

ACTION FICHE FOR
**ENPI-SOUTH REGIONAL PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF
 THE INFORMATION SOCIETY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title	EUMEDRegNet– 2007/019-602
Total cost	EUR 5.000.000
Aid method / Management mode	centralised management, managed by EC Delegation in Egypt
DAC-code	22010 Communication Policy and Administrative Management

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

Information Society is among the priorities of the Action Plan of the European Neighbourhood Policy with each Partner country and budget has been earmarked in the Regional Strategy Paper (2007-2013) and in the Regional Indicative Programme (2007-2010) under “Sustainable Economic Development / Development of the Information Society project”. Cooperation in the Information Society field has been declared essential in order to contribute to the sustainable economic and social development in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The Dundalk Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in May 2005 adopted a series of recommendations in order to promote sector reform and development of the Euro-Mediterranean Information Society. These recommendations have been taken up by the Senior Officials Forum on the Information Society in April 2006 which adopted a Work Programme focussing on the opening of the electronic communications markets, the cooperation between regulatory authorities, the promotion of online services and the improvement of the Mediterranean participation in the European Union's Research Framework Programme. A further step in this direction has been taken by the 2nd Ministerial Conference on Information Society, held in Cairo on 26-27 February 2008.

During the identification phase the EC Delegation in Egypt, with the assistance of experts, analysed *in-depth* the situation and needs related to:

- The Euro-Mediterranean dialog and cooperation on the information society
- The Regulatory reform in the electronic communications sector
- Research networking infrastructure
- R&D in ICTs and Mediterranean partner’s participation in FP7 and
- The previous EUMEDIS pilot projects.

The feasibility study concluded that the major problems to be addressed should be:

- (a) The Mediterranean dialogue and cooperation in IS/ICT requires further articulation and coordination of cooperation activities both on the EC and MEDA sides, mapping the stakeholders and integrating the areas of infrastructures, policies and applications (including e-government, e-learning e-education, research, ICT private sector and general adoption, cultural dialogue, e-inclusion) and establishing a liaison among the different levels of policies, regional projects and national initiatives.
- (b) There is a need for “hands-on” support related to the priority areas of regulation in the Information Society Chapter of the ENP Action Plans, which are covered by the NATP II Reference Guidelines with the objective of harmonization at regional level and in relation to the EU framework. There is also the need for multilateral workshops and networking among regulators in the region and with the European Regulators Group (ERG);
- (c) There is a fundamental need to ensure that interconnectivity of research networks to support ICT/R&D cooperation between Europe and the MEDA countries is promoted and sustained. Maintaining connectivity requires the rationalization of use and an increased share of national funding, including also bilateral cooperation funds.
- (d) Some additional work could be envisaged in implementing the recommendations of MED-IST and MAP-IT (FP6 projects) as well as establishing an active link between the ICT research and the other regional projects that promote the ICT industry, innovation for SMEs and economic competitiveness.
- (e) The implementation of strategic and methodological recommendations from the EUMEDIS pilot projects (a “white paper” was produced) should be supported were appropriate.

2.2. Lessons learnt

The past regional project EUMEDIS (including its key component EUMEDCONNECT), the projects NATP I and II as well as the bilateral MEDA assistance projects were analysed during the identification phase, through documentation review and stakeholders interviews, and some key lessons were drawn¹² in the areas of technological and regulatory cooperation, know how transfer and capacity building. These are:

- Processes have to be well designed, integrating all stakeholders’ needs from the very beginning, building substantial policy support, and embedding the institutional and financial sustainability strategies in to the original design.
- Building awareness, connecting and articulating national and regional initiatives in the same areas has not been enough endorsed and could not be proven efficient.

¹² List of documents reviews is in annex. Complete list of meetings and interviews is annexed to the identification phase feasibility study

- There are also recognised needs for increased internal networking, and sound outreaching strategies for dissemination.
- Sustainability can also be improved by increased communication with stakeholders as well with an early link with the potential beneficiaries of the projects outcomes.
- Leveraging mechanisms and lobbying capacity have also to be considered as an important factor.
- Ownership building strategies are necessary to enable opportunities for a leading role of the MEDA partners
- Monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of the projects outputs should be integrated a from the very beginning
- Some degree of implementation flexibility and timely reactions to changes of the environment and the stakeholders' needs are important success factors, in particular in the ICT/IS field.

