scientific projects. This is the

⁷ In the framework of the EUMEDIS Programme (Euro-Mediterranean Information Society), launched by the European Commission in 1998 to enhance the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Information Society, the Network per l'Università Ovunque NETTUNO (the Italian Distance University), with 25 Euro-Mediterranean partners, has been selected to implement the Med Net'U (Mediterranean Network of Universities) Project.

NETTUNO is nowadays the only Telematic and Television University in Europe that supplies its 38 public partner universities with two satellite television channels, RAI NETTUNO SAT 1 and RAI NETTUNO SAT 2, and with an Internet-based didactic portal, www.uninettuno.it.

⁸ The EuroMed Permanent University Forum, <http://www.epuf.org/en/trajectory.html>

⁹ The EuroMed Permanent University Forum has elected a Management Committee consisting of 21 members, and has chosen Francesc-Xavier Grau, rector of the Rovira i Virgili University (Spain) as coordinator, rector Hassan Nadir Kheirallah from the Alexandria University (Egypt) as the deputy coordinator, and vice-rector Driss Ouaouicha (Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco) as secretary. It has also been agreed that the Rovira i Virgili University will be the headquarters of the Executive Secretariat of the network and that the network's first ordinary general assembly will be held in Alexandria or Rabat. On the other side, five work groups have also been agreed, which will be designed by professor Giuseppe Giliberti, from the Università degli Studi di Urbino "Carlo Bo" (Italy).

conclusion that they ended up at the debate by taking into account all the accumulated experience of the three Mediterranean University Forums that have been held in the past (Alicante 2004, Tarragona 2005 and Malta 2006) and the importance of the Tarragona Declaration for Dialogue and Cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean Universities.

5. *The Alexandria Declaration (June 2007)*

Following the Tampere Declaration, the EuroMed Permanent University Forum (EPUF) submitted, on behalf of the Universities, Networks and Institutions attending the IV Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Universities in Alexandria, a list of recommendations arising out of the work done on the 11th and 12th of June 2007 to the First Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research in Cairo (18 June 2007).

It has to be noted that the Alexandria Declaration¹⁰ is the first comprehensive test, including specific proposals on which a Euro-Mediterranean High Education Area can be built. These recommendations can be categorized as follows:

Credit accreditation:

- adoption of the "European Credit Transfer System" by the universities of the states who have yet to adopt it (on either side of the Euro-Mediterranean), with the objective of unifying and establishing the equivalence criteria between the different study plans of the entire region.

Degree accreditation:

- promotion of a convention similar to the Hague Convention¹¹, which should include all the Euro-Mediterranean countries, as an act of absolute priority for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education Seal, by establishing a diploma supplement.

Double degree. Bilateral agreements:

- need of creation double-degree study programmes between northern and southern Mediterranean universities, and
- promotion of an Erasmus University Charter for southern Mediterranean universities, and its inclusion as a requirement to participate in European programmes.

Multilingual systems:

- promote opportunities of study of the Arab language in European countries; to give an impulse to the development of modern and attractive methods of study.
- promote and give a motive to foreign language learning systems, on both sides of the Mediterranean, for all students.

Reception:

- promote agreements between governments in order to exempt students who have a scholarship of the obligation to have a particular amount of money in a bank deposit.

¹⁰ EPUF – The Alexandria Declaration, http://www.epuf.org/media/documents/THE_ALEXANDRIA_DECLARATION_FRAMEWORK.pdf

¹¹ Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents, 1961.

Quality systems:

- encourage direct contacts between state agencies, and if the case, regional agencies, as well as on a European level with the ENQA, with the purpose of involving their activities in the work that EPUF is currently carrying out.
- promote, with the contribution of northern and southern universities, the constitution of a Euro-Mediterranean Quality Agency, EMNQA.

Speeding-up the visa procedures:

- elaborating a common official form, recognized by all the Euro-Mediterranean states, bearing the logo of the EU and each member state, which could speed up the visa procedures, presented together with the visa application form, including the names of the involved universities.

6. The Cairo Declaration (June 2007)

Having in its hands the detailed recommendations of the Alexandria Declaration, the First Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research, which was meeting in Cairo, took a step further. On 18 June 2007, the participants adopted a joint Declaration trying to enrich the Alexandria's proposals, aiming at achieving a common area of peace, stability and prosperity, as well as ensuring a better knowledge and promoting mutual understanding among peoples across the Mediterranean¹².

