

Questions & Answers

What is PRIMA and why is it needed?

PRIMA stands for Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area. The PRIMA initiative supports the sustainable management of water and food systems around in the Mediterranean Area by pooling know-how and financial resources in a strategic research partnership between the EU and participating states. Its aim is to develop fully piloted and demonstrated joint innovative solutions that the Mediterranean region urgently needs. These would help to make the water and food supply in the region more efficient, cost-effective and sustainable, and solve related problems.

In recent years, climate change and unsustainable resource management have brought severe water stress to the Mediterranean area. In particular, the agricultural sector is suffering from serious water shortages which in turn result in decreasing crop yields and failure to provide clean water and affordable food. Today, 180 million people in the Mediterranean basin are considered "water poor", facing negative effects on their nutrition, health, living standards and well-being. This social and economic stress is a major cause of instability. Until today, no suitable common innovative solutions have been identified that are adapted to the local conditions and easily transferable across the region.

How will PRIMA assist in tackling migration in the Mediterranean region?

Climate change, unsustainable resource management, political instability, and the rapidly growing population are among the factors that contribute to both internal and external migration. Consequently, numerous farm families are forced to move to cities while part of the population is driven to leave the country altogether to migrate to Europe, in particular, looking for improved living conditions. PRIMA therefore strives to be consistent with the recent [Communication from the Commission on establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration, \(COM\(2016\)385\)](#). This communication focuses on tackling the root causes of migration and forced displacement through 'all EU policies including education, research, climate change, energy, environment, agriculture'.

How will PRIMA leverage private investments?

The elaboration of a long-term common strategic research and innovation agenda in the field of water provision and food systems would ensure more predictability and stability for the countries concerned. Public investment through PRIMA will foster scientific and diplomatic links among participants and reinforce bilateral science & technology agreements between the EU and individual countries. Such improved conditions will, in turn, attract higher private investment. The PRIMA model of partnership based on an equal footing among Participating States has the potential to increase a third countries' buy-in of public and private stakeholders, scale up the deployment of the

potential of innovative solutions, thus expanding and integrating R&I investments. It further advocates new development cooperation models involving the private sector, innovative financing mechanisms and investments in SMEs and sustainable infrastructures.

How will PRIMA contribute to addressing unemployment issues in the Mediterranean region?

Developing innovative solutions for water provision and food systems in the Mediterranean could also help address unemployment. The implementation of innovations, e.g. in food products, can contribute to job opportunities. Product innovation in food SMEs is positively linked to employment, and process innovations do not necessarily reduce employment in the food industry. Additional market opportunities will be created for agricultural producers of raw materials for traditional food products. Overall, enhanced investment in R&I are likely to achieve broad economic indirect impacts as the effects of a more sustainable management of water provision and food systems would be beneficial also to other sectors, e.g. more availability of water in urban area and non-food industrial sector.

Why is it necessary for the EU to take action?

The objective of this partnership is to strengthen the integration and alignment of research and innovation systems and activities in the Mediterranean countries in the fields of water provision and food systems. The scale of the research and innovation necessary to address the challenges in the Mediterranean area is immense due to the systemic character of the major bottlenecks. The scope of research and innovation is complex, multidisciplinary and requires a multi-actor and cross-border approach. A collaborative approach with a wide set of Participating States can help to increase the required scale and scope, by pooling financial and intellectual resources. Since the objective can therefore be better achieved at Union level by integrating national efforts into a consistent Union approach, by bringing together compartmentalised national research programmes, by helping design common research and funding strategies across national borders, and by achieving the critical mass of actors and investments required, the Union may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Decision does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve those objectives.

Which is the legal basis for the PRIMA initiative?

The legal basis for PRIMA is Article 185 TFEU. This enables the EU to participate in research and development programmes undertaken by several Member States, including in the structures created for the execution of those programmes. Article 26 of the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme Regulation specifies the conditions and criteria for identifying and proposing an initiative pursuant to Article 185 TFEU.

How will the projects under PRIMA be chosen and who is eligible for funding?

