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Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA)

Following a request made by nine Member States in December 2014, on 18 October 2016 the European Commission adopted a proposal to establish a new public-public Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) under Article 185 TFEU. PRIMA would focus on two key socioeconomic issues that are important for the region: food systems and water resources.

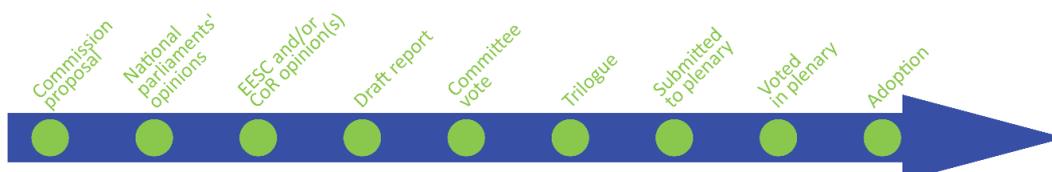
The decision adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in July 2017 establishes the partnership for a period of 10 years, and provides PRIMA with €220 million in EU funds from the Horizon 2020 framework programme for research, to match the commitments of the participating states. The proposal introduces derogations to the rules concerning participation in Horizon 2020 in order to allow third countries to join the partnerships.

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the participation of the Union in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) jointly undertaken by several Member States

COM(2016) 662, 18.10.2016, 2016/0325(COD), Ordinary legislative procedure (COD) (Parliament and Council on equal footing – formerly 'co-decision')

Committee responsible:	Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)
Rapporteur:	Sofia Sakorafa (GUE/NGL, Greece)
Shadow rapporteurs:	Pilar Ayuso (EPP, Spain), Patrizia Toia (S&D, Italy), Notis Marias (ECR, Greece), Pavel Telička (ALDE, Czech Republic), Michèle Rivasi (Greens/EFA, France), David Borrelli (EFDD, Italy)
Procedure completed.	Decision (EU) 2017/1324 of 4 July 2017 OJ L 185, 18.7.2017, p. 1

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Introduction

In December 2014, nine Member States submitted a proposal to the European Commission on EU participation in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA). After conducting an impact assessment, the Commission concluded that the use of an Article 185 initiative was the tool best suited to achieving PRIMA's objectives and adopted the legislative [proposal](#). This was also the participating Member States' tool of choice.

Context

[Article 185 initiatives](#) are Member State partnerships for the joint funding of research activities that receive EU funds from the framework programme for research (currently Horizon 2020). They were promoted by the Commission in 2001 as a way to implement the [joint programming](#) of research activities. The legal basis for their creation is Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

As stated in Article 26 of the Horizon 2020 [Regulation](#), Article 185 initiatives are proposed only in cases 'where there is a need for a dedicated implementation structure and where there is a high level of commitment of the participating countries to integration at scientific, management and financial levels'.

Five Article 185 initiatives have been established since 2003. An evaluation of the instrument has revealed that implementation of the three levels of integration is hindered by the lack of political will to implement joint programming as well as the existence of national legal and administrative barriers to transnational funding.

Existing situation

Building EU-Mediterranean cooperation in research and innovation

The 1995 Barcelona [Declaration](#) launched the process of establishing a Euro-Mediterranean partnership. In this declaration, the EU Member States and countries of the Mediterranean area agreed 'to strengthen scientific research capacity and development, contribute to the training of scientific and technical staff and promote participation in joint research projects based on the creation of scientific networks'. They established the Euro-Mediterranean Monitoring Committee in Research and Technological Development (MoCo), now known as the Euro-Mediterranean Group of Senior Officials ([EU-Med GSO](#)), to improve Mediterranean cooperation in research.

In 2004, the Commission's [strategy](#) for the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) aimed to support structural and institutional capacity building activities in research and innovation 'to increase the participation of these countries in the Community's RTD activities and to improve their national research systems' contribution to economic growth and social welfare'.

