

Call for the Convening of a New Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research

Based on UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union's work in the region and notably its report "Internationalisation of higher education in the Mediterranean, current and prospective trends" commissioned by the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the recommendations provided therein;

In view of the demand made by Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the UfM, for organizing a UfM Ministerial meeting on Higher Education;

Recalling the objectives of the Barcelona process and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership for an enhanced collaboration in education, research and innovation in the Mediterranean area;

Recalling the 2006 Catania Declaration of the representatives from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, France, Spain, Italy, Malta, Egypt, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey, Jordan and Greece;

Recalling the declaration endorsed by the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research following its 2007 meeting in Cairo, in particular its objectives to create a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education Area and a Euro-Mediterranean Research Area;

Recalling the final declaration of the UfM Ministerial Conference held in November 2008 in Marseille, whereby the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 43 UfM Member States committed to pay particular attention to Higher Education and Research;

Considering the emphasis of the 2021 European Commission Communication "Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood" on youth, education, innovation and research;

Considering the launch of the new Erasmus+ programme, Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument and the Horizon Europe programme;

Considering the UNIMED Petition for an Erasmus Mediterranean Generation;

Considering the challenges in the region including unrest and the COVID-19 pandemic;



We, the signatories, call on the Union for the Mediterranean to take action and pave the way for the convening of a UfM Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research at the earliest opportunity. A renewed strategic agenda of cooperation for Mediterranean Higher Education and Research systems, acknowledging the achievements and developments of the past 15 years, is vital for the region's sustainable development and invaluable for its growth. Consequently, new commitments for the strategic importance of education, research and innovation in the development of human capital in the Euro-Mediterranean region are to be made.

Guiding Principles

We propose the following guiding principles for the convening of the UfM Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research:

- the endorsement in word and deed of the crucial role of higher education, research and innovation for Euro-Mediterranean progress and dialogue;
- the recognition of efforts of the Higher Education Institutions of the Euro-Mediterranean area to cooperate through International Credit Mobility and Capacity Building programs;
- the support of new and innovative flagship regional initiatives focused on the convergence of Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education systems;
- the support of more inclusive, greener and more equal Higher Education systems.

In particular, we call for the concentration of efforts on:

- research and innovation;
- e-learning, digitalization and teaching innovation;
- physical mobility and virtual exchanges;
- youth employability;
- knowledge dissemination.



Founded in 1991 by Professor Franco Rizzi, [UNIMED](#) is an association of Universities from the countries of the Mediterranean basin aimed at developing research and education in the Euro-Mediterranean region in order to contribute to scientific, cultural, social and economic cooperation. UNIMED currently counts 138 universities from 23 countries of both shores of the Mediterranean. This year, UNIMED is celebrating its 30 years of academic cooperation in the Mediterranean.



Annex I

Useful documents

Cairo Declaration “Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education & Research Area” following the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2007. Available [here](#).

Catania Declaration on a “Euro-Mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research” by the representatives from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, France, Spain, Italy, Malta, Egypt, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey, Jordan and Greece, 2006. Available [here](#).

Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of The Regions “Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood: A new Agenda for the Mediterranean”, 2021. Available [here](#).

Marseille Declaration, Final Statement of the Ministerial Conference, Union for the Mediterranean, 2008. Available [here](#).

UNIMED Petition for a Mediterranean Erasmus Generation. Available [here](#).

UNIMED report “Internationalisation of higher education in the Mediterranean, current and prospective trends” commissioned by the Union for the Mediterranean, 2021. Soon to be published.