



TOWARDS AN EURO-MEDITERRANEAN AREA OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

MEDGOVERNANCE PROJECT

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Contents

Introduction/Executive Summary	3
The Broad Policy Framework	3
The implementation framework	9
The role of regional authorities	11
The role of transnational and transregional cooperation	17
Conclusions	21

INTRODUCTION/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the Cairo declaration, Euromed partners affirmed their commitment to the objective of creating a Euro-Mediterranean area of higher education and research and clearly defined the guidelines for future cooperation among Euro-Mediterranean partners in this area. They also stated that the cooperation in the field of higher education, research and innovation, technology transfer and information society go hand by hand and constitute reinforcing elements to competitiveness and job creation in order to overcome the challenges of globalisation. In this sense, all stakeholders (international organisations, such as the EU, national and regional governments, local authorities, civil society, private business and universities) should have an active participation and involvement in the process. Nevertheless, it should be recognised the fact that European countries have been reforming their higher education and research systems more rapidly than the south-Mediterranean countries given the agenda designed to deal with the Bologna process.

The European university landscape is primarily organized at the national and regional levels and is characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity that is reflected in its organization, governance and operating conditions. From a general point of view, regulation in the form of enhancing institutional autonomy has certainly been one of the overarching governance trends in European higher education over the last two decades.

At the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Cairo on 18th June 2007, Ministers underlined the importance of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in supporting development and modernisation processes in higher education, especially through the TEMPUS Programme, as well as fostering research, technology, development and innovation in cooperation with Mediterranean Partner Countries, in particular through the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. They also welcomed the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window and the prospects offered by the Euromed scholarship scheme for university students and higher education staff from partner countries, as endorsed by the Euro-Mediterranean Summit in the year 2005. All this should add to the existing funding opportunities offered by both European Union Member States and Mediterranean Partners.

It is natural that there should be cooperation in the field of higher education, research and innovation since they can increase competitiveness in business, help create new job possibilities and prepare countries and regions to meet the challenges of globalisation. In this context, the importance of knowledge as a key element needs to be underlined. Supported by the achievements of the information society, knowledge is the basis for faster development – nationally, regionally and worldwide. In order to take a more active role in strengthening partnership and dialogue, Slovenia launched a specific initiative to establish a Euro-Mediterranean University in Piran. The formal inauguration of the Euro-Mediterranean University took place in Slovenia in June 2008. The main reason for establishing an international institution of this kind was the need to draw inspiration from the cultural, religious and human inheritance of the Euro-Mediterranean area. The University has every prospect of becoming a meeting place for

young people, researchers and academic staff from the entire Mediterranean area. One of the emphases of this initiative is the promotion of multilingualism and intercultural exchanges between young people as a means of increasing their employability, mobility and social inclusion and, thus, promoting development.

In spite of all these initiatives, the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area is far from being closed. As a matter of fact, it is in its initial phase.

Generally speaking, the government's new role in Higher Education may be termed "facilitative" as it attempts to create a viable service provision environment in which it controls the outcomes at a systems level without detailed interference. But here again, new steering devices have been introduced for which output funding and multi-year agreements with the (individual) higher education institutions provide illustrative examples. In effect, governments are not withdrawing from responsibility for higher education systems but are in search for new means of system oversight and performance-based steering of organizations. In some countries one can speak of the state as the 'market engineer' while emerging 'quasi-markets' still vary a lot in their degree of competition and the extent to which they are regulated by government. For example, the provision of continuing education or academic consultancy activities is largely unregulated in most countries because these activities are not perceived as academic core business. Traditional academic programs and degrees are often still subject to governmental regulation and access to this market is frequently controlled by state authorities or authorities delegated with this responsibility. Competition on the research market is promoted by moving away from the tradition of institution-based research funding towards performance-based funding, and the competitive funding of research projects through research councils or agencies at the national and international level.

Concerning transnational and transregional cooperation, there are few indications that this is emerging on a large scale. In the last years, the consolidation of several Euroregions fostered transborder and transregional cooperation in Europe. Among the different Euroregions, there are several initiatives focusing on Higher Education and Research. For instance, in Rhine-Waal, Helsinki-Tallinn, Galicia-Norte de Portugal and Nestos-Mesta Euroregions, specific objectives focus on qualifications and the labor market, innovation in arts and sciences, competitiveness and employment and technology transfer, respectively. However, only the Euroregion Pyrenees-Mediterranean has a specific objective on higher education and research.

The question one may ask after this review of governance reform and change in the higher education systems of the participating regions/countries is whether it is possible to find a link between governance reform and the overall performance of the systems taking into account the construction of the future Euro-Mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research. The few policy-initiatives taken since 1995 are in general not perceived as being very effective.

THE BROAD POLICY FRAMEWORK

European policy framework

In the Cairo Declaration (June 2007), Euromed partners affirmed their commitment to the objective of creating a Euro-Mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research and clearly defined the guidelines for future cooperation among Euro-Mediterranean partners in this area. They also stated that the cooperation in the field of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Technology Transfer and Information Society go hand by hand and constitute reinforcing elements to competitiveness and job creation in order to overcome the challenges of globalisation. In this sense, all stakeholders (international organisations, such as the EU, national and regional Governments, local authorities, civil society, private business and universities) should have an active participation and involvement in the process. Nevertheless, it should be recognised the fact that European countries have been reforming their Higher Education and Research systems more rapidly than the south-Mediterranean countries given the agenda designed to deal with the Bologna Process.

The Bologna Process aimed to establish a European 'Higher Education Area' by 2010. While undersigning countries originally interpreted the Declaration in their own ways, the process rapidly achieved a dynamic towards a broader focus: first on reforming study programmes, but then quality assurance, accreditation and degree recognition came into the picture. Bologna's perspective broadened in Berlin (2003) with the inclusion of the third phase (Ph.D.) and did so again in Bergen (2005) through the explicit mentioning of 'the importance of higher education in further enhancing research and the importance of research in underpinning higher education for the economic and cultural development of our societies and for social cohesion'.

