



OVERVIEW

Programme	European Union-Council of Europe joint programme "Towards Strengthened Democratic Governance in the Southern Mediterranean", South Programme II
Budget	EUR 7,370 Million
Funding	European Union (EU) EUR 7 M Council of Europe (CoE) EUR 370 000
Duration	2015 – 2017 (36 months)
Beneficiary countries	Southern Mediterranean Region
Programme Implementation	Council of Europe (CoE)



CONTEXT

The European Union (EU)-Council of Europe (CoE) Joint Programme "Towards strengthened democratic governance in the Southern Mediterranean" (South Programme II) started on 1st of January 2015 following the signature of an agreement between the European Commission (EC) and the Council of Europe (CoE) on 22 December 2014.

This joint initiative aims to contribute to the reinforcement of democratic governance agenda in the Southern Mediterranean region, more specifically by:

- ▶ Supporting the development of new constitutional and legal frameworks and independent democratic governance instances deriving from them;
- ▶ Contributing to the creation and expansion of a common legal space between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean through progressive accession to the CoE conventions and agreements;

- ▶ Fostering regional co-operation in the field of human rights, rule of law and democracy through the creation of and the support to formal and informal networks between Europe and countries of the Southern Mediterranean region, as well as within countries from the region.

Co-operation activities under the South Programme were primarily directed to Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan and open to other partners of the South Mediterranean through regional activities or targeted bilateral activities, in response to specific demands from national authorities and in line with the Programme's objectives.

Through the launching event the Council of Europe aimed to:

- ▶ Present to the main partners and stakeholders the new Programme and its clusters of activities and get the validation of the proposed work plan;



- ▶ Organise a constructive debate through the various working sessions about new challenges that the Southern Mediterranean partner countries are facing in the field of democratic governance as well as the South Programme's role in addressing them throughout the Programme's implementation period (2015-2017);
- ▶ Contribute to a better South-South co-operation and exchange between the various stakeholders in the fields of human rights, rule of law and democracy.

■ The programme of the launching event kicked off with the round table "Is strengthened democratic governance a silver bullet for more accountable societies in the Southern Mediterranean?" which was followed by six working groups (WG):

WG I: Supporting constitutional processes and the creation of new legal frameworks and democratic governance instances in the Southern Mediterranean

WG II: Advancing good governance through the prevention of corruption and money laundering

WG III: Strengthening capacities through inter-parliamentary co-operation, human rights training and local democracy

WG IV: Development /Consolidation of a common legal space between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean

WG V: Fostering a better democratic governance in the Southern Mediterranean through justice reform

WG VI: Building networks and exchanging experience: Schools of Political Studies, Lisbon Forum, Intercultural Cities, Pompidou Group

■ The launching event gathered around 100 participants, the majority of which came from partner countries and consisted of representatives of relevant Ministries, democratic governance independent structures, parliaments and civil society (including the CoE's Schools of Political Studies of Morocco and Tunisia).

OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS

The partners in the Council of Europe/European Union Joint Programme, **"Towards strengthened democratic governance in the Southern Mediterranean", South Programme II (2015-2017)**, meeting at the programme launch event, adopted the following operational conclusions.

The partners:

- ▶ Recognised the **relevance of the South Programme II** and its added value for helping to strengthen human rights, the rule of law and democracy in the countries of the Southern Mediterranean, including as a means of supporting economic development;
- ▶ Encouraged the continuation of **activities carrying on from** the South Programme I and **welcomed the new initiatives**, in particular human rights training;

- ▶ Welcomed the Programme's **pragmatic approach** and the **flexible framework** for co-operation provided by the Council of Europe for the partner countries, based on their specific needs and requests, in the broader context of the European Union's European Neighbourhood Policy and the Council of Europe policy towards neighbouring regions;

- ▶ **Approved the objectives and methodology** proposed by the Council of Europe and underlined the key part which the South Programme II should play in:

1. Supporting the **constitutional processes** and the establishment of new **legislative frameworks** and new democratic **governance bodies** in the countries in the region.
2. Helping to build a **common legal area** between the two shores of the Mediterranean;



3. Supporting the **judicial reform** processes in the partner countries and developing tools for **more efficient administration of justice**;
4. Ensuring a **systematic approach in the fight against corruption, money laundering and terrorism**, including through a regional approach in the Southern Mediterranean region fostering **regional and international co-operation** in criminal matters and in combating corruption and money laundering;
5. Fostering enhanced co-operation between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean and between the partner countries in the Council of Europe's areas of expertise through its **existing networks** (intergovernmental and convention-based committees, partial agreements and other Council of Europe initiatives such as the Schools of political studies and intercultural cities).

On the basis of the discussions and building on the practical achievements of the South Programme I (2012-2014), the partners underlined that the South Programme II should:

- ▶ Continue to align its objectives with the reform priorities of the Southern Mediterranean partner countries so as to ensure **sustainability and ownership by the partners of the programme activities**;
- ▶ Continue to support **capacity development for beneficiaries** in the partner countries, including through training-of-trainers, so as to ensure the proper application of legislation and institutional practices;
- ▶ Continue to involve **experts from Council of Europe networks**, including from central and eastern Europe, and involve more **experts from the Southern Mediterranean**, and encourage **South-South co-operation**, with exchanges of know-how and best practices between the partners from the Southern Mediterranean making for mutual enrichment;
- ▶ Continue to help **build a common legal area** between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean and establish **bilateral consultative bodies** so as to facilitate the process of legislative alignment;
- ▶ Foster the smooth functioning and the role of **independent governance bodies**, including bodies ensuring media independence;
- ▶ Pay particular attention to an approach respecting women's rights and **gender equality** and adopt appropriate tools;
- ▶ Ensure and foster **civil society involvement in the programme activities**, and adopt appropriate tools;
- ▶ Ensure co-ordination of the Programme activities with the partners from the Southern Mediterranean, including through **bilateral and regional** co-ordination committees, so as to facilitate the process of legislative alignment and closer ties with the international donor community.





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