



UNIDEM MED

UNIVERSITY FOR DEMOCRACY FOR THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

VENICE COMMISSION
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Modernising public administration in the Southern Mediterranean: a key measure for ensuring good governance and state effectiveness

■ The quality and effectiveness of public administration and services are essential to ensure democratic stability. This presupposes that citizens and users of public services have confidence in the structures of the state, and in particular in the public administration which should operate in accordance with clearly stated rules and procedures while respecting the principle of the rule of law. In addition, public officials should enjoy appropriate legal status and working conditions, be aware not only of their rights, but also of their duties and their responsibilities towards users.

■ The consolidation of democratic institutions and the modernisation of public administration are priority reform areas which should follow on from constitutional and legislative changes. With this in mind, the European Union and the Council of Europe have decided to work together to provide institutional support in this field through the South Programme, a joint initiative co-financed by the two organisations, and implemented by the latter. The Venice Commission's UniDem Med project implemented within this framework specifically seeks to build bridges between law and practice. It is grounded in the Council of Europe's fundamental role: defending the values of human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

The UniDem Med project: ambitious and realistic goals

■ The UniDem Med project is a regional project bringing together senior public officials from both banks of the Mediterranean for the purpose of peer-to-peer pooling of experience and forging closer ties between participating authorities. It seeks to help ensure good governance through the consolidation of institutions and the development of ever more effective public administrations which function in accordance with the principles of respect for human rights and the rule of law. The project was launched in September 2015 within the framework of the South Programme II in close co-operation with the Kingdom of Morocco's Ministry of Civil Service and Reform of the Administration. Since then, it has become one of the flagship co-operation activities of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe in the Southern Mediterranean region.

Linking the scientific approach to the practical exchange of experiences

■ The UniDem Med project is about providing legal capacity-building seminars for senior public officials in areas related to good governance, the rule of law and fundamental rights. The speakers are experts with practical experience in the relevant fields, along with academics from both sides of the Mediterranean. Their profile as well as that of the participants is broadened on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the project partners to ensure greater diversity in the sharing of experience. Simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Arabic, as well as free access for the selected public officials, facilitate and strengthen the exchanges between all the participants, who receive a certificate of participation at the end of the seminar.

Topical issues selected at the request of partners of the Southern Mediterranean to tie in with ongoing reforms

■ As a platform for exchanges between senior officials from both sides of the Mediterranean but also increasingly within the Southern Mediterranean region, the project has contributed to the strengthening of state institutions and the modernisation of the civil service by debating issues such as the transparency of public action, open government and the digitisation of services, the simplification of administrative procedures, and questions relating to equality, performance, integrity and ethics within the civil service. All these questions are dealt with from the point of view of the principles of human rights, the rule of law and democracy which the Venice Commission has championed and promoted ever since it was set up.

A participatory working method

■ The UniDem Med project is steered by the co-ordinators appointed by each beneficiary. Every year, a co-ordination meeting decides on the annual programme and the themes of the seminars. Once the themes have been identified, experts from both sides of the Mediterranean are invited to give presentations on the legal and constitutional developments that have been made and on best practices at national and international level. A particular focus is given to the expertise and experience of the partner hosting and co-organising the seminar. In parallel, each co-ordinator invites senior officials concerned by the topic and identifies their experts who will present their specific situation in relation to the themes of the seminar. A significant part of the seminar is then dedicated to discussion and exchange of practical experiences between peers. At the end of each seminar, a set of recommendations is identified and disseminated to the participants and the UniDem Med network. The annual co-ordination meeting also enables to take stock of the impact of the previous seminars and to discuss issues relating to the visibility and the sustainability of the project.

■ An increasing number of senior officials from the Southern Mediterranean region including Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine* and Tunisia take part in each seminar. The videoconference and “hybrid” formats have allowed the number of participants to grow exponentially. Since 2015, more than 1200 senior officials have been able to participate in the UniDem Med seminars, which today form a network of practitioners in the field of public administration reform.

List of seminars

■ For the detailed list of UniDem Med seminars organised since 2015, including the topics covered and the recommendations drawn from the exchanges between participants, please visit the Venice Commission website: <https://go.coe.int/lh23o>

Funding

■ Since 2015, the UniDem Med project has been supported by the successive phases of the South Programme, a joint initiative between the European Union and the Council of Europe to support democratic reforms in the Southern Mediterranean region (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine* and Tunisia). The current phase of the programme “Protecting human rights, rule of law and democracy through shared standards in the Southern Mediterranean” (South Programme V) is co-financed by the two organisations and implemented by the Council of Europe for the period of 2022-2025. It aims to continue the support to democratic reforms in the Southern Mediterranean through the establishment of a common legal space between Europe and this region.

South Programme V

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS, RULE OF LAW
AND DEMOCRACY THROUGH SHARED STANDARDS
IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN





Venice Commission of the Council of Europe

Initially conceived as an instrument of emergency constitutional engineering against a background of transition towards democracy, the Commission has gradually evolved into an internationally recognised independent legal think-tank. Although the Commission is mainly known for its legal opinions and transnational studies, it also helps to disseminate a common legal heritage based on the fundamental legal principles of Europe and beyond, including through its co-operation activities. It successfully conducted a training programme for officials in the Balkans and Eastern Europe for over ten years, thereby helping to improve the legal capacities of several thousand officials in a region in the throes of democratic transition.

Members of the Commission

Members – 61

Albania (1996), Algeria (2007), Andorra (2000), Armenia (2001), Austria (1990), Azerbaijan (2001), Belgium (1990), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002), Brazil (2009), Bulgaria (1992), Canada (2019), Chile (2005), Costa Rica (2016), Croatia (1997), Cyprus (1990), Czech Republic (1994), Denmark (1990), Estonia (1995), Finland (1990), France (1990), Georgia (1999), Germany (1990), Greece (1990), Hungary (1990), Iceland (1993), Ireland (1990), Israel (2008), Italy (1990), Kazakhstan (2011), Kirghizstan (2004), Kosovo (2014), Latvia (1995), Liechtenstein (1991), Lithuania (1994), Luxembourg (1990), Malta (1990), Mexico (2010), Monaco (2004), Montenegro (2006), Morocco (2007), Netherlands (1992), Norway (1990), Peru (2009), Poland (1992), Portugal (1990), Republic of Korea (2006), Republic of Moldova (1996), Romania (1994), San Marino (1990), Serbia (2003), Slovak Republic (1993), Slovenia (1994), Spain (1990), Sweden (1990), Switzerland (1990), North Macedonia (1996), Tunisia (2010), Türkiye (1990), Ukraine (1997), United Kingdom (1999), United States (2013).

Observers: Argentina (1995), Holy See (1992), Japan (1993), Uruguay (1995).

Participants: European Union, Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE (OSCE/ODIHR), Organisation of American States (OAS).

Special co-operation status: Palestine*, South Africa.

* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of Council of Europe and European Union member states on this issue.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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www.venice.coe.int

SOUTH PROGRAMME



pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/south-programme



@SouthProgramme



The UniDem Med project is implemented in the framework of the joint programme between the European Union and the Council of Europe entitled "Protecting human rights, rule of law and democracy through shared standards in the Southern Mediterranean" (South Programme V) co-financed by the two organisations and implemented by the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

www.coe.int

The Member States of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

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