In March 2000 the European Union committed itself in Lisbon to the ambitious objective of becoming 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.' European policymakers' intentions took on a more concrete form in 2003 when the goal of raising EU-countries' investments in R&D to 3% of GDP was outlined in Barcelona. However, several years of lagging progress forced policymakers to essentially restart the process by refocusing on broader economic growth and innovation.

It should also be emphasized that the Bologna Declaration and Lisbon Agenda have not been the only influences changing European higher education institutions. In many (West European) countries a series of reforms already were underway in the 1980s and many current reform initiatives have their origin in this time period. The changing role of the state vis-à-vis higher education institutions (i.e. in the form of enhancing institutional autonomy and stressing quality assurance and accountability) are well-known themes of the last two decades.

In this respect, a growing influence of the European Commission on national higher education policy is observed: national policies over higher education and research are increasingly influenced and framed by a European dimension. The European

Commission is seen as an emerging policy actor domestically, not only on the national level, but increasingly also by academics and university leaders. Although European competence in higher education policy making is formally limited, this apparently is of less importance than its more informal influence at the supra-national level. A possible explanation is that higher education policy is currently becoming more intertwined with, and partly dependent on, developments in other policy areas where the European Commission plays a more formal role. The role the European Commission plays in the area of research and innovation means that it is also a significant contributor to the emergent European dimension in higher education.

National policy framework

The European university landscape is primarily organized at the national and regional levels and is characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity that is reflected in its organization, governance and operating conditions. From a general point of view, regulation in the form of enhancing institutional autonomy has certainly been one of the overarching governance trends in European higher education over the last two decades.

For instance, French national policies and actions for research and innovation have evolved over time from a centralised system to a more decentralised one, with the recent creation of a new national innovation framework, oriented towards competitiveness and a knowledge based economy, with strong incentives for innovation and technologies transfer, innovative SMEs development, research results commercialisation, but also through important reforms of the public research and academic sector. The decentralisation process in France is in progress since the 80s but the national level remains very powerful, including within regional and provincial territories, through its “deconcentrated” services. In addition, if Regional Councils have an elected body, they are not entitled to enact laws nor to impose their views, policies or strategies to other territorial levels and none of the regional strategic plans is legally binding. According to the French Constitution, there is indeed no hierarchy between regional, provincial, communal, and other intermediate territorial levels of governments. Therefore, each level can play a role, according to its material compulsory competences and its willingness (for non compulsory competences). Regulation is made through a contractual process, especially through the “state-region contract”, which sets for 5 years the joined State and region policy and financing for the regional territory. This process includes in principle the provincial and municipal levels, but relationships between these levels remain complex.

The governance of innovation policies is particularly complex in Italy as it touches different bodies and ministries at different administrative levels (ie national and regional level). The design and implementation of innovation and research policies is largely performed at government level, where the main national strategic priorities are identified in coherence with the broader framework of Community guidelines and orientations. Universities are the heart and the pivotal point of the Italian research system: they are the main reference point of research, include important excellence centres and account for more than one third of total R&D expenditure in the country. Over these past ten years the university system has undergone a radical reform process also in response to the need to foster convergence with European standards and curricula. Higher education and research policies, mainly concerning universities, are

defined at the central level that is also the main source of financing of public universities. Universities enjoy a great autonomy in setting their own research goals and fields especially for what concerns basic research, even though over the past few years a portion of public funds for has been earmarked for *focused* or *mission oriented* basic research, covering strategic research fields.

Spanish higher education is regulated by an abundant collection of constitutional rules, organic laws and royal decrees. In addition, the governments of autonomous communities can issue complementary legislation within the framework of their own legal powers. The coordination of the university system is performed by two bodies, the General Conference on University Policy and the Council of Universities. The General Conference on University Policy sets out the general directives for university policy; ensures coordination with the EHEA; guarantees links with scientific and research policy; approves evaluation, licensing and accreditation criteria; proposes ways to promote collaboration between universities and the business world; and presents a biannual report on the university system including proposals to improve its quality, efficiency and financial sustainability. The Council of Universities addresses the academic aspects of the Spanish university system. It promotes academic collaboration, co-operation and coordination within the university system; formulates views on university policies which are conveyed to the Ministry of Education, education authorities within autonomous communities and the General Conference on University Policy. Governance of the university system is decentralised. The Minister of Education together with the General Conference on University Policy, establish the national level regulatory framework with general laws and Royal decrees. This role is complemented with additional legislation established by the governments of autonomous communities. The Ministry's role regarding the finance of universities is limited, for it is the autonomous communities that hold this responsibility with the exception of the national system of student scholarships and part of the investment in research and development.

Regional policy framework

The French State is represented in every region by its regional services. Two ministries acting towards innovation have regional services: i) The Ministry of industry, with the DRIRE (Regional Directorate for Industry, Research and Environment) and, ii) The Ministry of Research, with the DRTT (Regional Delegation for Research and Technologies). Both are implementing the national policies in the region. The ADEME is another national public actor operating on the regional territory. It is an industrial and commercial public agency, under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Spatial Planning and the Ministry for the Higher Education and Research. It aims to encourage, coordinate and facilitate the operations to protect the environment and manage the energy. In its field of competences, it also acts towards innovation and technology transfers. The SGAR is playing an important role, according to its responsibilities for structural fund management. The State also implements "structuring projects" of research in the PACA Region, like the Cancéropole, Genopole and ITER. Moreover, the Regional Council made two strategic plans that take into account innovation: one about economic development ("Schéma Régional de Développement Economique"), the other about research and higher education ("Schéma Régional pour l'Enseignement Supérieur et la Recherche"). The two documents acknowledge the need for SMEs and SMIs to benefit from the regional innovation and

research system. After an analysis of the regional situation and the regional actors' identification, both plans propose priorities and actions. None of these proposals is law binding, and most of the Regional policy is defined (and financed) by the state-region contract. According to the 2006 "Annual Innovation Policy Trends and Appraisal Report", 14,6% of the previous state-region contract was dedicated to "higher education and research" support. PACA belongs to the top five French regions for the budget share dedicated to research and technological development. The state-region contract 2007-2013 fully acknowledges the importance of innovation for the region and its economic development. Therefore, many measures are set up for skills improvement, technology and research results dissemination, exploitation, marketing and transfer. All together, they constitute a kind of "bi-level common policy" to enhance relationships between research and economic actors and to facilitate high value added projects. They also support the creation/reinforcement of regional interface actors, which encourage and spur on technologies and research results transfer.

