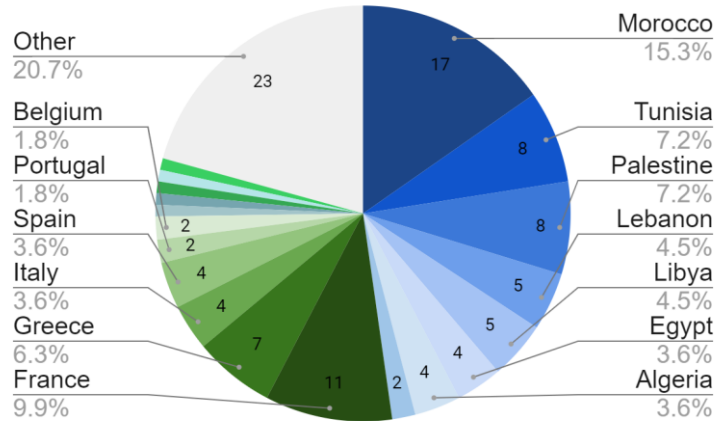


Presentation of the results of the Public Consultation in view of a 1st UfM Ministerial Meeting on Higher Education

UfM Higher Education Stakeholders' Meeting, Alicante, 17/03/23

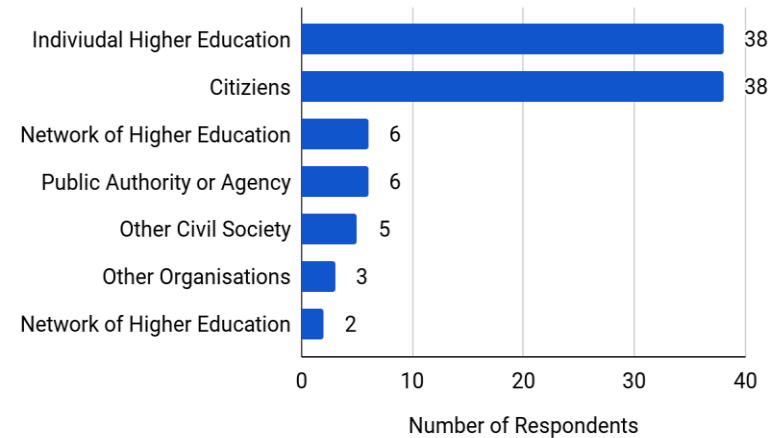
Overview of the result of the survey

- Consultation process: December 2022-February 2023
- 103 valid responses



19 different countries, 53 respondents from MENA region, 35 from Northern Mediterranean countries

Types of organizations



Large variety of stakeholders, in terms of type of organisation (see graph) and capacity of respondents: 63% Professors (33), 21% Students (11), 15% researchers (8)

Participating Stakeholders

Abdelmalek Essaadi University	Ecole Normale Supérieure de l'Enseignement / université Hassan II de Casablanca	Lebanese University	Universidade Lusófona	Université de la Manouba	Université Internationale de Rabat	Al Albayt University	University of Cyprus
Al Akhawayn University	ESITH Casablanca	Institut National de Recherche et d'Analyse Physico-Chimique	Universitat de Barcelona	Université de Monastir	University College of Applied Sciences	University of Tripoli	Palestine Technical University Kadoorie
Alexandria University	Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI)	Misurata University	Universitat de Girona	Université de Poitiers	University of Benghazi	An-Najah National University	University of Zawia
Alma Mater Studiorum - Universita' di Bologna	Lebanese American University	Mohamed Lamine Debaghine, Sétif 2 University	Université Chouaïb Doukkali	Université de Sousse	University of Derna	Arab American University	Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie
Ecole Nationale d'Architecture d'Oujda	Lebanese International University	Politecnico di Torino	UNIVERSITÉ DE CORSE	Université de Strasbourg	University of Granada	Saint Joseph University of Beirut	Téthys
Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport	BAU Global Education Network	International Association of Universities	UNIMED	Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI)	Erasmus Student Network	OCEANS	Center for Mediterranean Integration, UNOPS
Erasmus National Office Palestine	Paeradigms	Association Ouchrah pour la Culture et le développement	Association Solidarite Echange et Developpement de la jeuness (ASEDEJ)	HABITAT WORLD	HOMERE FRANCE	Mediterranean Youth Council	Hellenic Ministry of Education and religious affairs
Malta Further and Higher Education Authority	Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science	Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	Minsitère ensseignement supérieur (Tunisie)	Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique (Algerie)			

Individual Higher Education Institution
Network of Higher Education Institutions
Network of Higher Education Students
Other
Other Civil Society Organisations
Public Authority or Agency