In the joint declaration, the Euro-Med Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the relevant objectives of the five-year work programme of the Barcelona Summit and of the Association Agreement, as well as the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans. They also agreed that Higher Education, Research and Innovation should be defined as a priority sector within the Euro-Med Partnership.

The Conference's recommendations can be summarised as follows:

In Higher Education:

Creating a Euromed Higher Education Area:

- Approximating the Euromed Higher Education Systems;
- Promotion of a Permanent Euromed University Forum;
- Promoting Educational Innovation and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT);
- Promoting mobility through exchanges of higher education students, teachers, researchers and administrators;
- Enhancing participation in the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window.

In Research and Innovation:

Towards the creation of a Euromed Research Area:

- Modernizing Science and Technology, R&D policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries;

¹² First Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research (Cairo Declaration - 18 June 2007), http://www.epuf.org/media/documents/Cairo_Declaration.pdf

- Supporting Institutional Capacity Building, including human and research infrastructure development;
- Enhancing the participation of the Mediterranean Partner Countries in the Framework Programmes by taking into account their particular needs, as well as areas of mutual interest and benefit between EU and Mediterranean Partner Countries;
- Promoting innovation in the Mediterranean Partner Countries and enhancing exploitation of the RTD outputs by society and industry;
- Favouring mobility of researchers;
- Enhancing participation of the Mediterranean Partner Countries in the "People" Specific Programme of FP 7.

Ministers committed, also, to undertake appropriate measures to realise the following actions:

- Approximation of the Euromed Higher Education systems with relevance to the Bologna process and ECTS system.
- Structured cooperation to promote the comparability and readability of Higher Education systems in the Euromed area
- Support Mediterranean Partner Countries in the establishment of comparable Quality Control and Accreditation schemes;
- Develop - parallel to higher education reform - initiatives to support market-based reform in the field of Technical, Vocational Education & Training (TVET);
- Institutional Capacity Building and Human Resource Development by supporting joint teaching and training programmes for academic, technical and administrative staff;
- Cooperation, including through existing schemes to increase the relevance of the awarded degrees to the Mediterranean Partner Countries labour market needs.
- Support the implementation of the Euromed University Forum objectives;
- Increase the involvement of civil society in education.
- Cooperation between Euromed Distance universities;
- Cooperation aiming at the creation of a Mediterranean Digital Library and portal including translation between Euromed languages;
- Enhancing participation to a Euromed Scholarship Scheme in the framework of the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window, including by providing a more flexible framework and by studying the possibilities of joint funding to allow increased participation.
- Support Euromed Higher Education Programmes. This could be achieved through the following actions:

7. Union for the Mediterranean - Marseille Statement (November 2008)

On November the 3rd and 4th 2008 Marseille (France) hosted the ministerial conference of the member countries of the "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean". The ministerial conference, which brought together the foreign ministers from the member countries of the Barcelona Process aimed at working towards implementing ambition for a strengthened part-

nership around the Mediterranean renewed by the Heads of State or Government at the Paris summit on 13 July of the same year¹³.

In this statement, the participants underlined the fact that the inauguration of the Euro-Mediterranean University in Slovenia (see below) marked an important step in building cultural and educational bridges between the North and South of the Mediterranean. This achievement will certainly encourage cooperation in higher education, following up the objectives of the Catania Process and the First Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research (Cairo, June 2007)¹⁴.

Ministers look forward to the implementation and follow up of the Cairo Declaration by reinforcing the role of the Monitoring Committee for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in RTD (MoCo)¹⁵ and the prompt creation of an expert group on Higher Education with a precise mandate to realize the objectives and actions of the Declaration. They also considered that particular attention should be given to further promoting academic mobility, enhancing quality assurance mechanisms and to issues concerning the recognition of degrees and study periods which may lead to the development of joint degrees between institutions in European and Mediterranean countries.

8. The special role of Universities – Foundations – Consortiums

8.1 Anna Lindh Foundation

The Anna Lindh Foundation's¹⁶ work is guided by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership principles, values and priorities as enshrined in the Barcelona Declaration of 1995. The Barcelona Declaration is the far-reaching political agreement established in 1995 between the European Union and its ten Southern Mediterranean partners in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Syria and Turkey.

The declaration is the first attempt in modern history to create strong and durable bonds between the shores of the Mediterranean. It comprises three main objectives:

- The definition of a common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of political and security dialogue.
- The construction of a zone shared of prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the gradual establishment of a free trade zone.