Beside the strategic and goal-setting role occupied by the Italian central government new power has been granted to the regions in the field of scientific research and technological innovation policy formulation since 2001. Constitutional reform has gone in the direction of confirming and better defining the competences of regions in the field of research and innovation policies, especially by virtue of the growing importance of these policies in regional development. Regions thus play an active role in the development of research and technological development, through regional resources and through Structural Funds. It is in this perspective, and in order to comply with Community guidelines on better regulation, that Latium Region has recently adopted a new comprehensive legislation on research and innovation. Law 13 of 2008 for the "Promotion of Research and Development, Innovation and Technology Transfer" is an effort to re-organise and unify previous legislation on the subject by creating a "regional research area" linking and streamlining public and private research bodies, higher education institutions, small and large enterprises and the public administration towards a new governance system. The Law is still in its early stages of implementation and the region is still in the process of elaborating a regional strategic activity that will orient the activities under the new legislation that will become operational in 2010. The Regional Government of Piedmont is attempting to drive through change at a number of different levels of activity. Firstly, it is trying to change the way that innovative organisations behave in Piedmont, and encourage more rationality and less opportunism. Secondly, it is expanding successful experimental activities to increase and leverage resources made available to innovative businesses. Thirdly, it is trying to encourage the creation of new, high-growth, high-potential innovative businesses to change the nature of the Piedmont economy. This is an ambitious – and long term – programme for change, and reviewing its performance requires appreciating the long-term nature of the expected outcomes. The way the Regional Law 04/2006 is drafted suggests that there is a good legal foundation of transparency and consistency which should help produce the most effective innovation outcomes for the region.

Higher education in Spain has strong regional characteristics and sometimes even major differences between Autonomous Communities to an extent that it is often considered that Spain has 17 higher education systems. Adapting universities to regional needs may be a positive action but can also bring forth problems. In Spain, the regionalisation of universities has been a very fast and far-reaching process. All 17 Autonomous Communities have their own universities traditionally to cover the needs of the region.

This regionalisation process has also brought forth some challenges: i) High political influence from governments to universities (and vice versa); ii) Increased political value of universities but weakened governmental capacity to steer higher education; iii) Little differentiation because of the fact that each region is considered a higher education system (irrespective of the size and number of higher education institutions). Within the university sector, autonomous regions have broad responsibilities for higher education including the creation of public universities and the recognition of private ones; planning and co-ordinating the supply of university study programmes; financing the system of public higher education; and science and technology policies. However, the issuing and standardising of professional and academic degrees; the determination of basic university staff legal regulations (as civil servants); the specification of the internal governance arrangements for public universities; and the general coordination and promotion of scientific and technical research are the responsibility of central government. University autonomy in Spain needs to be understood within this framework.

THE IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

General presentation

At the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Cairo on 18th June 2007, Ministers underlined the importance of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in supporting development and modernisation processes in higher education, especially through the TEMPUS Programme, as well as fostering research, technology, development and innovation in cooperation with Mediterranean Partner Countries, in particular through the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. They also welcomed the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window and the prospects offered by the Euromed scholarship scheme for university students and higher education staff from partner countries, as endorsed by the Euro-Mediterranean Summit in the year 2005. All this should add to the existing funding opportunities offered by both European Union Member States and Mediterranean Partners.

The Monitoring Committee for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in RTD (MoCo) is a forum bringing together Senior Official representatives from the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPC) and the EU Member States and Associated Countries, responsible for RTD issues. It has been established in the context of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and of the follow-up of the Barcelona Process, and plays a central role in monitoring and stimulating the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in RTD. Since the Cairo Declaration, it was complemented with the creation of an expert group so as to cover Higher Education, with a view to implementing the conference objectives, deliverables and actions in order to enhance the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area. The Committee meets usually once a year, under the responsibility of the EU Member State holding the chairmanship of the EU Council. The meetings are held 'traditionally' alternatively in a EU Member State and in a Mediterranean Partner Country. Currently, the functioning of the MoCo is supported by the 'Mediterranean Innovation and Research Coordination Action – MIRA (<http://www.miraproject.eu/>). MIRA is an INCONET type project funded by the 7th EU Framework Programme for

RTD, dedicated to the EU – MPC bi-regional policy dialogue and priority setting in S&T. In turn, MoCo acts as Steering Committee of MIRA Project.

It is natural that there should be cooperation in the field of higher education, research and innovation since they can increase competitiveness in business, help create new job possibilities and prepare countries and regions to meet the challenges of globalisation. In this context, the importance of knowledge as a key element needs to be underlined. Supported by the achievements of the information society, knowledge is the basis for faster development – nationally, regionally and worldwide. In order to take a more active role in strengthening partnership and dialogue, Slovenia launched a specific initiative to establish a Euro-Mediterranean University in Piran. The formal inauguration of the Euro-Mediterranean University took place in Slovenia in June 2008. The main reason for establishing an international institution of this kind was the need to draw inspiration from the cultural, religious and human inheritance of the Euro-Mediterranean area. The University has every prospect of becoming a meeting place for young people, researchers and academic staff from the entire Mediterranean area. One of the emphases of this initiative is the promotion of multilingualism and intercultural exchanges between young people as a means of increasing their employability, mobility and social inclusion and, thus, promoting development.

In spite of all these initiatives, the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area is far from being closed. As a matter of fact, it is in its initial phase.

