



DIALOGUE 5+5

THIRD MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON
RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION
TUNIS, MARCH 30-31, 2017

**Promotion of research, innovation and higher
education for social stability and economic growth**

TUNIS MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

The Ministers in charge of Research, Innovation and Higher Education in the Dialogue 5+5 Member Countries of the Western Mediterranean, meeting on the occasion of the Third Ministerial Conference on Research, Innovation and Higher Education, in Tunis on March 31, 2017 in presence of the European Commission, the General Secretariat of the Arab Maghreb Union, and the General Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean:

Considering the recommendations of the Second Summit of the Heads of States and Governments of the Dialogue 5+5 Member Countries, held in Malta in October 2012;

Recognizing the recommendations of the meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the Dialogue 5+5 Member Countries, held in Tangiers on October 7, 2015 and in Marseille on October 28, 2016

Acknowledging the recommendations of the previous Conferences of Ministers of Research, Innovation and Higher Education of Dialogue 5+5 Member Countries;

Being aware of the challenges facing the Dialogue 5+5 Member Countries in the field of Research, Innovation and Higher Education, and convinced of the importance of these sectors in achieving development, progress and prosperity of their countries;

Taking note of the rich and constructive debates during the Conference sessions as well the interventions of the Member Countries, the European Commission, the Arab Maghreb Union and the Union for the Mediterranean;

Reaffirming the agreement during the First and the Second Ministerial Conference of the Dialogue 5+5 Member Countries on Research, Innovation and Higher Education held in Rabat and in Madrid in September 2013 and March 2015, respectively, to organize the Third Ministerial Conference in March 2017 and to pursue the cooperation within the Dialogue 5+5;

Underlining the importance of research and higher education for the development of knowledge, the promotion of technologies and national innovation systems for the purpose of attaining socioeconomic growth and bearing the different challenges that the Member Countries face, such as, unemployment, economic underdevelopment, environmental degradation, shortage of natural resources and serious scarcity of water and energy.

Moreover, research and higher education can be relevant and powerful means to face the migration challenge, which is admitted to be a long term phenomenon in the Dialogue 5+5 area.

Recall

1. The Work Programme, prepared by the Group of Senior Officials during the Second Ministerial Conference whose preparatory meetings were constructed on principles and priorities;
2. The support to the principles set out in the Second Ministerial Conference for the successful implementation of the actions identified in the Work Programme:
 - a) To support research, the advancement of scientific knowledge and the advanced training of scientists in all areas of knowledge;
 - b) to minimize the gap between research and innovation. and support the smooth transition to the principle of "idea to market" integrated into the architecture of H2020 and gradually into national programs of research and innovation of the countries of the Dialogue 5+5;
 - c) to support a broader approach in raising awareness and motivation of researchers to meet the demand for PhDs in collaboration with industry, the consolidation of internship schemes for master's students in the private sector, and the promotion of entrepreneurship and improvement of the innovation skills profile in science and technology graduate programs;
 - d) to integrate the dissemination and sharing of knowledge and technology transfer as a cross-cutting issue in all proposed actions;
 - e) to adopt a variable geometry approach where the actions should escalate from bilateral to multilateral settings;
 - f) to establish a viable approach to financing activities using national budgets for international cooperation and for opening programs and projects to participants from other countries in the region, and to promote maximum synergy with the European funding programs, such as H2020, ERASMUS+ and COST.

The Ministers:

Agree to consolidate the scientific and technical achievements within the Dialogue 5+5;

Welcome the launch of the Dialogue 5+5 Website www.fiveplusfive-rihe.org, jointly developed by Tunisia, Spain and Italy, which is an essential instrument of communication through which the ongoing projects and activities within the Dialogue 5+5 Member Countries and beyond can be showcased;

Encourage the continuation of the (ongoing initiatives) adopted in Madrid and to be developed in the next period 2017-2018;

Call for all Dialogue 5+5 Member Countries to maintain regular contact, through regular meetings, and to ensure the implementation of the agreed conclusions, monitoring and evaluation of launched initiatives, and the leveraging of synergies between different sectors, in particular research, innovation and higher education;

Emphasize their common determination to strengthen relations between the countries of the Western Mediterranean, and thus, justifying a new dynamic to their scientific cooperation, based on efficiency, performance and complementarity;

Agree that strengthening the potential of youth, is fundamental to the development and prosperity of the Mediterranean Region; ensuring that they are given full opportunities to access higher education;

Recall that training and professional integration of young people and job creation must remain a priority for projects within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean, and in the context of the EU-Africa partnership;

Emphasize the importance of enrolling students and young researchers at the heart of exchange mobility and scientific and technological cooperation programs between the two shores of the Mediterranean at the scientific, social and cultural levels, to foster mutual understanding and to combat radicalization, racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance;

Acknowledge the valuable contributions of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), and the European Commission (EC), as observers.

Welcome the development of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) initiative to be undertaken by the European Commission and several Member States, Associated Countries and Third Countries Takes Note of the progress being achieved in the inter-institutional negotiations and looks forward to its timely adoption. The Dialogue 5+5 Member Countries fully support this initiative, which will address the common challenges in food, water and migration in the Mediterranean Area.

Welcome the BLUEMED initiative for blue growth and jobs, and the efforts to open up this initiative to southern Mediterranean countries.

Endorse the Work Programme for 2017-2018 on Research, Innovation and Higher Education annexed to this statement.

The Ministers express their deep appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Tunisia for the warm welcome and hospitality and all arrangements that contributed to the success of this Conference.

The Ministers congratulate Spain for the work accomplished during its co-chairmanship of the Dialogue 5+5. The Ministers approve with pleasure the request by Italy to host the Fourth Meeting of Ministers in charge of Research, Innovation and Higher Education in the Western Mediterranean Dialogue 5+5 that will be held in 2019 in Rome chaired by Italy and co-chaired by Tunisia.

The Ministers acknowledge the intention expressed by Portugal to chair the next north turn of the Western Mediterranean Dialogue 5+5 Ministerial Conference.

This declaration is originally written in English and French. In case of discrepancies in interpretation the English version will prevail.

Les versions originales de cette déclaration sont rédigées en anglais et en français. En cas de divergence d'interprétation, la version anglaise prévaudra.