¹³ Final Statement of the "Union for the Mediterranean ministerial conference" (3-4 November 2008), http://www.eu2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/1103_ministerielle_Euromed/Final_Statement_Mediterranean_Union_EN.pdf

¹⁴ SEC (2008) 2499 final, Commission Staff Working Document "The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean. A reinforced regional partnership. Proposals for the 2009 work programme to be adopted at the 10th Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Marseille, 3-4 November 2008)", Brussels, 19/09/2008, par. 28.

¹⁵ For the conclusions and recommendations of the 12th Monitoring Committee Meeting, which took place in Istanbul (6-8/11/2008), see

http://www.miraproject.eu/workgroup.2008-08-27.7312350974/working-documents/MoCo_12th%20Conclusions_final.pdf

¹⁶ <http://www.euromedalex.org/>

- The rapprochement between people through a social, cultural and human partnership aimed at encouraging understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies.

The signatory states declared that they respect human rights and fundamental freedoms and that they guarantee the exercise of such rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of association for peaceful purposes, freedom of thought and freedom of religion. They stressed on the importance of thorough education in these fields and stated that they would combat manifestations of intolerance and racism within their societies.

The improvement of the living conditions of populations, an increase in the employment level and the reduction in the development gap in the Euromed region were recognized objectives of major importance. It was clearly understandable that success of the partnership required a substantial increase in the EUs financial assistance, and that this must encourage sustainable indigenous development and the mobilization of local economic actors.

The partners expressed their recognition of the key role of women in development and undertook to promote their active participation in economic and social life as well as in the creation of employment opportunities.

Dialogue between the cultures of the region through exchanges at the scientific, technological and human levels were seen as an essential factor in bringing peoples closer and improving their perception of each other.

The declaration also stipulates that the Euro-Mediterranean partnership must contribute to enhance educational levels throughout the region and that a regular dialogue on educational policies will take place. The development of joint research programmes, cooperation of universities and other institutions of higher education by dealing at the same time with the promotion of vocational training and technology in education were planned¹⁷.

8.2 Euro-Mediterranean University

The idea of establishing the Euro-Mediterranean University was born in 1995, when the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was formed with the Barcelona process EUROMED, designed on three pillars: political-security, economic-financial and cultural-social partnership. In the next years the idea has gained wide support at political and academic levels.

The Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI University)¹⁸, having its seat in Piran - Portorož, Slovenia, was inaugurated on June 9, 2008. Its objective is to be an international, post-graduate, higher-education, and research institution, fully integrated in the Euro-Mediterranean area. EMUNI University was cofounded by universities and other higher-education and research institutions.

The signing of the Charter represents one of the first steps towards the establishment of EMUNI University. In Barcelona on November the 26th in 2008, the institutions that signed the Foundation Charter had the right to appoint a representative to the General Assembly which

¹⁷ See also the Anna Lindh Foundation's full presentation at http://www.euromedalex.org/sites/default/files/ALF_presentation.pdf

¹⁸ <http://www.emuni.si/>

adopted the Statute of the University. The Charter has so far been signed by 118 institutions from 32 countries.

The aim of the University is to be an international, mainly postgraduate and research academic institution within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

The main objectives of the University are:

- to develop academic and professional human resources in the region and contribute to the creation of a common higher education and research area in line with the developments of the Bologna Process, the Catania Declaration and the Cairo Declaration,
- to support and strengthen the existing co-operation networks among universities and institutes by promoting and organizing joint study and research programmes,
- to contribute to the enhancement of intercultural dialogue and dialogue between culture and to the strengthening of the Barcelona Process in general.

In the 2008/09 academic year, first pilot Master study programmes are offered in the areas of Energy and Sustainable Development, European Mediterranean Cultures and Policies, Euro-Mediterranean Culture and Tourism, and Diplomatic Studies. The activities planned for 2009 include Euro-Mediterranean Summer School, short programmes and annual international conference, master programmes, doctoral research seminars, EMUNI Research *Souk* - The Mediterranean Student Research Conference, *International Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies* (IJEMS) and other research and development projects¹⁹.

8.3 Euro-Med Permanent University Forum (EPUF)

In June 2005, Universitat Rovira i Virgili de Tarragona (Catalonia-Spain) hosted the II Mediterranean University Forum under the auspices of the European Commission, through its Jean Monnet programme. Thanks to the collaboration of their project partners (Université Catholique de Lovain, Institut Catholique de Paris, Association Immaginare l'Europa, University of Malta), this Forum could gather 60 Euro-Mediterranean universities whose efforts during two days of work 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.