Contribution of the various stakeholders

The first theme that should be stressed is that higher education institutions as actors have gained in importance in the steering of the system almost everywhere. The rise of the university as a managed organisation reflects not only the growing influence of institutional leadership within the organisation but also the role of universities as key actors in national higher education policy. This often means a decrease in direct governmental interference in higher education in certain areas matched by attempts to strengthen institutional autonomy accordingly. At the same time, governmental reform efforts may imply even stronger state regulation than in the past, and not only a process of transmitting responsibility from the system to the institutional level.

In many systems authority is also transferred from the national/regional level to a new intermediate level. While the arguments for this shift are often related to the delegation of 'non-policy issues', it could be argued that there is an emerging 'agencification' taking place in a number of countries. The latter development is particularly evident in the area of quality assurance, but sometimes also in the funding area. The problem some countries seem to face is that these new agencies often take on or develop an unclear or semi-autonomous position between the state and the institutional level. They hold an intermediary position in the principal-agent relationship between governments and higher education institutions thus creating a more complex picture in terms of the transparency of the whole national/regional governance arrangement. In this way, attempts to clarify the roles and responsibilities of governments and higher education institutions are sometimes blurred.

Responsibilities that were formerly those of the state have thus not only been transferred to higher education institutions but also to other organizations such as research councils, accreditation bodies etc. New actors at the national level (e.g. ministries of economic affairs) and regional level are entering the higher education scene, especially given their interest in the emerging knowledge society and technology transfer. In this respect the state's role becomes one of a network manager and new regimes of governance emerge: we now see a more multi-actor, multi-level governance framework emerging in a number of countries.

Further, external stakeholders (industry and business) are gaining influence in national higher education policy. Traditionally, their position has been weak but increasingly efforts are being made to involve them in governmental policy networks and decision-making processes as well as in consultation on institutional profiles and strategies.

Even though the reports do not provide evidence on the level of regional funding allocated to higher education, other studies on changes in the funding regimes in Europe indicate that there has not been a general reduction in the level of public funding. In general this has meant a trend towards public funding for the sector being based on performance or excellence with the general aim of improving the efficiency of the sector. In some countries, there are initiatives to increase the level of funding for higher education, especially through the introduction or increase of tuition fees. Faced with a context of financial stringency, governments and higher education institutions are, however, moving steadily to consider such sources of revenue. The basic question for many countries is how the (growing) demand for high quality higher education can be met. The policy responses are basically of two types: first, those that attempt to lower costs by merging institutions for economies of scale, creating or strengthening low cost institutions, or increasing student-faculty ratios etc.; and, second, those that attempt to supplement limited public revenue with private revenue, for example, with tuition fees, philanthropic donations, or institutional or faculty entrepreneurship. The higher education reform agendas of most countries contain some elements of both.

THE ROLE OF REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Competences

The government's new role in Higher Education is to create a viable service provision environment in which it controls the outcomes at a systems level without detailed interference. But here again, new steering devices have been introduced for which output funding and multi-year agreements with the (individual) higher education institutions provide illustrative examples. In effect, governments are not withdrawing from responsibility for higher education systems but are in search for new means of system oversight and performance-based steering of organizations. In some countries one can speak of the state as the 'market engineer' while emerging 'quasi-markets' still vary a lot in their degree of competition and the extent to which they are regulated by government. For example, the provision of continuing education or academic consultancy activities is largely unregulated in most countries because these activities are not perceived as academic core business. Traditional academic programs and

degrees are often still subject to governmental regulation and access to this market is frequently controlled by state authorities or authorities delegated with this responsibility. Competition on the research market is promoted by moving away from the tradition of institution-based research funding towards performance-based funding, and the competitive funding of research projects through research councils or agencies at the national and international level.

In France, regional administrations' internal organisation changes from one region to another. Concerning the PACA Regional Council, there is no official interaction between the direction of international and European affairs, and the services in charge of innovation and SMEs, even though the latter may have international and European actions. This situation is called to change in a close future. Indeed, the Regional Council being endorsing the role of Managing Authority of the Med program, it is planned to develop European projects in every regional field of competence and to reinforce the Region's presence in Europe and in the Mediterranean area.

The Italian national state has sole competence for activities in the field of basic research and so national science and technology policy decisions play a strongly shaping role on evolving regional innovation system. The national government also has an interest in innovation policy through the valorisation and exploitation of these investments in knowledge capital. There is a formal organ through which the Italian regions interact with the national state, the State-Regions Conference, created in 1997 to deal with a problem arising from ongoing constitutional reforms, namely an increasing devolution of power to the regional tier. This body became more important after 2001 when changes to the constitution meant that it became the leading Constitutional co-ordination mechanism between the State and regional levels. There are discussions around the co-ordination of industrial policy within this institution, although the discussions cover the full gamut of policy discussions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the overlapping responsibilities between national and regional Governments for innovation policy have meant that there are a number of agreements negotiated between these two levels to give coherence to their collective activity.

In Spain, in spite of the strong state regulation, regions, as seen above, have an important amount of autonomy in designing their higher education systems. The central government holds responsibility of overall coordination of the higher education system, the European and international representation under a unique voice of the Spanish higher education system and the coordination and control of social policies (scholarships and grants), while the rest is under regional regulation, including funding mechanisms and a large part of the quality processes. This has conditioned the performance of the different regions, with some performing at a higher level than others, among these the Catalan higher education system. Each region has the ability to decide in which areas of public policy it wants to prioritise. In Catalonia higher education and research have become a regional priority in recent years. A number of important initiatives have differentiated the Catalan higher education system from other regions in Spain.

Capacities and resources actually involved

In June 2005, Universitat Rovira i Virgili de Tarragona (Catalonia) hosted the II Mediterranean University Forum under the auspices of the European Commission, through its Jean Monnet programme. Thanks to the collaboration of our 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 the meetings 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.

In November 2006 the procedures to register the EPUF 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.