2.3. Complementary actions

The project is designed to build on the past and current EC interventions in the field of Information Society in the region, namely EUMEDCONNECT/EUMEDIS and NATP II. It will provide complementary activities to current ICT- research projects such as MAP-IST and MAP-IT, Med-Ibtikar and Med-Innov and to future research projects within FP7.

The proposed intervention will also focus on promoting a coordinated approach of the national projects (as per the National Indicative Plans) in all the related fields (research networks, innovation, electronic communication regulation)

2.4. Donor coordination

There are no other donor active in both this particular area (electronic communications regulation, research networking) and with the same geographical (Euro-Med) coverage. EU Member States representatives in Cairo have been briefed by the EC Delegation in Egypt during identification and formulation phase. At the bilateral level, there are several cooperation projects (financed by the EC and member states) that this particular project will look to better articulate and leverage on.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

To support and further improve the mutually beneficial Information Society cooperation between Europe and the Mediterranean Partner Countries, building on the achievements of the EUMEDIS and other Regional initiatives.

The project specific objectives (purposes) are to:

- (a) Facilitate the creation of a harmonized and investment friendly environment in the electronic communications sector to enable the development of the Euro-Med Information Society.
- (b) Ensure sustainability of the research networking infrastructure in order to maximise the synergies of bilateral and regional Information Society projects.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

Specific Objective 1: The focus will shift from general conceptual level to the specific detailed needs of assistance, both at the regional and national bilateral level due to the progress made by the MEDA countries on the path of regulatory reform. There is a need for “hands-on” support related to the priority areas of regulation in the Information Society Chapter of the ENPI Action Plans as well as for multilateral workshops and networking among NRAs in the region and with NRAs in the EU Member States. Finally, continuation for NATP II is strongly supported by the stakeholders in the framework of the future Euro-Mediterranean regulators network. Consequently, the proposed intervention will focus on¹³:

- (a) fostering regional policy harmonisation;
- (b) assisting in the adoption of regulatory frameworks and their approximation with the EU framework (based on the NATP II Reference Guidelines) and promote the improvement of the administrative capacities of the regulators;
- (c) promoting regulators networking activities in the region and in relation to regulators in the EU Member States;
- (d) promoting best practices and bilateral activities, in a regional perspective.

Specific objective 2: The proposed intervention strategy is to ensure long term sustainability and effective impact of the networking infrastructure on R&D. Maintaining connectivity requires the rationalization of use and an increased share of national funding. In the very short term, connectivity has still to be co-supported, while at the same time have to be deployed substantial efforts to ensure mid and long term sustainability, tackling national budgets and bilateral cooperation funds. The project should support 50% of connectivity cost, as EC contribution for the first one and half year and at the same time take all the actions described below, to ensure full sustainability with other resources and budgets, after that period.

This should be achieved through:

- (a) lowering the costs and rationalising the use of the bandwidth, by re-tendering contracts, monitoring the usage and redirecting through commercial internet the non-critical applications, and rationalizing the network topography by interconnecting the national research and educational networks (NRENs), thus limiting number of direct connections to GEANT and their cost;

¹³ Further details on the strategic choices are in *Annex 3 Justification of Strategies*

- (b) increasing the effective use of the infrastructure by rebuilding links with the researchers community (in particular FP6-7 projects), promoting potential partnerships and joint-ventures in R&D, partnering with MED-IST project;
- (c) documenting sound cases of its usage, research impacts/benefits in order to enable to lobby national governments and other funding sources, including bilateral cooperation;
- (d) developing capacity of the Mediterranean countries to self manage the network operation and sustain interconnection with GEANT.

The expected results in relation respectively to the 2 specific objectives are:

- **R1** A harmonized regulatory framework for the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Information Society.
- **R2** A locally supported sustainable R&D support network to enable greater level of collaborative research activities.

For Result 1, related to the regulatory framework harmonization for the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Information Society, secondary expected results are:

- **R 1.1** A more comprehensive regulatory framework in the electronic communications sector, which is harmonised with the EU framework principles.
- **R 1.2** The implementation of national projects is articulated within a regional framework (RIP, bilateral NIPs, NIP CBC) with increased use of other instruments for regulatory assistance(Taix and Twinning).