Achievements over the past years

Increased network, collaboration and exchanges between higher education organisations, governments and researcher centres allowed to **strengthen the Euro-Mediterranean community** and develop **joint programs, courses, research projects and initiatives**

Sharing of best practices and cooperation in general led to **enhanced academic and research quality, skills, intercultural competences, improved infrastructure practices, the establishment of common standards.**

The implementation of the **International Credit Mobility** in 2015 (and the inclusion in general of Southern Med countries into ERASMUS+ and Horizon framework programs) impacted internationalisation strategies of institutions

Europe and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region face common challenges, which can only be addressed through **cooperation at an international level**: investment in **research and innovation helps finding answers to these challenges** and exchanges or joint projects foster **intercultural dialogue, promotion of peace and stability and development of human capital.**

Overview of topics



Internationalisation



Governance



**Inclusion, including
the gender dimension**



**Greening / Sustainable
Development**



**Fundamental
academic values**



Digital Education



Internationalisation – Overcoming Barriers

Description of Challenge

- **Asymmetrical cooperating systems** result from asymmetric scientific resources and outputs, financial supports and incompatible administrative and financial procedures.
- **High fragmentation in the procedures and systems of credit recognition and assessment of qualifications** or non-standardized or non-aligned diploma and higher education frameworks
- **Uneven participation of countries** and in programs and initiatives, and **limited to few universities**, leading to unequal benefits and impact.
- Cooperation mostly unidirectional from **South to North**
- **Bureaucratic** obstacles (difficulty obtaining visas)
- **Financial constraints** (still very dependent on Erasmus+) limit the ability to scale up and sustain cooperation

Suggestions

- Foster the **standardisation and recognition of curricula and diplomas**:
 - Encourage the **harmonisation of higher education policies and regulations** across the Euro-Mediterranean region, with a focus on ensuring **compatibility** and **mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications**.
 - Harmonise the content of training courses and match their content with the real needs of each country.
- Set up joint tools to **monitor the quality of international collaborations**.
- **Facilitate mobility** (e.g. facilitating visa obtention for meetings and conferences or standardised visa procedures and an "Erasmus Visa", reduce administrative barriers)
- Promote **regular networking opportunities and conferences through university networks, permanent forum for dialogue or other platforms to encourage dialogue and collaboration**.
- **Promote multilingual competencies, the Mediterranean dimension and intercultural understanding**, ideas, perspectives, and cultural heritage through collaborative activities.



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Internationalisation – Creating a common vision

Description of Challenge

- **The absence of a clear strategy of cooperation** that is built on regional priorities.
- **The lack of implication** at different levels of **decision makers**
- Need to **adapt to complex social, economic and geopolitical developments in the Mediterranean**
- **Lack of awareness by the general public** about the existence and benefits of international education, Euro-Med partnership, or more specific the UfM actions and initiatives.

Suggestions

- Design more effective **channels and platforms of communication** for collaborative development of a **regional strategy for internationalisation** and **support capacity building of individual institutions** in the development of **their strategies**:
 - **Renewed commitment and a corresponding allocation of resources** and policies that facilitate cross-border collaboration by governments and the higher education sectors of both shores of the Mediterranean is needed
 - A comprehensive and responsible **internationalisation strategy is needed as a governance tool for universities** and should follow quality standards to **ensure opportunities to all**.
- **Increase EU funding for Euro-mediterranean higher education programmes** (Mediterranean initiatives, International Credit Mobility ICM)
- Better integrate Mediterranean partners into **European Research Area and into European University Alliances** (e.g. initially as associate partners)



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Internationalisation – Implementing Joint Activities

Suggestions

- Encourage the development of joint activities (start small and scale up):
 - **Strengthen bilateral collaborations** as testbeds to overcome obstacles to internationalization
 - Establish **working groups** along certain expertises to facilitate creation of joint activities
 - **Share best practices (in e.g. education, research, administration), data, research results** across borders.
- Joint activities proposed:
 - **Short mobilities and programs** (e.g. summer schools, hackathons, capacity building programs)
 - **Seminars on common challenges** of the Euro-Mediterranean
 - **Joint Research projects** on common challenges (reinforce **capacity building** of researchers from MENA region)
 - Joint **degree programs or courses** between universities in the Euro-Mediterranean region
 - **Internationalisation at home** by promotion of intercultural activities on campus, development of study programmes in partnership with foreign institutions, teaching in foreign languages, integration of international topics in the study programmes, creating virtual partnerships and mobility with international universities.