Expertise capacities of regional authorities

Apart from its administrative structure, EPUF is organised by Working Groups, each one focusing on a particular topic within the broader theme of Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area. These groups are:

1 The Cairo Process

To monitor and promote the approximation of the Euromed Higher Education systems with relevance to the Bologna process and ECTS system, in the context of the EPUF objective related to encouraging collaboration and dialogue among higher education institutions. In particular, (a) Structured cooperation to promote the comparability and readability of Higher Education systems in the Euromed area, aiming to facilitate the recognition of merits; and (b) Cooperation, including technical assistance through existing schemes, to establish Education and Training paths based on systems of comparable transferable credits.

2 Quality: Harmonization and Assurance

Implementation of the EPUF's objective related to improve the quality of [higher] education and research, including the promotion of the establishment in Mediterranean Partner Countries of comparable Quality Control and Accreditation schemes, and the

setting up of a EuroMed agency to disseminate information, experiences and good practices in the field of quality assurance in higher education to QA agencies in EuroMed countries, public authorities and higher education institutions.

3 Efficiency and Capacity Building

Implementation of the EPUF's objective focused on increasing the efficiency of higher education institution including Institutional Capacity Building and Human Resource Development by supporting joint teaching and training programmes for academic, technical and administrative staff.

4 Participation and Knowledge Society: Development and Promotion

Implementation of the EPUF's objective promoting the direct transfer of knowledge to society by increasing the relevance of the awarded degrees to the Mediterranean Partner Countries' labour market needs, by developing the links between universities and enterprises and by increasing the cultural and social role of universities; also, by increasing the involvement of civil society in education.

5 Innovative Methodology and Technology

To monitor developments in the context of point 3 of the Cairo Declaration: Support Euromed Higher Education Programmes and Exploit the use of innovative methodologies and ICT to enhance Higher Education. In particular, to monitor steps taken by the authorities to promote (a) Cooperation between Euromed Distance universities; and (b) Cooperation aiming at the creation of a Mediterranean Digital Library and portal including translation between Euromed languages.

6 Mobility

To monitor developments in the context of points 5 and 8 of the Cairo Declaration: Enhance Effective Mobility in the Euromed region. In particular, to monitor steps taken by the authorities to (a) Sustain the TEMPUS Programme with a more strategic orientation through university networks and participation of Higher Education ministries; (b) Strengthen the participation of the Mediterranean Partner Countries' universities in the Erasmus Mundus Actions; (c) Establish Mobility Centers and Portals as well as promoting mobility contact points in the Mediterranean Partner countries; (d) Establish national programmes of mobility and open access to incoming mobility from EU Member States to Mediterranean Partner Countries; and (e) Facilitate exit and entry procedures, including visa procedures for students, researchers and teachers among Euromed countries.

Coordination with local stakeholders

The first theme identified is that higher education institutions as actors have gained in importance in the steering of the different regional Higher Education systems. The rise of the university as a managed organisation reflects not only the growing influence of institutional leadership within the organisation but also the role of universities as key actors in national and regional higher education policy. This often means a decrease in direct governmental interference in higher education in certain areas matched by attempts to strengthen institutional autonomy accordingly. At the same time, governmental reform efforts may imply even stronger state regulation than in the past,

and not only a process of transmitting responsibility from the system to the institutional level.

The regional and local actors of the regional innovation system are very numerous in the PACA Region, which are in the meanwhile both a strength and a weakness. They are a strength because the regional system is rich of innovation support organisations, but all those organisations hardly constitute an organised system. Innovation actors are sprayed upon the regional territory, without any coordination framework. This abundance without coordination blurs the overall understanding and visibility. It also complicates the stakeholders' access to information about support measures and multiplied the procedures, considering that each organisation develops its own procedural frame. Therefore, the Regional Council is working on the regional innovation system organisation. The creation of a regional innovation network is planned, to articulate and create synergies between the 230 regional organisations. According to the regional services, a real qualitative jump is at stake. The Region is working with Méditerranée Technologies to identify the actors and to create this network. It is quite complex to draw a full picture of the regional and local actors: the lack of a central coordinator diminishes considerably the regional system "legibility". Five technological centres provide assistance, services and support for the SMEs development. They had been created by the successive state-regions contracts and, in their specific thematic, help and encourage SMEs to use technologies that can improve their performances. They associated themselves for the Solaris Project, to build a coherent network that gathers technology transfer organisations. Two Innovation and Technology Transfer Regional Centres (CRITT), respectively specialised in "food processing and research" and "chemistry, plastic and material". Six Technology platforms to facilitate the SMEs access to new technologies. Each of them constitutes a network that gathers education institutions, engineering higher education school, universities and CRITT. Three incubators benefit of the Research Ministry label: the inter-university Incubator Impulse in Marseille, the PACA Est. Incubator (Nice and Toulon), and the Multimedia Incubator in la Belle de Mai (Marseille). In addition, the Region has other "pépinières d'entreprises", like "Marseille Innovation" (that counts more than 50 start-up), or Sophia Antipolis (where 80% of the ICT enterprises had been created less than 10 years ago). The six technopoles/science parks are grouping in the same space higher education, research and economic actors. They have been created to foster exchanges between those actors. The regional science parks are Agroparc in Avignon (food research and processing), Mediterranean Europole in L'Arbois (environment), Château Gombert (engineering sciences) in Marseille, the Technologic and Science Park of Luminy (biology and life sciences), Sophia Antipolis (NICT, multimedia and biotechnologies) and the project of Toulon Var Technologies (marine sciences and technologies). Competitiveness Clusters aim to create a real "ecosystem for growth", gathering in a defined space, research, universities, SMEs and big businesses working in the same field. They aim to create a partnership process to obtain synergies and international visibility around common innovating projects. Many associations/actors are acting, locally or regionally, to improve exchanges between all actors and to provide support to innovation projects and processes.

