

Title of the initiative
Mediterranean Science, Policy, Research & Innovation Gateway (MED-SPRING)
Idea origin (country)
The name the country where the inspired practice came from
Italy
The project is conducted involving several countries: Italy, Egypt ,Spain, France, Germany, Greece, Malta, Portugal, Cyprus, Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Belgium
Idea origin (institution)
The name the institution where the inspired practice came from
CENTRO INTERNAZIONALE DI ALTI STUDI AGRONOMICI MEDITERRANEI – ISTITUTO AGRONOMO MEDITERRANEO DI BARI (CIHEAM-IAMB)
Brief description
<p>The project focused on three societal challenges (Energy, High Quality Affordable Food, and Scarcity of resources) and aimed at tackling policy objectives by creating a dialogue and coordination platform of governmental institutions, research organizations, associations and civil society. The specific objectives of the project were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) enhancing European-Med Partner Countries co-ownership in research cooperation; 2) creating synergies in order to reduce fragmentation of research actions; 3) involving the civil society in the institutional dialogue on research and innovation; 4) developing cooperation instruments to tackle societal challenges with a view to sustainability; 5) supporting research and innovation capacity building through comprehensive training and contributing build an Euro-Mediterranean shared knowledge space in order to develop common planning capacity and a sustainable regional RDT policy and cooperation. <p>The overall objective of MED-SPRING was to contribute to the quality of the Euro-Mediterranean research area, with a particular focus on the bi-regional Euro-Mediterranean scientific & technological cooperation, research & innovation, policy dialogue and cooperation monitoring. The proposal aimed at creating a dialogue and coordination platform of governmental institutions, research organizations, associations and NGOs helping integrate society in the institutional dialogue. To this end, it supported synergies and networking to strengthen joint activities and cooperation in EU programmes, as well as a monitoring of regional RTD cooperation and policies. In particular, the proposal is structured to address three societal challenges: energy, high quality affordable food, scarcity of resources. These challenges have been selected on the basis of the result of the long-standing and ongoing EU-MPCs policy dialogue and represent the most significant areas of common interest in current Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.</p>
Idea focus
The focus of the inspired practice was on
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Research management ○ Cooperation in research

Why is it considered an Inspiring Practice?

Keywords of the practice are research cooperation, synergies and reduced fragmentation, engaging the civil society in the dialogue on R&I, supporting training and capacity building, building a shared knowledge space. Despite the project was financed and implemented about 10 years ago (2013-2017), the approach and the cooperation framework among different stakeholders are valuable and still relevant. The winning idea was to involve in the dialogue governmental institutions, research organizations, associations and NGOs, the civil society as well as universities, with the scope of contributing to the quality of the research in the Med and to carry out a comprehensive analysis of societal challenges. Another element of value of the project was the idea of monitoring actual cooperation policies and opportunities.

Relevance of the initiative in its specific context

(why was it developed, why is it important in its specific context, what type of change it generated for the target group, relevance at local / national / international)

The project was particularly important as an additional tassel in the overall policy dialogue about cooperation in research in the Euro-Med area. It was able to put together 28 partners from 18 countries, including national research centers, ministries, higher councils for research, universities, networks, foundations, etc. Such a diverse and high-profile consortium was able to influence policies, processes, raise awareness and develop communication and cooperation channels for exchange and cooperation in the region.

Target Group of the practice

- Academic staff
- Administrative staff
- University leaders
- Policy-makers

Impact

How the initiative produced an impact in its context and beyond

The final event of the project, open to the public, was hosted by the European Commission, titled “The MedSpring legacy for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation on R&I” (July 2017). The event shows the great relevance given to the EC to the project, and was an opportunity to reflect on the legacy of MED-SPRING providing inputs for actions and steering the European Commission policy and planning towards areas functional to fill the remaining gaps and needs. The project managed to engage institutions into a policy dialogue well beyond the project lifetime and scope, for a thorough reflection including all perspectives, with senior researchers, young innovators, cooperation actors, EU officers, international organizations, representatives of the private sector, public/governmental administrations, NGOs (including representatives of the civil society), all witnessing the project positive impacts and willing to jointly design the road ahead. In terms of impacts, there has been a successful element common to all the project’s pillars: the establishment or strengthening of networks, partnerships, relationships and dialogue platforms that have contributed to the achievement of the project objectives. This “fil rouge” among all the pillars has increased the level of dialogue among research, policy level and civil society which is functional to reinforcing the NEXUS approach when tackling the societal challenges related to water, energy and food. The project has contributed to create a conducive environment for research and innovation by building an effective ecosystem in which policy makers, researchers, civil society and public/private entrepreneurs collaborate towards innovative solutions for problems related to water scarcity, sustainable food production and consumption and sustainable energy production and management. The continuous involvement of young researchers and innovators laid the basis for further actions to facilitate job creation and approach migration related issues by offering opportunities for local development.

Transferability of the initiative

Which elements can be adapted and transferred to other contexts/fields

Among the many actions put in place during the project, some can be replicable producing a great impact:

- Local brokerage events, involving local authorities, researchers, the private sector, policy-makers and decision-makers, innovators and civil society representatives, to exchange ideas and proposals.
- “Inter-institutional events” gathering research actors and programme managers to discuss common priorities and challenges, and draft a plan for cooperation and mobility schemes in the Euro-Med region
- Creation of a multi-discipline and multi-stake expert group.
- Awareness events at national and local level. An example is the organization of ‘scientific coffees’ aimed at connecting researchers with the general public.
- Online activities such as consultations, surveys, good practices exchange
- Creation of an online platform as a key virtual ecosystem for sharing information, priorities, opportunities linked to research and innovation.
- Establishment of a working group for the analysis and monitoring of existing national research programmes

After each event, a position paper has been drafted and widely circulated, giving sound recommendations to policy makers and research managers. The project also organized a Euro-Mediterranean Hackathon (held in Amman in December 2016), where around 90 innovative ideas were presented by 200 young idea carriers.

Sustainability of the initiative

The factors favoring the success of the initiative over time

The overall action is hardly replicable unless a high-profile consortium applies for funding. However, several of the actions implemented during the project are replicable, relying on a strong collaboration between Libyan Higher Education Institutions, national decision-makers and stakeholders at local level. Universities shall invest in training human resources and in establishing long-lasting relations and networks, so as to reinforce synergies. These collaboration will be essential for joint successful collaborations and ventures over time.

Contact and references

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Link: <https://www.iamb.it/>

Link: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/311780/reporting>