



UNIDEM MED
UNIVERSITY FOR
DEMOCRACY FOR
THE SOUTHERN
MEDITERRANEAN

VENICE COMMISSION
OF THE COUNCIL OF 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. 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 530 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.

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 "Regional Support to Reinforce Human rights, Rule of Law and Democracy in the Southern Mediterranean" (South Programme IV) co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe, and implemented by the latter, builds on the achievements and lessons learned from its three past phases (I, II and III). It seeks, in particular to foster co-operation, knowledge exchange and best practice sharing between the two shores of the Mediterranean in areas related to human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

List of seminars

Twelve seminars have been organised since September 2015:

- ▶ Human Rights and Civil Service, 1st UniDem Med, 14-17 September 2015, Rabat, Morocco
- ▶ Open Government, 2nd UniDem Med, 4-7 April 2016, Rabat, Morocco
- ▶ Reform of the General Statute of the Civil Service, 3rd UniDem Med, 31 October-3 November 2016, Rabat, Morocco
- ▶ Performance, Merit and Equality in the Civil Service, 4th UniDem Med, 27-30 March 2017, Tunis, Tunisia
- ▶ Prevention of Corruption and Promotion of Integrity in the Civil Service: shared experiences, 5th UniDem Med, 25-28 September 2017, Skhirat, Morocco
- ▶ Women and the Labour Market, 6th UniDem Med, 7-8 November 2017, Algiers, Algeria
- ▶ Improving the Relation between the Administration and Citizens: a democratic imperative, 7th UniDem Med, 23-26 April 2018, Rabat, Morocco
- ▶ Transformation and innovation in the senior civil service: challenges and opportunities, 8th UniDem Med, 24-27 September 2018, Tunis, Tunisia
- ▶ Towards a public service closer to the citizens: models and good practices, 9th UniDem Med, 12-14 June 2019, Marrakech, Morocco
- ▶ Leading Innovation in the Civil Service: from Rule of Law Standards to Leadership, 10th UniDem Med, 4-6 November 2019, Amman, Jordan
- ▶ Towards a user-oriented administration, 11th UniDem Med, 13-15 October 2020, video-conference, Morocco
- ▶ Public Administration Reform: new challenges and new operating modes, 12th UniDem Med, 15-17 December 2020, videoconference, Tunisia

The next seminars will address the following themes:

- ▶ Public administration facing the Covid-19 pandemic: modernisation and digital innovations, 13th UniDem Med, 5-6 October 2021, videoconference, Palestine*
- ▶ Good Governance and Quality of Administration, 14th UniDem Med, 1-2 December 2021, videoconference or hybrid format, Morocco



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 – 62

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), Russian Federation (2002), San Marino (1990), Serbia (2003), Slovak Republic (1993), Slovenia (1994), Spain (1990), Sweden (1990), Switzerland (1990), North Macedonia (1996), Tunisia (2010), Turkey (1990), Ukraine (1997), United Kingdom (1999), United States (2013).

Associate member: Belarus (1994).

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 should 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

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/south-programme>

The Unidem Med project is implemented in the framework of the European Union/ Council of Europe joint programme "Regional Support to Reinforce Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy in the Southern Mediterranean" (South Programme IV).

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 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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