The main political body within the Lazio Region in charge of designing and coordinating research and innovation policies is the Research, Innovation and Competitiveness Unit within the Directorate general for Economic development, research, innovation and tourism. In particular the Unit identifies and coordinates the

interventions targeted at the implementation of research, innovation and technology transfer. It represents the regional institutional reference point for regional organisations with responsibilities in this field, such as: i) FILAS, Financial Regional Development Agency, is the organisation responsible for supporting development and innovation processes in the region's entrepreneurial system. To this end, FILAS proposes initiatives but, above all, administers innovation policies and the implementation of the relevant regional instruments (including EU funds); ii) Sviluppo Lazio, a regional development agency in charge of internationalisation and investment promotion in the region; iii) the Business Innovation Centre Latium (BIC LAZIO), which oversees business start-ups and growth. It has recently opened the latest of its 12 branches at "La Sapienza" University. BIC Lazio manages four incubators and is particularly active in planning activities for technology transfer interventions within the region; iv) the Regional Agency for Development and Innovation in Latium (ARSIAL) – established with the aim of supporting the competitiveness and innovation of Latium enterprises operating in the agricultural sector; v) Centro Atena (FILAS) is a centre of excellence established by the Latium region dedicated to interactive multimedia communications and aerospace, but recently enlarged to the other priority sectors of ROP 2007-2013. The Centro Atena provides support services for pre-competitive investments and conducts analyses and studies of the sector and of enabling technologies. It should be added that other Regional Directorates contribute to the development of innovation and research policies, according to their specific competences. In particular the Regional Directorate for Productive Activities – coordinating policies for the development of the productive system with a particular focus on SMEs – plays a relevant role in this respect and coordinates some of the interventions foreseen under Priority Axis n.1 of the ERDF ROP 2007-2013, mainly pertaining to the development of innovative enterprises.

In Catalonia, there have been some specific policy initiatives that have stimulated the regional role of universities and at the same time have provided a space for collaboration between universities, the industry sector, the government and the civil society. Among these initiatives two can be mentioned as examples. The first one is the Pacte Nacional per la Recerca i la Innovació (Catalan Agreement for Research and Innovation, CARI) which fosters research and innovation understanding that universities have a crucial role in this area, but also including many other stakeholders from the private sector, the regional authorities and the civil society. The second policy initiative, as mentioned earlier, is the White Paper of the University of Catalonia that includes a strong regional dimension in its vision for the Catalan higher education system and calls upon different stakeholders to accomplish its objectives for the benefit of Catalonia. Some policy tensions can be found when the regional role of universities conflicts with the objective of international excellence. However so far, the regional role is still predominant. There is also a differentiation between teaching and research activities, the first more oriented to students of the region (especially in undergraduate courses) and the second more oriented towards achieving excellence and national and international recognition (a policy example is the financial incentive for academics to increase their research productivity). Catalan universities are playing an increasing role in "third mission" activities in the field of knowledge transfer and relationships with firms. All public universities and the URL, a private one, have a Technological Transfer Office so-called Oficina de Transferència de Resultats de la Investigació (OTRI). The industry financing of university R&D expenditures is above the OECD average and the R&D contracts between universities and firms have increased. Furthermore, the number of spin-offs and of university patent applications have also increased being the

Polytechnic University of Catalonia the first university in Spain in the number of patent applications. Nevertheless, some weaknesses are the low mobility of researchers and the incorporation of PhDs in firms, the co-operation between universities and firms, especially SME, is still not very frequent and that the technological level of the agreements between universities and firms is quite low. In addition, other indicators, such as the incomes by licenses of patents are very far from advanced countries.

THE ROLE OF TRANSNATIONAL AND TRANSREGIONAL COOPERATION

Contribution to national policies

Concerning transnational and transregional cooperation, there are few indications that this is emerging on a large scale. In the last years, the consolidation of several Euroregions fostered transborder and transregional cooperation in Europe. Both the Assembly of the European Regions and the Association of Border Regions of Europe (ARFE) have promoted this collaboration actively acting as lobby for the recognition of the transregional/transborder cooperation as a tool to promote the economic and social development both at the internal frontiers as well as at the external borders of the European Union. The final objective of the transregional/transborder cooperation is the integration of those territories divided by state frontiers that suffer common problems that require common solutions. The main motivation has been, and it is, the setting in place joint projects to overcome the diversity of political structures and to remove all those obstacles that hinder the daily relationships in both sides of the frontiers.

Although different with regard to their formal structure or organization, most of the Euroregions share many common characteristics: they are permanent structures, they have a personality separated from that of their members, they have their own decisive organs, as well as technical, administrative and financial resources, and cooperation is not based in individual measures but in the elaboration and the development of a common strategy. The geographical area is determined by the socioeconomic integration of different territories and not only by administrative units. It must be noted that Euroregions are not constituted as a new level of local or regional government, but as an exchange point for the public sector and private.

Among the different Euroregions, there are several initiatives focusing on Higher Education and Research. For instance, in Rhine-Waal, Helsinki-Tallinn, Galicia-Norte de Portugal and Nestos-Mesta Euroregions, specific objectives focus on qualifications and the labor market, innovation in arts and sciences, competitiveness and employment and technology transfer, respectively. However, only the Euroregion Pyrenees-Mediterranean has a specific objective on higher education and research.

The importance of the paper of universities characterizes the Euroregion Pyrenees-Mediterranean. Thirty universities, together with those responsible for higher education and research and the governments of the different territories, have signed a declaration by means of which they state their will of collaborating to make a genuine contribution to the Europe of knowledge and to collaborate in the strategic sectors of research. The aim is to become the reference for higher education and research of the south of Europe.

The thirty higher education institutions committed in this task have already begun on the way to collaboration and they plan solid linkages that allow the exchange and the transfer of knowledge and technology to settle down. The main lines of academic and scientific collaboration will be centered in the mobility and the compatibility of degrees, the coordination of research and education and the development of strategic areas such as aeronautics, biomedicine, biotechnology and agronomy, among others.