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Governance

Description of Challenge

- Need for **effective and improved leadership**
- Need for **good governance practices** that prioritise transparency and accountability
- Certain countries lack **quality assurance** mechanisms
- **Discrepancy in higher** education systems can be a barrier for collaboration
- **Brain drain** from South to North countries

Suggestions

- Enhance inclusivity of stakeholders by **involving citizens** and promoting the **engagement and participation of teaching staff, students and employees** for informing governance of Higher Education Institutes
- **Support staff** of Higher Education Institutes **through capacity building and provide training**, ensure retain of talent and fostering of professional development
- Use governance to support knowledge transfer and capacity building by **establishing collaborations with Mediterranean universities and having regular thematic meetings.**
- Encourage the development of **strong and visionary leadership** that is able to respond to complex challenges and drive social transformation
 - Identify and establish best fit model for governance
 - Support development and implementation of common quality assurance and evaluation standards in Higher Education Institutes
- **Promote good governance, transparency and ethical conduct** through partnership and collaboration
- **Align higher education strategies with regional development objectives**



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Inclusion including the gender dimension

Description of Challenge

- Need to **boost equality and reduce disparity** in professional posts, mobility, retention and promotion of talent, leadership, research, learning in all regions despite cultural and historical reasons, including equality for:
 - Gender, especially
 - Religion
 - Cultural/ethnic
 - Social minority groups
 - refugees
- **Improve accessibility** to Higher Education and make it flexible, meeting different needs of different groups of the public.

Suggestions

- **Update policies and initiatives** promoting equality and inclusion
- Use role models and **best practices** as inspiration, including initiatives, prizes, mentorships, etc.
- **Integrate gender dimension** in regulations, curricula, and also as pre-requirement for **scholarships/funding/grants/incentives**.
- Put in place **persons or organisations in charge of inclusion** and equality and for exchange and to understand needs of each group
- Launch programs of continuing education or **lifelong learning** as well as enhance **recognition of prior learning**, and apprenticeships.
- **Guarantee continuation** of Higher Education for refugees
- Provide **more opportunities and resources** for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **Address harassment and discrimination** in Higher Education and provide support to victims.



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Digital Education

Description of Challenge

- **Resources** needed to invest in digital education
- Limited **qualified personnel**
- Lack of **infrastructure** for digital education
- Low **digital literacy**
- Lack of **strategic planning**

Suggestions

- Investment in and adapting to new technologies by investing in **infrastructure** for digital education and increasing methods for **finding resources**
- **Shared online tools and platforms** for peer-learning and sharing of resources and information
- Capacity building through **regular training** of staff on **digital education and digital transformation**
- Support for digital readiness for the future by promoting **digital skills training** for citizens and faculty staff and students as well as integrating **digitization** in university pedagogy
- Establishing **joint online programs** for digital education (like MOOC)
- Increasing access to programs and curricula and internationalization at home through **distance learning** and **virtual exchange programs**
- Enhancing development of student digital skills by **integrating digital education in teaching**, as well as creating an **enhanced learning and teaching** experience.
- Development of **clear strategies and policies for integrating digital education** into curricula



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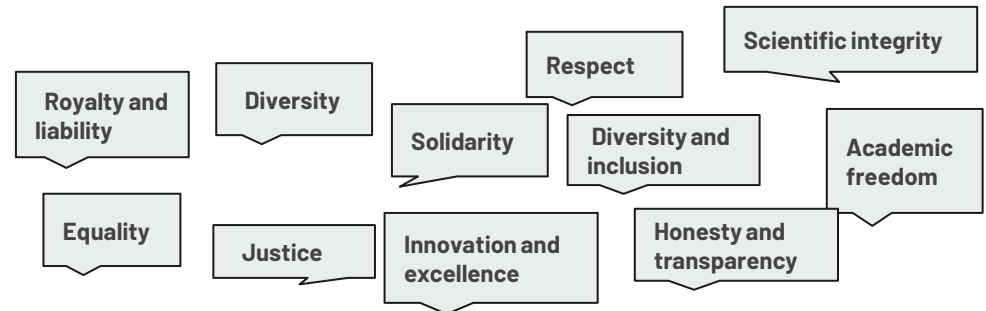
Fundamental Academic Values

Description of Challenge

- Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the field of Higher Education needs to be **underpinned by values and given a sense of responsibility** by those involved in it.
- The **varied educational systems**, along with diverse geographical, cultural, economic, and historical perspectives are valuable assets, but **balancing them will be the main challenge** of HEI's in the region.

