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JEAN MONNET EUROPEAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
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Report on Perspectives for Academic Cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean space

EU Policies Towards its East Med Maritime Space:
Energy and Security (EU-EMES)

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Report on Perspectives for Academic Cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean space

In the framework of its European Governance Programme, the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence (Centre) of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) expands its activities on the study of European Union's (EU) policies towards its Eastern Mediterranean maritime space, as part of the external aspects of the EU's energy and security policies, two fields identified to be particularly under-represented at present in the academic community in Greece.

In this connection, the Centre submitted a project proposal entitled "EU Policies Towards its East Med Maritime Space: Energy & Security" (Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Activities 2019 Call for proposals), which was selected by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission (EU-EMES project, reference number 611501-EPP-1-2019-1-ELEPPJMO-PROJECT) and the respective grant agreement has been signed in October 2019.

The overall aim of EU-EMES was to promote reflections and enhance knowledge on EU policies on energy and security that are relevant to East Mediterranean space, by forming and supporting a scientific team, comprised of excelling academics, researchers from the NKUA and other universities and research institutes in Greece and abroad (Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Germany, Israel, Libya, Spain, Turkey, UAE and USA) as well as persons with professional expertise and interest (e.g. policy makers, business and civil society representatives) in the study fields of the project. The academics, and other researchers who joined the project team draw their expertise from various disciplines, such as international relations, political science, European studies/ Europeanisation, law, environmental studies, political economy, security studies, energy, energy security and business, regional studies, etc.

Among the main objectives of the project, prominent place has been given to the aim of setting the foundations for a more comprehensive academic cooperation between the Greek and Eastern Mediterranean space academic communities, in the subject area of EU Studies at large; of enhancing the EU orientation of the involved academic institutes; and potentially of inaugurating co-teaching for students of the involved parties, by organising common pilot activities with a view to explore further academic cooperation and the appropriate tools to support it.

To achieve these ends, EU-EMES ambioned furthermore to serve as a forum for facilitating participating institutions in discussing and deciding on organising further common academic activities and the preparation of tools supporting them (through MoUs, Erasmus Mundus Joint PhD Degrees, and/or joint consortia for other schemes of European funding). These common academic activities could include the joint development of content and co-teaching for selected doctoral (and post-graduate) students and researchers from the involved universities. reinforcing their knowledge or increasing their interest in EU's policies in its eastern borders.

In the framework of the EU-EMES project two main events were held: a "Cross-fertilisation workshop on EU Policies on Energy and Security in the East-Med for young researchers" and the "Policy Conference on Energy and Security in the East Med Maritime Space".

The Cross-fertilisation workshop took place virtually (between 15/11 and 6/12/2021) and was addressed to young researchers and doctoral students from universities in Greece and abroad. The workshop provided a selection of lectures by the key staff and invited experts on EU Governance & Integration, EU Foreign Policy and CSDP, European Neighbourhood Policy, EU policies addressing Maritime Security and Hyber/Cyber Threats and EU Energy and Environmental policies.

The Policy Conference was a two-day policy-oriented conference which took place in Athens (3-4/11/2022) in a hybrid form. It brought together key staff and other members of the scientific team of the project along with policy makers from Europe, US and other East-Med countries, who discussed energy security, hard and soft security issues affecting EU and its Member States and the role of East Mediterranean countries in this context, including maritime delimitations as well as the options for EU and the other actors in the Eastern Mediterranean space and the policy tools for the successful implementation of EU aims in this region.

Both main events above aimed at boosting existing knowledge on the subject matter of the EU-EMES project, and at analysing recent geopolitical developments in the Eastern Mediterranean region. In this context, the implementation activities were focused on EU's actorness in the region (EU as a force of stability in the region), implementing multi-disciplinary approaches in relation to political, economic, security, migration and institutional co-operation aspects in the Eastern Mediterranean region. In this way, the project activities contributed to enhancing the EU orientation of the teaching and research activities of the academic and research institutions involved in the implementation of the project.

During the discussions at the events organised for the implementation of the project and at bilateral or plurilateral consultations held among members of the key staff and the scientific team of the project, the participants explored opportunities for further academic cooperation between their universities and the relevant funding sources (e.g. MoUs between the universities, Erasmus Mundus PhD Degrees, Executive or MBA courses, etc.). More specifically, the participants considered

potential forms that the academic cooperation among their universities and institutions.

1/ In the first place, the participants underscored that their universities and institutions should take full advantage from the existing valuable instrument of academic cooperation and mobility that represent the Erasmus + programme.

In this respect, it has been acknowledged that there is a rich potential that has not been yet fully used by the higher education institutions, participating in the various activities for the implementation of the EU-EMES project. The participants agreed to advocate within their universities and institutions for greater and more effective use of the opportunities provided by Erasmus + programme, including by promoting the conclusion of MoUs and cooperation agreements between their institutions that will contribute to higher numbers of exchanges of academic staff and students.

2/ The participants considered further the possibilities for promoting joint tutoring of PhD candidates and joint supervision of Master's dissertations on topics of common interest.

Starting in the form of cooperation between individual professors who have common scientific interests, such cooperation could pave the road for a more formalised and ultimately institutionalised framework of inter-university cooperation.