Contribution to European and Mediterranean policies

Concerning the PACA Regional Council, the Mediterranean zone is becoming a concrete reality and not only a political priority, since the President of the Regional Council has been appointed as the President of the Inter-Mediterranean Commission of the CPMR and since the Region became Managing Authority of the Med program. Yet, the practical “content” of this priority is not defined, although it appears that services in charge of innovation will try to use both programs, MED and CBC program of the ENPI. The regional executive always recalls on the importance of the Mediterranean, and strongly disagrees with the notion of “neighbourhood” in the Mediterranean space, considering the Mediterranean as a whole. For historical, social and demographical reasons, he always insists on the importance of Mediterranean political cooperation. Accordingly, all regional directions and services received a strong incentive to implement projects and actions in the Mediterranean context (whatever is their field of actions), and the PRIDES will be associate to this movement. At the national level, the Mediterranean is also a subject of high concern for the new presidency, although the content of the “Union Méditerranéenne” proposal is not defined yet: it seems that this priority is more the result of a geo-political concern than of a real will to go forward with a social and economic integration. In spite of the political declarations and the intentions displayed, which claim the importance of the Mediterranean area, the actors of the innovation do not privilege it. In the Mediterranean area the scientific and the technological win out over the proximity.

In the Lazio region there are many types and forms of international academic cooperation in creating research networks between euro-mediterranean universities (e.g. the Community of Mediterranean Universities), such as conferences; summer schools or certificate courses; doctoral research seminars and master study programmes (see for example the Master Course in Euro Mediterranean Studies organised by Uninettuno or the Master Course for Architecture graduates from Maghreb and Mashrek countries organised by University La Sapienza). The Ministry of Economic Activities through the Italian Foreign Trade Board is also active in the Euro-Mediterranean area, although its initiatives are not oriented towards collaboration among higher education institutions or between them and the industry sector, but rather at promoting business cooperation in the high technology sector (mainly ICT) such as for example through business to business cooperation, capacity building of business intermediary organisations, and investment promotion activities.

Actions foreseen or already undertaken in the perspective of future policies

On the base of the Institut de la Méditerranée (IM) researches and interviews for this questionnaire, and IM previous experiences, three possible common actions to build a

Mediterranean Lisbon Strategy have been identified: i) **Promote and support a common regional research strategy at the Mediterranean scale:** In this proposal, we suggest that the Regions identify a list of research sectors that are, according to them, particularly relevant for the Mediterranean context. Some specific topics, such as water management, renewable energies, environment, maritime resources, etc can already be imagined. Regions will organise common calls for proposal. Each Region will take in charge the process for its territory (promotion of the initiative, communication, and identification of stakeholders). The territorial stakeholders of each territory will elaborate, in association with their counterparts in other Regions, a common proposal to reply to the call. The financing will be, after approval, given by each region to its own territory stakeholders; ii) **Creation of a common regional forum on competitiveness and SME:** We propose to create a forum gathering the Regions and promote intensive experiences exchanges and analysis on innovation and SME (long term approach). Such a forum could be very operational, gathering all regional agencies that play a role in innovation and technologies transfer for SME. It could be even possible to create a network of opportunities for the Mediterranean stakeholders and SMEs: a SME in one region could benefit from the support provided by an agency present in another region (information about local stakeholders and research centres, support to create a subsidiary company on the other regional territory, etc.); iii) **Creation of a common structure on European fund management and use:** It can be possible to create a common structure (network), conceived as a common think-tank and know-how database about European funds (structural funds, framework program, and all relevant programs to fulfil the objectives of the Lisbon strategy). This structure could gather regional innovation stakeholders, and keep up with European programs as well as stakeholders' needs, so as to identify the most relevant European programs. The target has of course to be SMEs and innovation process.

The Piedmont Region participates in transnational projects in the framework of Regional Law 4/2006 about innovation and research. Under the Regional Operational Program, the operational objective of promoting innovation through strengthening the processes of technological knowledge, dissemination and implementation of innovative investment by supporting cooperation between universities, research centers and enterprises is accomplished through this activities: the National Maritime Technology Platform (PTNM), created in the face of an express requirement of the economic system of having a place of confrontation between the single Industry, research and administration system in research, training and innovation in the areas of sea; the PTMB - Technology Platform for Maritime and Marine Research, Innovation and Training in the Mediterranean and Black Seas (proposal submitted under the ENPI CBC MED) with the objective to operationally implement the Technology Platform for Maritime and Marine Research, Innovation and Training for the Mediterranean and Black Sea (PTMB) and, in doing so, implementing part of the EU Integrated Maritime Policy in the Mediterranean as requested in the EU Communication COM 2009(0466). The Piedmont Region has identified the Intelligent Mobile Platform, or Infomobilità, to unite and to network all the different actors who are, or may be in the future, specifically interested in the diffusion of technologies and systems in the field of mobile information, in order to promote and improve the value of the territory. The objective of the Platform is to facilitate the connection and synergies between projects and the various actors who contribute to the development of the mobile information, interpreting and bringing initiatives to the needs of the automotive sector, ICT and satellite technologies. Within the European Regional Development Funds (POR FESR

2007-2013, Priority 1 -Innovation and Production Transition, Regional competitiveness and employment), the Piedmont Region has developed a specific measure for creating a number of innovation clusters (poles of innovation). In accordance with the indications given by the European Commission innovation clusters are composed of groupings of independent subjects (start-ups, SMEs, gi, research organizations) active in a particular sector or territory and whose scope is intended to stimulate innovative activity by encouraging the intensive use of common facilities and exchange of knowledge and experience, and contribute effectively to technology transfer, networking and dissemination of information among those who constitute the Pole. The Piedmont's regional government has been involved in the MANUNET project, funded under the 6th Framework Programme and possibly extended in the 7th. MANUNET is an ERA-NET action in which national/regional governments develop a cooperation framework to launch joint calls. Specifically MANUNET addresses SME's in manufacturing providing them the opportunity to collaborate on research and innovation projects together with other European partners. The EU funds the coordination activities among the 22 MANUNET partners while each partner supports the joint calls with its own funding. In the case of Piedmont and of many other partners, joint calls are financed with structural funds.