The Cairo [Declaration](#) 'Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education & Research Area' of June 2007 reaffirmed the will of the EU Member States and the Mediterranean Partner Countries to strengthen their



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cooperation in research. The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) created following the 2008 Paris [Summit](#) included higher education and research as one of its [priorities](#).

In 2011, the Commission updated its [partnership](#) with southern Mediterranean countries. It introduced the objective to create a Common Knowledge and Innovation Space ([CKIS](#)) with the ENP countries, including 'cooperation in research and innovation, and increased mobility opportunities for students, researchers and academics'.

The emergence of the PRIMA initiative

The implementation of the CKIS was at the heart of the Euro-Mediterranean [Conference](#) on Research and Innovation held in Barcelona in April 2012, the objective of which was to pave the way to establish a Common Research and Innovation Agenda. The participants [concluded](#) that 'a renewed partnership in research and innovation should be based on the principles of co-ownership, mutual interest and shared benefit'. In the [conference report](#) the Commission suggested that it might be worth exploring the possibility of implementing an Article 185 initiative for research cooperation for the Mediterranean. This proposal was [discussed](#) and supported by the MoCo in June 2012. A core group of Member States interested in working towards an Article 185 initiative for a Partnership in Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area ([PRIMA](#)) was formed at the Informal Competitiveness Council [held](#) in Nicosia in July 2012.

Cooperation activities between the EU and the Mediterranean area

In September 2014, the Commission adopted its [roadmap](#) for cooperation in research and innovation between the southern Mediterranean and the European Union. It introduced three focus areas for cooperation: water availability and management, and food security; renewable energy and efficiency; and efforts to fight disease and improve well-being. The roadmap also took stock of the instruments developed to support research cooperation with the Mediterranean countries:

Two [INCO-Net](#) projects funded under the seventh framework programme (FP7) focussed on priority setting and supporting the science policy dialogue. The Mediterranean Innovation and Research coordination Action ([MIRA](#)) set up a dialogue and action platform encouraging scientific and technological cooperation from 2008 to 2012. It was followed by the Mediterranean Science, Policy, Research & Innovation Gateway project ([MED-Spring](#)), focussing until 2016 on three societal challenges: energy, high quality affordable food, and scarcity of resources.

[ERANETMED](#) established a network of national research owners and managers in the participating countries from the EU and the Mediterranean area to develop procedures to implement joint funding for research activities in renewable energies and energy efficiency and water resource management.

Two sectoral ERANETs were set up under FP7 implementing joint research activities on the Coordination of Agricultural Research in the Mediterranean Area (ARIMNET and [ARIMNET2](#)) and on Enhancing Forest Research in the Mediterranean ([FORESTERRA](#)).

Specific calls have been launched for research proposals under Horizon 2020 targeting countries in the southern Mediterranean.

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Projects were supported under the [European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument](#) (ENPI) for 2007-2013, replaced by the [European Neighbourhood Instrument](#) (ENI) in 2014.

The EU has also signed science and technology [agreements](#) with Algeria (2013), Egypt (2008), Jordan (2009), Morocco (2005) and Tunisia (2004). Tunisia has also been a Horizon 2020 [associated country](#) since January 2016.

Proposal for an Article 185 initiative for PRIMA

The Member States concerned began preparatory work to establish the PRIMA initiative following the 2012 meeting in Nicosia. In December 2014, the [PRIMA Joint Programme](#) was presented. It focused on two socioeconomic issues of key relevance for the region: food systems and water resources. The participating states¹ (PS) agreed 'to focus on the development of innovative solutions and the promotion of their adoption for improving the efficiency and sustainability of food production and water provision'. Twelve of them² committed a total cash contribution of €200 million to the programme over 10 years, subject to the establishment of an Article 185 initiative.