3/ The participants envisaged also the promotion of cooperative schemes of post-graduate and doctoral studies. Such schemes may comprise the following possibilities:

3(a)/ Organisation of joint Masters and Doctoral Academic Sessions and/or Summer Schools, in which post-graduate students and PhD candidates could participate and present their ongoing research to academic panels comprised of professors from universities both from EU Member States and from regional East Mediterranean regional non-EU countries. In this way, the post-graduate students and PhD candidates participating in the joint sessions/summer schools could have guidance for their research from various and varying theoretical perspectives.

3(b)/ Possibility of developing joint programmes for PhD Studies: PhD candidates, already enrolled in PhD programmes of one higher education institution involved in EU-EMES project (EU-EMES partner institution), could participate in specific activities of other institutions involved, such as Workshops, Seminars, Winter and/or Summer

Schools, and/or ongoing research programmes carried out by EU-EMES partner institutions, in order to conduct their original research (in whole or in part). In addition, these PhD candidates will be given the opportunity to write and publish academic articles fulfilling the academic obligations of the University/Institution issuing their PhD.

3(c)/ Possibility of developing joint programmes for post-graduate students: LL.M./MA/MSc Students, already enrolled in relevant programmes of one EU-EMES partner institution, could participate in specific activities of other institutions involved, such as Workshops, Seminars, Winter and/or Summer Schools, and/or ongoing research programmes carried out by EU-EMES partner institutions, in order to attend courses and/or conduct their research (in whole or in part).

Such actions could contribute to the further development of high-level research in EU-EMES partner institutions, to the reinforcement of the cooperation between students, to the exchange of expertise in order to mutually enhance good practices and the development of new methodological tools in research.

4/ The participants contemplated the prospect of developing joint modules (mandatory or elective) to be included in existing academic programmes and, moreover the design of common programmes and degrees, with the aim of improving the quality of professional training among the participating universities in European studies and in particular in the field of EU policies on security and energy relevant to the East Mediterranean space. In this direction, general or introductory courses on European Union affairs would be introduced to departments and schools that do not offer a wide range of such courses as well as specialised elective courses related to developments in the EU (especially in departments and schools that already offer a course range on EU policies).

In this respect, the participants highlighted the cooperation between the Centre and the Rabdan Academy, a higher education institution located in Abu Dhabi (UAE), specialised in Safety, Security, Defence, Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Management studies. Rabdan Academy participants devised, prepared and delivered, in the framework of the Cross-fertilisation workshop on EU Policies on Energy and Security in the East-Med for young researchers, a module focused on "The Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean - Energy & Security" (29 November 2021), providing a new perspective on the issues discussed in the Workshop.

Following this cooperation, the Centre and Rabdan Academy plan to initiate consultations for strengthening their cooperation in additional

fields, including the possibility of students from both institutions to attend courses of the other, exchange of academic staff, etc.

5/ Finally, the participants discussed the proposal of creating a new Master's Programme on EU energy and security policies towards Eastern Mediterranean space, with the participation of several EU-EMES partner institutions, both from universities located in EU Member States and universities in regional East Mediterranean regional non-EU countries. The participants converged that this possibility should be a long-term objective, taking into account the different normative frameworks regulating higher education in the various countries concerned, as well as the administrative and practical issues which will need to address in order to implement such project.

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The aim of the above range of actions is to foster the development of new teaching; reinforce research and debating activities on EU themes, in particular EU policies on energy and security and their impact on East Mediterranean space; demonstrate evidence of academic added value; and promote and provide greater visibility to these European studies/issues both within the EU-EMES partner institutions and beyond.

In this respect, the participants agreed that actions such as academic cooperation and mobility that represent the Erasmus + programme as well as Joint tutoring of PhD research seemed easier to achieve under the current normative framework and despite existing administrative difficulties. To this end, consultations have been initiated and currently continue in order to conclude agreements between interested EU-EMES partner institutions that will allow expansion of cooperation and mobility opportunities that currently are underexploited.

The same conclusion has been drawn with respect to the discussed cooperative schemes of Post-Graduate and Doctoral Studies (participation of post-graduate doctoral students in joint post-graduate/doctoral sessions, summer schools or programmes): such actions are in principle feasible, and individual participants in the implementation of the EU-EMES project have already initiated the consideration within their universities of such actions, with a view to advancing the idea and devising the concrete steps needed for the realisation of cooperative schemes of Post-Graduate and Doctoral Studies

With regard to the actions envisaging the development of joint modules, common programmes, degrees and a Master's Programme focused on EU energy and security policies towards Eastern Mediterranean space, the participants concurred on their usefulness and timeliness. They, nevertheless, underlined that the normative

framework regulating the higher education systems in the countries of the East Mediterranean countries, be it EU Member States or non-EU countries are vastly different, so that the existing discrepancies, for the time being, render the successful implementation of such initiatives doubtful.

Consequently, the participants recommended that their universities and institutions focus first on the full exploitation of the existing possibilities and the expansion of the beneficiaries of such existing opportunities, through the conclusion of bilateral agreements to that effect, and in parallel work towards the creation of the conditions that will enable them to materialise, at a later stage, discussed actions, such as joint modules, common programmes and degrees, including a joint Master's Programme focused on EU energy and security policies towards Eastern Mediterranean space.