In Lazio as regards research cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area, the document drafted by MIUR in preparation of the National Reference Strategic Framework 2007-2013 acknowledges the central role played by the internationalisation of the research system in boosting its competitiveness and its capacity to support growth and sustainable development of the country. In this perspective the document acknowledges the natural vocation of our country of acting as a bridge between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean area and identifies opportunities areas in the new technological frontiers and in the growing interdependence among productive sectors and S&T research on the global and Euro Mediterranean scale. The Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs bear the main responsibility for fostering international cooperation programmes and promoting knowledge exchange. These initiatives mainly take the form of bilateral cooperation agreements. On a yearly basis the two ministries allocate funds to support joint cooperation projects between Italian HE&RI and similar institutions in third countries, within the framework of Bilateral Cooperation Agreements for Cooperation in the field of S&T. For the year 2009, 10 out of the 53 projects approved involved Euro-Mediterranean partner countries (3 in Algeria, 5 in Egypt and 1 in Turkey). Two of these projects are carried by the University of Tuscia, in the Latium Region. Additional information on bilateral agreements in place between Italian universities and research centres of the Euro-Med areas can also be found on the interactive platform managed and hosted by CRUI, the national representative organisation of Italian Universities. The Euro-med countries with which cooperation is more advanced are Israel, Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco. Cooperation with Israel is focused in high technology sectors such as artificial intelligence, biotechnologies and nanotechnologies. Some other relevant agreements that have been concluded with Mediterranean countries such Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia with the aim of reinforcing S&T cooperation

In Catalonia, HEIs are a key element in different regional agreements and strategic plans. Although there is not a whole strategic plan that covers all the factors for regional growth and welfare, there are different regional and local initiatives where the role of the universities is considered fundamental for the development of the region. Among

the current agreements and plans, the most important at a regional level are “The Strategic Agreement to Promote the Internationalisation of the Catalan Economy, the Strengthening of its Competitiveness and the Quality of Employment 2008-2011” and “The Catalan Agreement on Research and Innovation” (2009) and, at a local level, “The Strategic Metropolitan Plan of Barcelona” and “The Strategic Plan of the Camp of Tarragona”. The first one, the “Strategic Agreement of the Catalan Economy” for the period 2008-2011 is the continuation of a first agreement promoted by the Catalan Government that achieved a high degree of socio-economic consensus and was signed in 2005 by the government, business associations and the trade unions. The main objective of this agreement is to foster a change in the economic model of Catalonia. Although it can not be considered a real regional strategic plan it presents a list of detailed and concrete measures to promote competitiveness and to guarantee social cohesion. The universities collaborated in the preparation of the agreement and are also one of the main target agents of the measures proposed in it. Despite this, their participation in the follow up mechanisms of the Agreement are very scarce. In the agreement for the period 2008-2011 the main objectives regarding universities and their role in regional development are: i) Developing and strengthening the transfer networks in Catalonia; ii) Moving towards an entrepreneurial university that fosters the transfer of technology and knowledge. Some concrete measures to achieve this objective are to link a percentage of public financing of universities to the results of the transfer of knowledge to business or to rationalise and specialise the science and technology parks; iii) Evaluating and marketing the research produced in Catalonia and incorporating the functions of prospecting and technological vigilance into the system. The main commitment of the Government to fulfil this objective is to develop a public-private instrument for the exploitation of technology that will be available for every university and research centre; iv) Developing a university model that opts for excellence and internationalisation; v) Revising qualifications and teaching methods to adapt them to the need of the labour market; vi) Improving university-industry relations with a reformulation of the universities’ social councils as it is described further on.

CONCLUSIONS

The question one may ask after this review of governance reform and change in the higher education systems of the participating regions/countries is whether it is possible to find a link between governance reform and the overall performance of the systems taking into account the construction of the future Euro-Mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research. The few policy initiatives taken since 1995 are in general not perceived as being very effective.

This is perhaps the main reason why we currently are seeing various forms of contractual steering arrangements as the preferred way forward for many governments. This implies that the notion of institutional autonomy is increasingly followed by a stronger emphasis on the division of responsibilities and roles between national authorities and higher education institutions. It also implies that hierarchical governance arrangements are being replaced by arrangements more characterised by negotiation and the ‘individualisation’ of policy initiatives taken. This may sometimes result in decentralisation, but an outcome can also be, as shown in our study, that the state reclaims responsibility in areas considered to be of national or strategic importance. In

terms of system coordination we see a growing recognition that governance relationships are not only becoming more complex and dynamic but are also involving more actors from different levels.

With respect to governmental instruments and reforms affecting how contractual relationships are designed and used, one could argue that the emphasis on contractual steering arrangements has triggered an interest in the standardisation and integration of available governmental steering instruments. This integration and standardisation provides national governments with benchmarks and more room to manoeuvre when entering negotiations with individual institutions about performance goals and other output measures, but such instruments may also have effects on performance as they open up the possibility of institutional (and introspective) comparisons on a range of issues.

In the area of quality assurance, for example, one can argue that performance gains are to be made by moving the operational responsibility for quality assurance down from the national to the institutional level via 'contractualisation'. Knowledge and know how for improving teaching and learning can be expected to be more systematically distributed throughout European higher education institutions. Interestingly, and as shown earlier, this is perhaps less dependent on the actual national methods for external control of the institutional responsibilities in this area (whether accreditation, audit or assessments are used), and more dependent on how national and institutional needs are negotiated through practice.

Finally, an interesting observation coming to the fore in all our data is an increasing interest in reform per se. Hence, quite recent reforms seem to be followed by new reforms expanding or relating to past reforms. The result is that one can observe a broadening of the scope of reform, but also a speeding up of the reform tempo. This might imply that the countries involved are improving their capacity for implementing reform, with the potential consequence that future changes in the governance arrangements may be more comprehensive, and perhaps more effective than in the past. Reform may also link the area of higher education to other policy domains as evident in the increasing role the European dimension plays in domestic policy-making. Although we don't have enough data, there are hints in several national reports that domestic reform agendas in higher education are highly influenced by general public sector reforms in the individual country, where the higher education sector is part of broader reform efforts.