One year later - June of 2006 - the University of Malta welcomed the III Mediterranean University Forum. The path to achieve the creation of the network continued there, inviting the universities to the next Forum at the University of Alexandria, with the sponsorship of the ALF- Anna Lindh Foundation-, who had already taken part in the process initiated in Tarragona.

In October 2006, the Tampere Polytechnic University of Applied Sciences, MEDA-Institute of Finland, and the Rovira i Virgili University organised the first EuroMed Universities Rectors' Conference, with the sponsorship of the Finnish Presidency of the EU and the European Commission. The conference concluded with the constitution act by which the EuroMed Permanent University Forum was created and the election of its first Executive Committee and the Executive Secretary.

¹⁹ Euro-Mediterranean University – Report 2008, p. 8.

In November 2006 the procedures to register the EPUF ²⁰ in the Brussels registry of associations started, under the Belgian law for the International Non Profit Association (AISBL in French), a process undertaken by the Bours & Associates office of legal advisers.

In December 2006 the working groups met for the first time at the Università degli Studi di Napoli l'Orientale based in Naples.

The first meeting of the EPUF Executive Committee took place in March 2007 at the University Rovira i Virgili.

8.4 Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research (EMCER)

EMCER ²¹ started off as the Comparative Education Programme in the Faculty of Education in 1994. It became an autonomous Research Centre at the University nine years later. EMCER sets out to further one of the University's main goals—that of becoming a pole of excellence in the inter-disciplinary study of Mediterranean and European issues.

In pursuing this goal, and in focusing specifically on the challenges that education systems in the Euro-Mediterranean region are facing, EMCER has made a number of contributions that highlight the way Universities can be mobilised to support development goals of the wider regional and international community.

The Centre operates as a loose network of associated scholars, engaging academics from across the region according to the profiles required by the different research projects it is involved in. The core EMCER Associate Fellows support the centre's activities in a number of ways: they are, for instance, members of the regional board of editors of the *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*, and ensure networking, within their own respective countries, on behalf of the Centre.

The Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research is one of the more recent of the University's research centres. Building on the Faculty of Education's Comparative Education Programme, which was established in 1994, EMCER sets out to further one of the University's main goals—that of becoming a pole of excellence in the inter-disciplinary study of Mediterranean and European issues. In pursuing this goal, and in focusing specifically on the challenges that education systems in the Euro-Mediterranean region are facing, EMCER has made a number of contributions that highlight the way Universities can be mobilised to support development goals of the wider regional and international community.

EMCER depends on its network of Associate Fellows in order to ensure quality services. Associate Fellows:

- act as referees for the *MJES*
- solicit articles from promising academics in their country
- promote EMCER and its journal, the *MJES*
- teach on the MA Euro-Mediterranean Comparative Education Studies programme
- are partners in funded projects that EMCER bids for
- contribute papers to conferences and workshops organised by EMCER.

²⁰ <http://www.epuf.org/>

²¹ <http://www.um.edu.mt/>

8.5 Euro-Mediterranean Academic Consortium Agreement (CREMO – EMACA)

The more recent initiative in the Euro-Mediterranean higher education area is the EMACA Consortium²², which was established on October the 24th 2008.

The Founding meeting of the Academic partnership EMACA - CREMO was organised by the University of the Aegean (Rectorate and Department of Mediterranean Studies) in partnership with the Institute of International Relations (I.I.R.) of the Panteion University of Athens, under the auspices of the Euro-Mediterranean University. Among the objectives is the establishment of Joint Masters Programs according to the provisions of the new framework-law.

The meeting was addressed by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Y. Valinakis and the Ambassador of France in Greece Mr. Chr. Farnaud, while representatives of 20 Universities as well as independent experts have been invited to attend²³.

This cooperation aims at promoting the teaching and research on Euro-Mediterranean issues, by establishing an Academic Consortium and a Research Centre on the Eastern Mediterranean²⁴, which will have its legal residence in Rhodes.

Moreover, through its network of member universities and Institutes, CREMO aims to promote research in the areas of conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, environment, local and regional security and migration and to make proposals on the political and economic dimension of relations between the European Union and its Mediterranean partner countries.

In this way CREMO aims to be one of the main pillars of EMUNI in the East Mediterranean.

