



PRIMA “Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area” in Horizon 2020

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EC consultation’s aim and request: In 2014, nine Member States of the European Union (EU) – Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain – submitted a proposal for a joint research and innovation programme focused on food systems and water resources in the Mediterranean basin. This would be through an Article 185 TFEU initiative under Horizon 2020. The proposal has been named PRIMA, “Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area”. The following seven non-EU countries are also taking part in PRIMA: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. A total of two hundred million euros have been committed for this initiative over a 10-year period starting in 2018. This figure includes the contribution from the Czech Republic and Luxembourg, which joined PRIMA at a later stage. The general objective of PRIMA is to reinforce cooperation in Research and Innovation (R&I) between Mediterranean countries in order to contribute to the challenges of sustainable food production and water resources management. The purpose of this process is to analyse the need and opportunity for an EU action in this domain and the potential economic, social and environmental impacts of the alternative policy options.

EPSO experts from Mediterranean as well as other countries helped to develop the input to this EC consultation. The consultation contained six sections on which EPSO provided the view on the scope, objectives, and expected impacts of the PRIMA initiative:

Problem definition

Among several options, the most relevant problem statements for R&I challenges in the field of sustainable food production and water resource management in the Mediterranean area are, in our opinion, insufficient **investments in R&I** as well as insufficient **implementation of innovative solutions**, inadequate **governance** structures and processes to address common and inter-related problems in R&I, and a lack of **cooperation** between countries and research organisations on one hand and between academic and non-academic actors on the other. As there are similar challenges across the region, similar innovations may bring widespread solution, highlighting the need for collaboration between research organisations and various stakeholders. **The Mediterranean region hosts challenging environments that may become more widespread with the impact of climate change. It is important to understand the present issues and develop solutions which may prepare us for these impending future impacts.** Other issues include the effects of genetically modified foods, expansion of organic agriculture, and improvement of water management

Core objectives

The most important objectives of a partnership for R&I geared towards improving the efficiency and sustainability of food production and processing and water resource management in the Mediterranean region are, in our opinion, to support the **development and application of innovative solutions** and to facilitate the **creation of knowledge-based jobs and competences and strengthen the research capacity**

R&I priorities

The most relevant R&I priorities of a partnership for improving food production and water resource management in the Mediterranean region are, in our opinion, to support **development of sustainable farming systems, to test and stimulate the application of context-tailored water-saving solutions for agriculture**, and to improve land and water sustainability in the

arid and semi-arid environments. Also crop diversification and development of new food products, together with improving seed collections, are of high priority.

Crop diversification is relevant and would support better use of water resources and development of new food products that fit the diet heritage of the region, while also enhancing links between nutrition and health. **Both yield and quality issues should be addressed.** It is also necessary to do research and improve seed collections on endemic plant and their plant microbiome.

Actions

In order to reach the objectives of PRIMA, the most relevant actions would be the **public sector's investments in R&I**, the development of pilot projects, the networking and cooperation activities and training for researchers, as well as information and communication activities. Whereas the private sector's investments are also important, they are not of prime relevance to PRIMA.

Impacts

The contribution to the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) is of outstanding importance for the impact of PRIMA. Other expected impacts include the support to **economic growth** through job creation and the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region, the introduction and dissemination of innovative products, technologies and production methods, the identification of current obstacles to innovation, and to develop more effective and sustainable production, use of food and water resources and consumption patterns in the region.

Policy options

The preferred policy option to support PRIMA and meet the problems for R&I in the field of sustainable food production and water resource management in the Mediterranean area is a **Co-fund action**. The goals require support from the EU for a 5-year programme which integrates research, innovation and training, and that involves a large number of countries.

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Useful links and references

- EPSO: [Statement on Crop Genetic Improvement Technologies](#), 18.12.2015.
- EPSO: Submission to EC consultation on the [Draft "Strategic approach to agricultural research and innovation"](#), 15.12.2015 [Submission summary](#) and [completed questionnaire](#), calling to urgently strengthen collaborative basic research in the Societal Challenges, supporting all technologies equally, including improvement of yield and yield stability and plant compounds for human nutrition and health
- EPSO: [Submission to EC consultation on the Role of Research in Global Food and Nutrition Security \(summary reply\)](#), 1.9.2015; [completed online questionnaire](#)
- EPSO communications: www.epsoweb.org/epsos-communications
- EPSO member institutes and universities: www.epsoweb.org/membership/members
- EPSO representatives: www.epsoweb.org/membership/representatives
- EPSO Board members: www.epsoweb.org/about/board
- Plants for the Future ETP: Study on "[The Economic, Social, and Environmental Value of Plant Breeding in the European Union](#)", 15.3.2016

About EPSO

EPSO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an independent academic organisation that represents more than 220 research institutes, departments and universities from 28 European countries, Australia, Japan and New Zealand, and 3.200 individuals Personal Members, representing over 28 000 people working in plant science. EPSO's mission is to improve the impact and visibility of plant science in Europe, to provide authoritative source of independent information on plant science, and to promote training of plant scientists to meet the 21st century challenges in breeding, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, plant ecology and sectors related to plant science. www.epsoweb.org