For the Result 2, related to a locally sustained and “owned” R&D support network to enable a greater level of collaborative research activities, second level results are:

- **R 2.1** The EUMEDCONNECT 2 is in place providing dedicated connectivity for collaborative R&D applications.
- **R 2.2** Increased usage of the network for specific research and development applications (in particular FP6 and FP7 projects) and enhanced impacts are measured.
- **R 2.3** Documented usage and impacts, together with technical assistance, enable to lobby successfully for funding national governments and other donors.
- **R 2.4** There is an enhanced capacity of partners’ for EUMEDCONNECT network self management.

The activities, related to the Result 1 will include:

- **Act 1.1.** Project management, administration and reporting
- **Act 1.2.** Technical assistance to the regulatory activities of the Euro-Mediterranean Regulators Network: prepare priorities and work plans, periodical monitoring of the regional markets and the regulatory landscape

- **Act 1.3.** Identify and coordinate partners leveraging on other complementary projects and funding sources such as TWINNING and TAIEX, and bilateral cooperation budgets that could support activities related to electronic communications regulation in the region (benchmarking studies, mutual assistance between regulators, support e.g. to countries lagging behind)
- **Act 1.4.** Development and maintenance of the EUMEDRegNet project's Web site on regulatory developments of regional relevance

The activities related to Result 2 will include:

- **Act 2.1.** Re-tender contract connectivity for the Eumedconnect 2. Set-up up operational procedures test and migrate network, manage day to day operations and prepare the next phase. Shared costs for 18 months. Later, full costs will be covered by the partner countries and/or alternative cooperation instruments
- **Act 2.2.** Conduct the rationalisation studies and support NRENs to redirect, rationalise and monitor national network traffic, and CAMREN interconnectivity feasibility study in order to rationalise bandwidth use and eventually have less dedicated direct links to GEANT.
- **Act 2.3.** Technical assistance to: (a) prepare case studies on network usage and showing impact on national development, to advocate and convince decision makers to increase support to cover the network operation and promotion costs (b) secure additional funding by preparing and submitting project proposals to the national budgets, bilateral cooperation (NIPs) funds and other donors.
- **Act 2.4.** Promote network applications and collaboration opportunities to the stakeholders in both sides of the Mediterranean, connect and network potential user-researchers, integrate FP7 grantees activities, as well as Medibtikar, MED-INNOV Avicenna, Eumed-Grid, Tempus, stakeholders, (via national/regional events and active networking activities).
- **Act 2.5.** Capacity building and training for the Mediterranean partners networks
- **Act 2.6.** Develop capacity and business plan for CAMREN, in the perspective of a sustainable self management and operation of their interconnection with GEANT.

3.3. Stakeholders

Key stakeholders and target groups (direct beneficiaries) for this intervention include:

- National Regulatory Authorities for electronic communications and/or for radio spectrum management, participating in the Euro-Med regulators group
- MPC National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) and current EUMEDCONNECT, partners and stakeholders

Indirect beneficiaries, includes many stakeholders categories such as R&D public and private institutions, technology firms, ICT service providers, and furthermore, all kind of ICT services, and ICT-enabled services users.

3.4. Risks and assumptions

The two most important risks for both project components are related to (a) lack of political support that could lead to a lack of financial resources commitment in the longer term and (b) a lack of (progressively assumed) partners ownership.

In order to tackle these risks, the project design will prioritise activities that strengthen partners' capacity, target gaining high level political support, and leverage other sources of funding and support.

It can be fairly assumed that the project will be owned by the relevant key stakeholders, as it answers the needs they have expressed during the identification and formulation phases as well as during the previous evaluation and strategic planning exercises. Another encouraging fact is that in these 2 areas they have recently created regional ad-hoc networks (Euromed Regulator group, and Research Networks Consortium CAMREN). The intervention design does include strategies to address the funding gap risks, ensuring financial sustainability through active lobbying capacity, political support, and leveraging on the resources available (national budgets and bilateral cooperation).

Finally, another risk inherent to the region is related to potential social and political conflicts.