Finally, according to the text of the Agreement (art. 2), the cooperation shall cover the following areas:

- the exchange of students, researchers and academic staff, in accordance with the annual work-program and the specific projects agreed in the context of the present Agreement and in compliance with the relevant laws and internal regulations of the Parties;
- the establishment of joint curricula and diplomas, the exchange and diffusion of expertise in the field of university evaluation and assessment, the promotion of innovative teaching methods and the dissemination of relevant materials;
- the elaboration and implementation of joint research projects and networks;
- the organisation and implementation of scientific colloquia, conferences, summer schools and other academic events;

²² <http://www.cremo.edu.gr/>

²³ The Consortium is being consist of: Centre d' Etudes Stratégiques pour le Moyen - Orient, Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS), Euro - Mediterranean Observatory on Risk Management, Institute of International Relations (IIR), Izmir University of Economics, University of Cyprus, Technological University of Cyprus, European University of Cyprus, University of Montpellier I, University Isik of Istanbul, T.C. Yeditepe University, University of Aegean, Ionian University, University of Peloponnese, University of Montpellier III, University of Nice, University Pierre Mendès - France of Grenoble, University of Aix - Marseille III, University of Rabat, University of Tunis II, University of Catania, University of Genoa, University of Napoli II, University of Haifa, Community of Mediterranean Universities (CMU), UNINETTUNO - International Telematic University, Centre for Strategic Studies (CSS) - University of Jordan and University of Cairo.

²⁴ in French: Centre de Recherches et d'Études sur la Méditerranée orientale – CREMO.

- the joint production of publications, academic journals and any other kind of publication of interest to the Parties.

8.6 MIRA Coordination Action

In its Vienna meeting of 28-30/06/2006, the Monitoring Committee for the Euro-Mediterranean S&T Cooperation in RTD, also named the Barcelona RTD Committee (MoCo), has welcome the proposal of the European Commission to include as an activity of the INCO Program within the Capacities program of FP7 an INCO-Net coordination platform for selected target areas, including the Mediterranean Partners Countries (MPC).

These coordination platforms aim to bring together policy makers and stakeholders of MPCs and EU countries in the framework of the dialogue structured through the MoCo. This proposed project, Mediterranean Innovation and Research Co-ordination Action (MIRA) ²⁵, aims to create a dialogue and action platform to identify common interests in research areas, set-up S&T priorities and supporting capacity building activities. MIRA will promote actions in order to monitor, develop, promote and contribute to the creation of synergies among the different cooperation S&T programs between the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs) and the member states of the EU, and foster the participation of the MPC in the Framework Programme.

The present Coordination Action (CA) aims at developing the objectives of the INCO-Net Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPC) action by, among others:

- Creating a dialogue platform using the state of the art of the ICT technologies, which will enable the discussion between relevant stakeholders from both sides of the Mediterranean to improve the S&T cooperation by, among other means, connecting and facilitating the interaction between the dispersed S&T cooperation initiatives already existing supported by the Member States, the European Commission and other political bodies;
- Addressing training activities to improve the quality of the participation and management of the partners of FP7 from the MPC;
- Creating discussion platforms and organizing meetings to monitor and discuss the content of the Thematic priorities of FP7 in term of the common interest of the EU and MPC;
- Creating an Observatory of the EU-MPC S&T cooperation, which will agree indicators for the monitoring of RTD cooperation activities;
- Creating networks of research institutions and technological transfer services from both sides of the Mediterranean, to support strategic collaboration and provide a reference element for the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Innovation Space. All these activities are aimed at providing a strong institutional basis for the EU-MPC S&T cooperation.

²⁵ <http://www.miraproject.eu/>

Conclusions / Proposals

Undoubtedly, the universities of the EU countries and the associated states – even those geographically distant of the sea – can help the countries of the Eastern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean upgrade the capacity of their scientific and educational systems. They are conscious that this lies on in their own interest. The European universities are able to help the countries on the other shore to acquire a wide range of competences necessary for development. They can, in their turn, receive significant cultural impetus from them. All this requires a joint reflection on the mission of university in this area. This process will also involve external actors such as students' associations, trade unions of university teachers as well as companies and the third sector. It will thus be possible to start a **bottom-up promotion** of a real "Euro-Mediterranean area of higher education".

Accordingly, **following the example of the Socrates/Erasmus programme**, the universities and consortiums will be necessary to test:

- the adoption of a framework for qualifications of the Euro-Med Higher Education Area compatible with the Bologna process;
- the use of a transferrable credit system;
- the use of common qualification descriptors as regards the results of the learning process;
- the establishment of common standard procedures with a view to conferring double or joint degrees in the three study cycles;
- simple and exhaustive information for students and society;
- the elaboration of assessment systems concerning the quality and shared criteria for excellence in order to improve the capacity and accountability of the higher education institutions;
- the increase in joint research programmes as the link between research and teaching is the essential characteristic of the university.

