

EMUNI-UfM Conference  
**“Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications:  
Where does the Euro-Mediterranean region stand?”**

Friday 12 April 2019  
Barcelona, Spain

## BACKGROUND

At a time of growing demand and supply of international higher education, the recognition and portability of academic qualifications across borders have never been so crucial for promoting and facilitating the mobility of students, academics and workers, expanding employability and lifelong learning opportunities for all, strengthening higher education cooperation between countries and deepening regional integration processes.

While legal instruments for the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education have been in force for many decades now through the UNESCO conventions in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean (1976), in the Arab States (1978), and in the European region (1979, 1987), people across the Euro-Mediterranean region still experience recognition difficulties when deciding to study abroad or returning to their home country after a study period in another country from this area - whether it is for an exchange or for getting a full degree.

Like in other regions of the world, the diversity of higher education systems and traditions amongst Southern Mediterranean countries and between Southern and Northern Mediterranean countries has resulted in a lack of common practices and mechanisms for the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired abroad. Yet the region has great potential for increased higher education integration as put forward by the Cairo Ministerial Declaration towards a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research area (2007)<sup>1</sup>.

Ministers back then expressed their commitment to undertake the appropriate measures “to achieve an approximation of the Euromed Higher Education systems with relevance to the Bologna process and ECTS<sup>2</sup> system” and structure cooperation “to promote the comparability and readability of Higher Education systems in the Euromed area, notably through the further development of the MERIC<sup>3</sup> network aiming to facilitate the recognition of merits”.

In 2015 the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission gathered European and Southern Mediterranean stakeholders in a regional seminar to exchange best practices and identify key challenges still impeding the “credit recognition and portability of qualifications” between the two rims of the Mediterranean. Several EU-funded Erasmus+ capacity-building projects over the last years have enabled Euro-Mediterranean consortia to draw up and experiment innovative approaches and solutions to this common challenge.

Most of the 43 UfM Member States participated in the Fifth Bologna Policy Forum which final Statement<sup>4</sup> acknowledges the engagement of the region in the development of national or regional

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/cairo\\_declaration.pdf](https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/cairo_declaration.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

<sup>3</sup> Mediterranean Network of National Information Centres on the Recognition of Qualifications (MERIC)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018\\_Paris/36/8/BPFStatement\\_with\\_Annex\\_958368.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/36/8/BPFStatement_with_Annex_958368.pdf)

integrative instruments, such as quality frameworks, credit transfer systems, and qualifications frameworks, to strengthen quality and facilitate intra-regional recognition and mobility.

In parallel Arab States with the support of the UNESCO have engaged in the revision process of the regional convention on the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education in the Arab region. The UNESCO is also preparing the first ever global recognition convention<sup>5</sup> due to be presented for adoption in the next UNESCO General Conference in November 2019.

## OBJECTIVES

This regional conference, jointly organized by the Euro-Mediterranean University ([EMUNI](#)) and the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean ([UfM](#)), aims to:

- Update participants on recent developments and initiatives related to the recognition of higher education qualifications in the Euro-Mediterranean region;
- Provide a platform for multi-stakeholder regional dialogue and constructive exchange on progress made and remaining obstacles;
- Come up with policy and operational recommendations for the future;
- Strengthen regional cooperation on the topic.

## STRUCTURE

The event is structured along moderated active panel discussions. Roughly, half of the time allocated to each panel is dedicated to contributions by panellists and questions by the moderator, the other half being used for inputs/questions/comments by participants and closing statements by the panellists.

## PARTICIPANTS

The conference targets participants from the 43 UfM Member States from diverse backgrounds - university rectors and senior academic representatives, national authorities and competent national bodies, representatives from the European Commission and relevant intergovernmental and international organisations, experts, private sector and civil society representatives - who have an interest in debating and advancing academic recognition issues with the view to promote closer Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation on this topic.

Participants need to cover their own travel and lodging.

## LOCATION

UfM Conference premises - Palau de Pedralbes - Avinguda Diagonal 686 - 08034, Barcelona.  
<https://goo.gl/maps/tkfQAs3qQfA2> (access through Pedralbes Gardens only).

## REGISTRATION

Online registrations: <http://bit.ly/emuni2019>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/higher-education/recognition-qualifications/global-convention>

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**12 April, Barcelona**

**AGENDA**

**Thursday 11 April**

**20:00 - 22:00 Welcome cocktail**

*UfM Secretariat - Carrer de Pere Duran Farell, 11 - 08034 Barcelona*

<https://goo.gl/maps/rvGYXSCsXez>

**Friday 12 April**

**8:30 - 9:00 Registration**

*UfM Conference premises - Palau de Pedralbes - Avinguda Diagonal 686 - 08034, Barcelona*

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**9:00 - 9:15 Welcoming words**

Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean

Prof. Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry, President, Euro-Mediterranean University

**9:15 - 11:00 Panel 1**

**The vision of a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research area**

*Where do we stand with respect to the Euro-Mediterranean commitment to creating an integrated Higher Education and Research area? How far have we come over the last decades and what are the remaining challenges? Is it still relevant and which are the opportunities for moving forward and making it a policy priority again?*

**Panellists:**

- H.E. Jernej Pikalo, Minister of Education, Science and Sport, Slovenia
- H.E. Mr. Abdalrahim Alfarra, Ambassador of Palestine to the EU, Belgium and Luxembourg
- Prof. Mostapha Bousmina, President, EuroMed University of Fes
- Prof. Michèle Gendreau-Massaloux, Rector Emerita
- Prof. Amr Ezzat Salama, Secretary General, Association of Arab Universities
- Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean

**Moderator:**

Prof. Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry, President, Euro-Mediterranean University

**11:00 - 11:15 Coffee Break**

**11:15 - 13:00 Panel 2**

**Transparency and portability of qualifications across the Mediterranean**

*What is the state of the art and practice of the recognition of foreign credits and qualifications among the UfM countries? Is there any sign of a convergent trend? Which procedures and practical tools have proved useful to facilitate the comparison, transparency and mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas in the region? What can we learn from other regions?*

Panellists:

- Mr. Anasse Bouhlal, Programme Specialist of Higher Education, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States
- Prof. Georges Yahchouchi, Provost, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik
- Mrs. Nicole Font Guedes, Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Initiative implementing consortium

Moderator:

Dr. Cloud Bai-Yun, Director, United Kingdom National Agency for the Recognition and Comparison of International Qualifications and Skills

**13:00 - 14:30 Networking Lunch**

**14:30 - 16:15 Panel 3**

**Recognition of foreign qualifications as a tool for increased mobility, youth employability and regional integration in the Mediterranean**

*What is the experience of practitioners and final users (senior academic staff, teachers, employers, students, etc.)? How can mutual trust in the quality of foreign education be further developed across the Mediterranean? Can new technologies bring novel perspectives to the issue? What would be the socio-economic impact on the region of an increased mutual recognition of higher education qualifications?*

Panellists:

- Prof. Maurizio Fermeglia, Rector, University of Trieste
- Prof. Karim Moustaghfir, Associate Professor & Mediterranean Programme Coordinator, Al Akhawayn University
- Mr. João Mourato Pinto, President, Erasmus Student Network
- Mr. Rafael Llavori, Head of Unit for Institutional and International Relations, National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain

Moderator:

Mrs. Emmanuelle Gardan, Head of Sector, Higher Education and Research, Union for the Mediterranean

**16:15 - 16:30 Conclusions and the way forward**

Prof. Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry, President, Euro-Mediterranean University

Mrs. Itaf Ben Abdallah, Senior Adviser of the Secretary General on Higher Education and Research, Union for the Mediterranean