3.5. Crosscutting Issues

The project relates to the EC cross-cutting issues of good governance and human rights that will be indirectly addressed thanks to promoting an enhanced political and cultural dialogue, cooperation among research networks and academic community, better public services through e-government and empowers populations at large through better access as well as the use of ICT tools.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Implementation method

Centralised direct management

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the European Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question.

Component 1: a service contract will be awarded following a tender procedure.

Component 2: A direct service contract shall be signed with DANTE (Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe, UK), based on article 242.1.f) of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation. The reasons for a direct award to DANTE are the following:

- DANTE operates the only existing pan-European research networking infrastructure, i.e. the GEANT network that was created in 1993 by 11 of European National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) to build and operate pan-European research networks
- it has been set up as a non-profit organisation, and is owned by a group of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs).
- DANTE has since then played a pivotal role in four consecutive generations of pan-European research networks: EuropaNET, TEN-34, TEN-155 and now GÉANT. In the case of pan-European research networking projects, the NRENs and DANTE are project partners, and DANTE acts as the managing partner of the projects.

Mediterranean Partners' Countries have been co-funding connectivity costs by around 35% in the past. In this new phase, they will provide 50% during the first 18 months (of the total cost, including management costs). After 18 months, the funding of connectivity will be done through the following combination:

- increased governmental funding for their share of the research network (that share could vary according to the capacity of each country)
- other bilateral cooperation funds
- for some regulators networking activities and workshops, possibly other resources available at the national level (via TAIEX, TWINNING and Sector Budget Support)

4.3. Budget and calendar

Calendar

The project implementation will be of 3 years from the date of signature of the contracts.

Budget

The indicative breakdown is as follows:

Component 1: EUR 1.000.000 (service contract)

Component 2: EUR 4.000.000 (service contract)

4.4. Performance monitoring¹⁴

The project will be monitored according to standard procedures. Project management monitoring and evaluation will be based on periodic assessment of progress reports and deliverables. Regular presentations to the EC Delegation in Egypt are recommended.

¹⁴ See Annex 6 for a comprehensive monitoring plan.

The following indicators are proposed for monitoring the project:

The proposed impact indicator at the projects' overall objective level is:

- 10% increase in trade, public and private investments in the information society sector between EU and Mediterranean countries (source: EUROSTAT statistics¹⁵)

The proposed outcome indicators at the project purpose level are:

- after 3 years, 60% of the countries national regulatory frameworks are at the level of the common reference guidelines.
- after 3 years, there is a 10% increase in public and private research projects in the information society area (source: project management monitoring report, benchmarking studies, DG-INFOS and EUROSTAT statistics).

The proposed output indicators at the project results level are:

- 15 bilateral or multilateral projects proposals have been prepared by the project team.
- Online web site with relevant and up to date information, permanently updated by the project management (source: monitoring reports and benchmarking studies).
- After 6 months the migration process to the Eumedconnect 2 network is completed (source: project reports).
- After 2 years there is a 50% increase of the number of collaborative research projects using Eumedconnect, and an increase of different institutions participating in these (source: Projects' Research reports and usage monitoring).
- After 18 months alternative funding is secured to cover 100% network operations costs, capacity building and promotion activities (source: Project reports).
- After 2 years CAMREM assumes the technical management of the network interconnection with GEANT (source: Project reports).

4.5. Evaluation and audit

A final evaluation and an audit will be implemented by the Delegation in Egypt at the end of the programme.

Expenditure incurred will have to be certified, as part of the obligations of the contracted parties in the framework of the implementation of this project. Evaluation of the results achieved will be entrusted to independent consultants, as well as external audits (which will be carried out if necessary). These evaluations and audits will be funded from other sources than the project budget, since no commitment will be possible once the validity of this Decision has expired ("N+1" rule will apply).

¹⁵ this indicator availability has to be confirmed with the MEDSAT project of EUROSTAT see <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/medstat>

4.6. Communication and visibility

The project will work out a specific communication strategy and develop specific activities dedicated to communication and visibility.

The project will take adequately the “EU Visibility Guidelines for External Actions” into account, in particular as regards workshops and conferences. Furthermore, the contractor and/or implementing partner must always issue at least one press release and use the appropriate stationery and report presentation format for technical assistance projects and studies as well as the 2 components’ web sites.