In this point of view, it is necessary to study, plan and implement actions aiming at the **harmonization of the EU and Mediterranean higher education teaching and credit systems**. This aim involves as well the drafting of Euro-Med guidelines on quality assurance, excellence criteria and their evaluation.

Moreover, it is important that the Universities, which participate in the EuroMed consortiums, agree on the necessity of **improving the quality of university management**. This is a strategic problem. A Euro-mediterranean area of higher education will inevitably be based on the principle of mutual trust between the participating institutions. It is therefore essential that each of the institutions involved in the exchange programmes should be duly informed on the existing courses, jointly set up the convenient procedures. For this purpose it is essential to train jointly managers, administrative and technical staff of the EPUF institutions in order to facilitate the promotion of a Eur-Med area of higher education and research.

In addition, **courses and practical training** for teachers, professionals, public administrators and managers of the "third sector" **need to be organized**. To this end, a good knowledge of the national laws and the specific rules of each university is required. Simultaneously, specific forms and procedures must be available. As a result, it is self-evident that to achieve the establishment of a EuroMed area of Higher Education, the **contribution of the techni-**

cal and administrative staff is of strategic importance. In order to promote cooperation, it is vital to improve the professional capacity of the staff involved in these processes as well as to share knowledge and experiences. In particular, the departments and administrative offices of the universities need staff capable to facilitate the elaboration and acknowledgement of common teaching initiatives, and to help draft and manage Euro-mediterranean research projects.

Finally, the directors of the **International Relations Offices** of the Mediterranean area ought to join forces so as to: **promote cooperation and innovation**, improve skills and create new competences among the staff, facilitate the setting up of new research and teaching initiatives, diffuse the values of the Tarragona Declaration. A virtual seminar on "The Euro-mediterranean partnership and higher education" would be the first step towards the creation of a working community. It would essentially be a permanent e-conference aimed at giving information and updating competences, and, contemporarily, an online forum for the exchange of proposals and good practices in the administrative field. Researchers, professors, senior officers of Chambers of commerce, etc., may be involved at a later stage, in order to take advantage of the acquired competences.

References:

- Alexandria Declaration (2007), Alexandria 11 - 12 June, found at http://www.epuf.org/media/documents/THE_ALEXANDRIA_DECLARATION_FRAMEWORK.pdf
- Cairo Declaration (2007), "First Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research", Cairo 18 June, found at http://www.epuf.org/media/documents/Cairo_Declaration.pdf
- Calleja, J.-J. (2005), "Wounded by a Divide Syndrome: The Impact of Education and Employment on Euro-Med Cohesion", *Mediterranean Politics*, Volume 10, Number 3 / November.
- Calleya, Stephen C. (2005), *Evaluating Euro-Mediterranean Relations*, Routledge.
- Catania Declaration (2006), "Euro-mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research", Catania 29 January, found at <http://www.miur.it/UserFiles/2209.pdf>
- Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs (2005), "Agreed Conclusions of the 7th Conference", Luxembourg 30 - 31 May, found at <http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/conseil/2005/05/31euromed/euromed.pdf>
- Euro-Mediterranean University (2009), *Report 2008*, Slovenia.
- European Commission (2003), *Europe and the Mediterranean: Towards a closer partnership*, Luxembourg.
- Monitoring Committee (2008), "Conclusions and recommendations of the 12th Meeting", Istanbul 6 - 8 November, found at http://www.miraproject.eu/workgroup.2008-08-27.7312350974/working-documents/MoCo_12th%20Conclusions_final.pdf
- Panebianco, Stefania (2003), *A new Euro-Mediterranean cultural identity*, Routledge.
- SEC (2008) 2499 final, *The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean. A reinforced regional partnership. Proposals for the 2009 work programme to be adopted at the 10th Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs* (Marseille, 3-4 November 2008), Brussels 19 September.
- Tarragona Declaration (2005), "For dialogue and cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean Universities", Tarragona 2 - 3 July 2005, found at <http://www.epuf.org/media/documents/en/TarragonaDeclaration2.pdf>
- Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, "Final Statement", Marseille 3 - 4 November 2008, found at http://www.eu2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/1103_ministerielle_Euromed/Final_Statement_Mediterranean_Union_EN.pdf