The Horizon 2020 rules apply. Any legal entities including those established in a Non-Participating States which are eligible for funding under Horizon 2020 will be eligible for funding under centrally managed activities that receive EU contribution. However, Non-Participating States will have no role in the design of the Strategic R&I agenda or Annual Work Plans.

A Coordination and Support Action ("CSA 4PRIMA"), which started in May 2016, is currently developing a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda on water and food that will outline the conceptual framework for future calls for proposal. Future topics and mechanisms of implementation (funding instruments) will be based on this agenda, taking into account the range of Technology Readiness Levels as well as other specificities. Then, the first Annual Work Plan will be elaborated to outline the scope and details of the project calls. Participants can then apply for funding for their projects through these calls. Finally, the evaluation procedure will be launched, following the Horizon 2020 rules for project selection.

Which countries participate in PRIMA?

The partnership currently consists of 15 participating countries: Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey. As the initiative is evolving over time, more participants, from both EU and non-EU countries e.g. Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco are expected to join soon.

How can non-EU Member States join the partnership?

In line with the objectives of Horizon 2020, any other Member State and third country associated to Horizon 2020 are entitled to participate in PRIMA if it commits to contributing to the financing of PRIMA. The participation of any other third country not associated to Horizon 2020, in particular Southern Mediterranean countries, may be possible if it commits to contribute to the financing of PRIMA and if the PRIMA Implementation Structure (PRIMA-IS) approves its participation.

To ensure participation of the third countries not associated to Horizon 2020 in PRIMA, international agreements between the Union and these third countries are required in order to extend to them the legal regime established by this Decision.

What is the initiative's budget?

So far, the Participating States have committed around €200 million, matched by a contribution of up to €200 million from the Union through its current research framework programme Horizon 2020. Participating States can support the initiative by contributions in cash and/or in kind. The contributions by the Union and the Participating States are managed by the DIS (Dedicated Implementation Structure) and the national funding bodies, respectively. The contributions centrally managed by the DIS are implemented in accordance with Horizon 2020 rules. For activities funded without Union contribution, financial and/or in-kind contributions by Participating States can be managed at either centrally or at national level.

The Union contribution, which is entirely funded by the current Horizon 2020 budget, will target mainly strategically chosen pilots and demonstrator projects. National financial contributions will fund R&I activities on appropriate Technology Readiness Levels with the ambition to move increasingly towards higher levels. The Union's contribution will be taken from the Horizon 2020 budget, from the Societal Challenge 2 ("Improving food security, developing sustainable agriculture, marine and maritime research and the bio-economy") from DG RTD, as well as from the corresponding budget line in DG AGRI (Societal Challenge 2, "Securing sufficient supplies of safe and high quality food and other bio-based products"). Further means will be taken from DG RTD's Societal Challenge 5 ("Achieving a resource-efficient climate change resilient economy and a

sustainable supply of raw materials") and from "Leadership in nanotechnologies, advanced materials, biotechnology and advanced manufacturing and processing").

How will the initiative be managed?

The initiative will be based on a comprehensive strategic research agenda which will be implemented through multiple transnational calls for proposals, undertaken by several Participating States. The implementation will be managed through a funding body, the DIS. Ex-ante checks, financial reporting, and ex-post verification will ensure a sound financial management and protect the financial interests of the European Union.

When will the initiative be operational?

The initiative is set to start in 2018 and will run for 10 years.

What are the next steps?

The legislative proposal for PRIMA has already been transmitted to the Council and the Parliament both of which will need to approve it before the partnership is set up. At the same time, international agreements with countries not associated to Horizon 2020 are being negotiated. Currently, the countries concerned are Morocco, Lebanon and Egypt. Also, the PRIMA Implementation Structure (PRIMA-IS) is being established.

When the proposal is finally adopted in the inter-institutional process, the Commission will start the implementation of the partnership by finalising technical details. Finally, the first Annual Work Plan will be elaborated to outline the scope and details of the project calls. Subsequently, the evaluation procedure will be launched, following the Horizon 2020 rules for project selection.