



UNIVERSITÀ DI SIENA 1240
RETTORE

Siena, 29 February 2016

To: Mr Robert-Jan Smits
Director General
Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
European Commission

Cc: Mrs Luisa Prista
Head of Unit I.2 – Eco-Innovation
Directorate I – Climate Action and Resource Efficiency
DG Research and Innovation
European Commission

Dear Director General Smits,

Following your letter of 25 November 2015, on behalf of the PRIMA Consortium, I am pleased to provide you with the requested information and clarifications, as well as to provide you with an update on developments of PRIMA since the Programme proposal was submitted to the European Commission on 22 December 2014.

Please find herewith the Addendum to the PRIMA Joint Programme (attachment 1), which has been organized in three sections, dealing respectively with issues related to sections 1, 2 and 3 of your letter. With reference to Section 3 of your letter, further information is provided also in attachment 2.

Taking into consideration Euro-Mediterranean RDI experience matured so far and simultaneously the fragmented funding landscape into small-scale projects or several co-fund actions under Horizon 2020, scientific, managerial and financial integration has become a necessary condition to obtain relevant innovative advancements in the crucial field of food production and water provision in the Area.

Challenges just mentioned need a wide, strongly structured and long-term committed partnership inspired by principles of co-ownership, mutual interest and shared benefits.

Banchi di Sotto 55, Siena
rettore@unisi.it tel. (+39) 0577 232206



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For this reason, I am very pleased to inform you that the support of Euro-Mediterranean Countries to the Consortium has considerably further grown after the submission of the Programme in 2014.

This is clearly demonstrated by financial commitment expressed in 2015 by Tunisia, and in 2016 by Cyprus, Egypt, Israel and Lebanon. This means additional long term cash contributions to be summed up to the commitment expressed on 22 December 2014.

Financial cash contributions, coming from 14 Countries, are now close to two hundred and fifty million euros, with the significant participation of 5 non-EU States, out of which three are not associated to Horizon 2020. Furthermore, in-kind contributions are foreseen by the Participating States equalling at least their in-cash contributions. These in-kind contributions cannot be ex-ante quantified since they will highly depend on selected RDI projects but will be thoroughly reported ex-post.

Further countries have expressed strong interest and support to the PRIMA Initiative, participating regularly in PRIMA meetings. Furthermore, institutions of 5 countries who have not expressed yet their financial commitment to the PRIMA programme are willing to contribute to the definition of its Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) since they joined the application for a Coordinated Support Action entitled "4PRIMA".

These signs all show a widespread attention and commitment to a stronger and integrated Euro-Mediterranean partnership in RDI.

Contributions announced so far are long-term national commitments (10 years) subject to the use of Article 185 of TFEU, which demonstrates that this instrument, compared to others, would allow the highest leverage effect on national public funds, and ensures the most stable commitments in the long-term.

Recent developments highlighted in this note and the contents of the attached Addendum make this belief even stronger.

The operational objectives of the Programme, defined in accordance also with the analysis of the previous Mediterranean and national RDI programmes and initiatives, have been structured around 3 pillars: 1) Sustainable management of water for arid and semi-arid areas; 2) Sustainable farming systems under Mediterranean environmental constraints; 3) Mediterranean food value chain for regional and local development. This structure in three pillars will also be the backbone of the upcoming Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, but we would like to reiterate the willingness of the PRIMA Consortium to take into consideration the priorities that the Commission will suggest, in particular with respect to the Work Programme 2018-2020 of Horizon 2020.

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The definition and implementation of the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda will promote the key principles of Open Innovation, Open Science and Openness to the World, highlighted by the European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, M. Carlos Moedas. This commitment, dependent upon changes occurring in the ways science works, will allow widest possible dissemination of PRIMA results, thereby bringing greater concrete advantages to Euro-Mediterranean end-users, communities and enterprises, and fostering dialogue among different ministries (especially agriculture, environment, research, foreign affairs) from the largest possible number of Euro-Mediterranean countries.

PRIMA presents high potentialities in terms of Science diplomacy. Science diplomacy produces added value in promoting cooperation and conflict prevention, rebuilding trust and fostering shared understanding across countries. As reported in the Addendum, PRIMA Programme, aiming at tackling territorial imbalances, adaptation to climate change, water and food security through an integrated framework, could contribute to face migration issues.

International events occurred during 2015, such as the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related 17 Sustainable Development Goals by UN Countries and the Agreement achieved at the Paris Climate Conference (COP 21), confirmed the crucial role played by sustainability in the societal agenda for the future.

PRIMA topics and activities are perfectly in line both with this new international agenda and with the 10 priorities of Juncker's Commission – with a special focus on priorities 1, 3, 8 and 9. Furthermore, monitoring systems to assess the impacts of PRIMA projects will be based on the SDGs framework in the field of food security and water provision, taking into consideration general (e.g. poverty, health, land use, GHGs emissions) and sectorial issues (e.g. agriculture, water services), the biophysical limits of Mediterranean ecosystem and the water-food-energy nexus.

Since the date of the PRIMA Proposal submission, the importance of the PRIMA Programme has been reiterated by Ministers of Countries involved in the Initiative. In particular during the 2nd Dialogue 5+5 Ministerial Conference on Research, Innovation and Higher Education conveyed on 23-24 March 2015 in Madrid. In endorsing a work programme for 2015-2016 defining concrete steps to move forward cooperation, the Ministers of the ten governments involved (Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia) expressed their full support to the PRIMA programme.

On 20 July 2015, Ministers of EU Member States confirmed their support to the PRIMA initiative during the Foreign Affairs Council, by inviting the Commission to a rapid adoption of a proposal for PRIMA under Art. 185 TFEU.

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PRIMA is a scientific bridge across the Mediterranean sea. We hope to count on your support to reinforce the foundations of this bridge and make it as strong and as stable as possible in the long-term.

I am available, with all Consortium Partners, to provide any further details you and your offices might need to promote a stronger partnership for research and innovation in the Mediterranean area in the field of food systems and water resources.

Yours sincerely,

Angelo Riccaboni
Chair of PRIMA Consortium

Attachments

1. Addendum
2. Information on UfM legal status

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rettore@unisi.it tel. (+39) 0577 232206