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This article forms part of a [set of background articles](#) which introduces the international statistical cooperation activities of the [European Union \(EU\)](#) with non-member countries and focuses on cooperation with Mediterranean countries in the context of the [European Neighbourhood Policy \(ENP\)](#), in other words the ENP-South countries. The principal vehicle by which the EU has provided assistance on statistics to ENP-South countries since 1996 was the multi-country MEDSTAT programme.

### Countries concerned

The MEDSTAT I and II programmes covered 10 Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine<sup>1</sup>, Syria<sup>2</sup>, Tunisia and Turkey. The MEDSTAT III programme covered nine countries, since Turkey had become an EU candidate country. Cooperation with Syria was suspended during the course of the programme, while it should be noted that Libya was not an active participant in the MEDSTAT programme. A fourth phase of the cooperation in statistics, MEDSTAT IV, was launched in January 2016, covering the nine ENP-South countries from MEDSTAT III as well as Libya, namely: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (cooperation with Syria remains suspended) and Tunisia.

### MEDSTAT IV (2016-2019) — improving quality and coverage of data

The current phase was officially launched in January 2016. The MEDSTAT IV project (2016-2019) is providing expertise and technical support to:

- promote the harmonisation of statistics in line with EU and international standards in six domains (business registers and business statistics, trade statistics and balance of payments, energy statistics, labour market statistics, migration statistics and transport statistics);
- help implement the [Statistical Code of Practice for the ENP-South countries](#) (based on the [European statistics Code of Practice](#) ) and improve the quality of statistics;
- provide training on statistical methods and tools; and
- ensure availability and visibility of a wide range of data.

<sup>1</sup>This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

<sup>2</sup>Cooperation with Syria is currently suspended due to the political situation in the country.

The overall objective of the MEDSTAT IV project (2016-2019) is to promote evidence-based decision-making and to foster democratic development by improving the availability, visibility and accessibility of robust, reliable and timely statistical data in the ENP-South countries.

The working groups covering the thematic domains and the cross-cutting issues (quality, gender, training and visibility) mentioned above are set-up and led by one or more partner countries to ensure ownership. The quality working group is led by Eurostat and has annual meetings and workshops to promote the development of a culture of quality in statistics in the ENP-South countries.

More than 100 activities are planned to be implemented during MEDSTAT IV's timeframe. MEDSTAT IV is providing technical and financial support to organise a wide set of events such as working group meetings, workshops, training sessions, study visits and technical assistance missions carried out by experts.

Addressing user needs in the preparation of the work programmes and consulting users on their needs for data analysis and dissemination, both nationally and regionally, will contribute to making the supply of statistics more relevant to the demand and to raise the visibility of statistics. The project will seek a stronger involvement of users in defining the needs for statistics as well as promoting and supporting joint activities and projects with users in order to obtain their feedback on the quality (including relevance) of the available statistics.

MEDSTAT IV will also seek to establish synergies among activities in each sector, between the thematic working groups, between the thematic working groups and the cross-cutting issues, and between the project activities and those organised by other international organisations operating in the region. The project will make use of both North-South and South-South cooperation.

The MEDSTAT IV programme is maintaining the Forum of Euro-Mediterranean statisticians as annual meeting to assess and to validate the progresses of the six thematic domains and the cross-cutting issues such as training, quality in statistics, gender statistics and dissemination.

## Previous MEDSTAT programmes

Through three distinct phases (MEDSTAT I, II and III), the cooperation programme has developed from focusing on capacity building work to improving the quality of statistics and providing the foundation for evidence-based policymaking. Euro-Mediterranean statistical cooperation was launched by the [Barcelona declaration and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership](#) (1995–96) with the aim of promoting 'cooperation in statistics in order to harmonise methods and exchange data'. The MEDSTAT IV programme is building on the progress achieved so far and adding further improvements to the methodology of statistical data production.

### **MEDSTAT I (1996-2003) — the first cooperation programme**

The main objective of MEDSTAT I was to provide the foundations for a standardised collection and exchange of reliable, harmonised and up-to-date statistics, which in turn would allow the EU to monitor the development of a free trade area (for manufactured goods) in the whole Mediterranean basin. The programme covered six thematic sectors (international trade in goods and services, transport, migration, tourism, the environment and national accounts) and two cross-cutting activities (training and information systems).

### **MEDSTAT II (2006-2009) — improving the quality of statistical services**

MEDSTAT II was mainly intended to improve the quality of statistical services through the consolidation of Euro-Mediterranean statistical cooperation. A further objective was to foster the development of statistical information systems in the Mediterranean countries, in other words to improve the quality of the compilation and exchange of statistical data between the EU and the Mediterranean countries. These joint efforts were centred on:

- collecting timely, relevant and high-quality data, necessary for political decision-making and ensuring good governance;
- the provision of assistance to the national statistical systems of the Mediterranean beneficiary countries;
- the promotion of the transparency of statistical activities.

Following an assessment of the statistical situation in each beneficiary country ( [country statistical situation report — CSSR](#) ), the [European Commission](#) , in cooperation with each of the Mediterranean beneficiary countries, identified priorities regarding necessary actions. As a result, in addition to the six statistical topics covered by MEDSTAT I, the scope of MEDSTAT II was extended to include the following topics: social, agriculture and energy statistics.

### **MEDSTAT III (2010-2013) — promoting evidence-based policymaking**

MEDSTAT III, built on the achievements of the previous two programmes and aimed to consolidate and further strengthen statistical cooperation. MEDSTAT III was launched in April 2010 and completed by the end of 2013.

The overall objective of MEDSTAT III was to promote evidence-based decision-making and to stimulate democratic development by improving the availability and use of statistical data in ENP-South countries. Moreover, it aimed to consolidate and expand further the progress achieved during the previous two programmes by providing users with a wider range of quality data for six priority topics — agriculture, energy, migration, social statistics, transport, and international trade and balance of payments statistics — as well as the cross-cutting activities of training and dissemination.

### **Between MEDSTAT III and MEDSTAT IV**

In 2012, Directors of the national statistical authorities of the ENP-South countries and representatives of the European Commission discussed the future form and scope of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in statistics after the conclusion of the MEDSTAT III programme. The agreed strategy for future cooperation - as discussed and agreed between the National Statistical Institutes of the ENP South countries and Eurostat - has four interrelated objectives:

- continuous improvement in the quality of official statistics;
- improved technical and management skills in the national statistical authorities through comprehensive training;
- users empowered with the data they need to address social and economic issues;
- a sustainable framework to design, implement and steer the cooperation.

Working groups were set up for a number of fields: business registers and business statistics, energy, the labour market, migration, international trade and balance of payments, and transport, as well as for cross-cutting issues such as training and quality in statistics. The quality working group was led by [Eurostat](#) and the other working groups were led by one or more of the ENP-South countries. After a two-year experimental period it was concluded that a MEDSTAT type of programme was needed; subsequently MEDSTAT IV was launched to implement the agreed strategy.

## **Other articles**

- [International statistical cooperation](#) — online publication

## **Database**

- [Southern European Neighbourhood Policy countries \(ENP-South\) \(med\)](#)

## **Dedicated section**

- [MEDSTAT programme](#)

## **Publications**

- [Statistical books and pocketbooks](#)
- [Leaflets](#)

## External links

- [EU neighbours — MEDSTAT IV – Euro Mediterranean Statistical Cooperation](#)
- [EuropeAid](#)
- [Medstat IV](#)
- [Technical Assistance Exchange Instrument \(TAIEX\)](#)
- [Twinning programmes](#)

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