

***Bridging Continents: Higher education as a tool
for EU-Southern Mediterranean cooperation***
***From brain drain to brain circulation: Fostering
shared growth through academic exchange***

Thursday | 11 December 2025 | 09:00 – 17:00
at the European Parliament, Brussels, Room SPAAK 6B1
Rue Wiertz/Wiertzstraat 60, B-1047 Brussels

Programme

08:00 – 09:00 *Registration of participants*

09:00 – 09:30 **Opening Ceremony, welcome by organizers**

- **Rado Bohinc** (President, EMUNI)
- **Mostapha Bousmina** (President, Euromed University of Fes)
- **Draško Veselinovič** (Director, Slovenian Business and Research Association)

09:30 – 10:30 **Keynote addresses**

- **Dubravka Šuica** (European Commissioner for Mediterranean): Strategic use of education in the Euro-Mediterranean neighbourhood policy
- **Igor Papič** (Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation in Slovenia)
- Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation in Moroccan-TBC

10:30 – 11:30 High-Level Policy Panel – Education as a strategic driver for Euro-Mediterranean stability and integration

Objective: *Set the strategic and political context for the conference by highlighting the role of education as a soft power tool in EU–Southern Mediterranean cooperation, enlargement, and diplomacy. This panel will discuss education's role in promoting democratic values, supporting EU neighbourhood and enlargement policy, preventing brain drain, and building resilient societies through inclusive knowledge partnerships.*

Topics:

- *The geopolitical importance of higher education in the Euro-Mediterranean space*
- *Education as a vehicle for democratic transformation and societal resilience*
- *The role of academic diplomacy in enlargement and neighbourhood policy*
- *Aligning education with EU foreign policy and the future Euro-Mediterranean Pact*
- *How strategic educational investments can contribute to stability, mobility, and integration.*

Moderator: Mouin Hamze (Management Board Chairperson, EMUNI)

Participants: *Joan Borrell-TBC (Deputy Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean-TBC), Antoaneta Angelova Krasteva (Director, Innovation, Digital Education and International Cooperation, Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission), Francisco Joaquín Gaztelu Mezquiriz (Director, Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, European Commission), Franci Demšar (Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education), Mostapha Bousmina (President, Euromed University of Fes), Rado Bohinc (President, EMUNI).*

11:30 – 12:00 Coffee break & networking

12:00 – 13:00 Panel I – Building South-North Mediterranean university alliances for a shared higher education space

Objective: Explore concrete institutional models and policy frameworks for building Euro-Mediterranean university alliances that support convergence in teaching, mobility, research, and innovation. This panel will showcase successful cooperation platforms and examine the role of networks and EU funding in scaling them up.

Topics:

- Creating inclusive and sustainable South–North university alliances: motivations, models, and governance
- Institutional challenges in building long-term Euro-Mediterranean academic partnerships (mutual recognition of degrees, credit systems, and quality assurance frameworks)
- The role of regional networks (e.g., UNIMED, EUA, AARU, Tethys) in fostering inter-university collaboration
- Supporting institutional capacity-building in Southern Mediterranean universities
- From bilateral cooperation to multilateral integration: toward a shared Euro-Med higher education area.

Moderator: **Joan Borrell** (Deputy Secretary General, Higher Education and Research Division, Union for the Mediterranean)

Roger Albinyana (Director, IEMed), **Anas Al Soud** (Executive Director, Association of Arab Universities), **Camille De Garidel-Thoron** (Director, Tethys), **Marcello Scalisi** (Director, Mediterranean Universities Union), **Ramon Vilanova** (Vice-rector for Students and Quality, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), **Roberto Biloslavo** (Vice President, EMUNI).

13:00 – 14:00

Panel II: Enabling academic mobility and brain circulation through university alliances

Objective: Discuss how South-North Mediterranean university alliances can serve as drivers for structured academic mobility, brain circulation, and inclusive access to education. The panel will explore barriers to mobility, disparities in funding, and alignment with broader regional development policies.

Topics:

- The role of inter-university alliances in facilitating sustainable mobility schemes
- Gaps and limitations in Erasmus+ for Southern Mediterranean institutions
- Models of circular mobility and incentives for talent return

- *Visa and recognition challenges*
- *Empowering youth and women through targeted exchange programs.*

Moderator: *Petra Kežman* (Senior Advisor, Higher Education and Research Division, Union for the Mediterranean)

Participants: *Bouchta El Moumni* (President, Abdelmalek Essaadi University), *Mohamed El-Shinawi* (President, Galala University), *Othman Benmoussa* (Vice-president, Euromed University of Fes), *Joan Guàrdia Olmos* (Rector, University of Barcelona), *Arno Schrooyen* (European Students' Union), *Emna Jbara* (Alumna, EMUNI).

14:00 – 15:30 **Lunch & networking**

15:30 – 16:30 **Panel III: Advancing research and innovation integration through Euro-Mediterranean alliances**

Objective: *Explore how Euro-Mediterranean university alliances can facilitate collaborative research, innovation transfer, and alignment with EU priorities. Emphasis will be placed on building a shared R&I ecosystem across the Mediterranean and linking academic work to economic and societal needs.*

Topics:

- *Strengthening cross-border research through university consortia*
- *Facilitating Southern Mediterranean access to Horizon Europe and PRIMA*
- *Fostering inclusive R&I agendas (digitalisation, sustainability, climate)*
- *University–business–policy cooperation and innovation diplomacy. The potential role of a Euro-Mediterranean Business & Innovation Chamber.*
- *Enhancing participation of women and early-career researchers in Euro-Med R&I*

Moderator: *Jaka Vadjnal* (Director of scholarship funds, EMUNI).

Participants: *Alessandro Calabrò* (Research and Innovation, Mediterranean, Middle East and Gulf Region, European Commission), *Angelo Riccaboni* (PRIMA Co-chair), *Maria Cristina Pedicchio* (President, Agency for the Promotion of European Research), *Gemma Aubarell Solduga* (Director of the Culture,

Gender, and Civil Society, European Institute of the Mediterranean),
Muriel Dal Pont Legrand (Vice-President European Affairs,
Université Côte d'Azur), **Ghada Bouhlal** (Director of Socio-economic
partnerships and Entrepreneurships, Euromed University of Fes).

16:30 – 17:00 **Closing Remarks**

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