Suggestions

- Produce a **joint declaration** and improve the existing **guidelines**.
- Include fundamental academic values into **curricula**.
 - Develop joint curricula and educational programmes aligned to academic values
 - Integrate new paradigms: open science; environmental humanism.
- Establish **mechanisms** related to academic values in order to **promote, monitor and evaluate** them
- Example of Academic values mentioned:



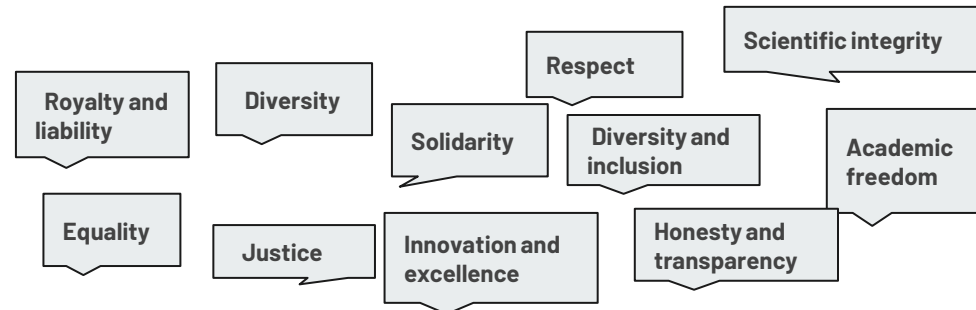
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Greening/Sustainable Development

Description of Challenge

- Curriculum and tools must adapt to train students and researchers to work on **complex global problems**
- Need for a **holistic approach** of the Mediterranean countries to **challenges of the region**
- **Resources and funding** to support sustainability approach
- Need for **collaborative efforts targeting sustainable solutions** for the region

Suggestions

- **Cross-cutting approach for integrating SDGs and climate-related topics** in curricula and training in HEIs to avoid an isolated conception of sustainability as a subject or practice that is separate and needs to be incorporated
- Encourage HEIs to **integrate opportunities into curricula** for students to have in community service, volunteer work and civic engagement and **to develop partnerships with NGOs and community groups to address pressing issues.**
- SDGs need to be made a **key item in the agenda and policy priorities** for organisations and Higher Education Institutes
- **Facilitate and support cross-border and interdisciplinary research collaboration** to address common challenges related to sustainability and the environment.
- Encourage finding of **sustainable solutions** through **academic-industry partnering**
- Generate strategic **programmes and initiatives** in favour of sustainability



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Other Areas. Employability

Description of Challenge

- Higher Education system needs a reform to cover needs of **labour market**.
- **Employability** a challenge to graduates and youth, as they don't have enough qualified skills and knowledge adapted to the rapidly evolving job market.
- **Need to reinforce entrepreneurship** and links between vocational education and training and higher education

Suggestions

- **Let private-public partnership reinforce employability**
 - Innovation clusters as a lever for territorial development
 - Practical and applied training in close collaboration with other players. Ex. dual training, work placements, service learning, etc.
 - Euro-Mediterranean TVET network to bring together institutions, industry, and government to exchange best practices, share resources, and collaborate on research initiatives that align with the needs of the labour market.
- Support dynamism and adaptation to **change, by tailoring education to needs of market and promote entrepreneurship**
 - Develop joint entrepreneurship programmes, career centres, and incubators for students from European and Mediterranean countries
 - Training programs for professional career, work-integrated learning programs, internships, and career development workshops
 - Fostering skills development aimed at enhancing students' digital, entrepreneurial, social and transferable skills
- Construct **pathways between formal and non-formal education** and experiential learning.

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Take-Home message

Main Challenges

Asymmetry, non-alignment and unequal distribution of opportunities amongst member states

Asymmetry and unequal distribution of opportunities within member states

Administrative and Financial Barriers to cooperation and mobility

The Mediterranean Dimension of higher education cooperation

Aligning education to job market needs

Lack of a common strategy, unified vision or leadership amongst stakeholders

Main Suggestions

Reinforce common platforms

Promote regular networking opportunities and conferences through university networks

Widen participation of underrepresented institutions and persons in cooperation

Leverage private-public partnerships to reinforce employability

Support joint activities on core activities: Short mobilities and programs; Seminars on common challenges of the Euro-Mediterranean; Joint Research projects on common challenges

Support staff of HEIs through capacity building and training

Increase EU funding whilst reduce dependency on it

Ensure compatibility and mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications

Adapt cooperation to regional social, economic and political conditions and needs

Thanks for your attention!

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João Lobo: joao.lobo@ufmsecretariat.org