The PS justified the use of an Article 185 initiative as a way to tackle the fragmentation of the current activities by integrating 'small-sized projects into one coherent large-scale research programme' in the long term. The initiative was also seen as a way to put all the PS on an equal footing, based on the principles of co-ownership, mutual interest and shared benefits. The PS expressed the wish that the PRIMA implementation structure be hosted by the Secretariat of the Union for Mediterranean.

The PRIMA Joint Programme was updated in 2016 with an [addendum](#) to the first version. The consortium of PS is currently supported by an 18-month Coordination and Support Action under Horizon 2020, called [4PRIMA](#), whose objective is to develop the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for the initiative. [Work](#) started in May 2016 and is expected to be completed by November 2017.

Council starting position

The Competitiveness Council [discussed](#) the PRIMA initiative in May 2014. It [supported](#) the initiative on 5 December 2014, noting that 'PRIMA, if based on Article 185 TFEU, could play an important role in reducing existing fragmentation and duplication between national and European programmes in the Mediterranean Area, by achieving a critical mass, thus providing a significant added value for the Union'. The Council invited the Commission 'to assess as soon as possible whether a participation of the Union in the PRIMA Joint Programme on the basis of Article 185 TFEU is justified'.

1 The PRIMA Joint Programme was prepared by Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Tunisia. Germany and Turkey were observers.

2 Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia.



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On 5 December 2014, Jerzy Buzek, on behalf of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), tabled a [question](#) for oral answer to the Commission on the implementation of PRIMA under Article 185 TFEU. The question led to a [debate](#) with Carlos Moedas, Commissioner for Research and Innovation, during the plenary session of 15 December 2014.

The debate highlighted the ITRE Committee's support for the use of Article 185 TFEU for the implementation of PRIMA. As Article 185 initiatives are adopted under the ordinary legislative procedure, the Parliament would be fully involved.

Proposal

Preparation of the proposal

On the basis of the request formulated on 22 December 2014 by nine Member States,³ the Commission issued an [inception impact assessment](#) in December 2015. The Commission also formed an [Expert Group](#) to help prepare the ex-ante [impact assessment](#) to evaluate the potential to use Article 185 TFEU to establish the PRIMA initiative.

The Commission conducted an online [public consultation](#) from 1 February to 24 April 2016, the [results](#) of which were published in June 2016, and held a stakeholder [event](#) on 17 March 2016.

The impact assessment and expert group concluded that an Article 185 initiative was the best option for PRIMA. 55 % of the respondents to the public consultation believed that existing national and EU actions in water management and food systems in the Mediterranean area did not fully address the issues at stake. A majority of respondents (69 %) favoured the creation of a permanent, dedicated structure under Article 185 TFEU over the use of ERANET schemes, in order to address the situation more effectively.

The changes the proposal would bring

The [proposed decision](#) would establish PRIMA as an Article 185 initiative funded under the Horizon 2020 framework programme for research, with a total EU contribution of €200 million. The partnership would be established and funded for 10 years (until 31 December 2028). A dedicated implementation structure – the PRIMA-IS – would be established to manage the EU contribution.

The proposal mentions that the partnership for PRIMA would be jointly undertaken by 14 countries, with varying status depending on their participation in Horizon 2020: nine Member States (Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal and Spain), two associated countries (Israel and Tunisia) and three third countries (Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon).

Specific measures for the participation of third countries

As Article 185 TFEU does not include a reference to the participation of third countries, the proposed regulation introduces specific measures to address the situation.

International agreements would have to be concluded between the EU and participating states with third-country status under Horizon 2020. Existing international agreements in the case of Morocco and Egypt do not provide the basis for the participation of these countries in Article 185 initiatives. Existing international agreements would need to be amended or new ones adopted in parallel with the adoption of the proposed decision in order to secure the participation of third countries in the initiative. The procedure would be the

³ Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain.

Preparation of the proposal

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adoption of a Council decision with the consent of Parliament in accordance with Articles 186 and 218(5) TFEU.

The decision would also introduce derogations to the [rules of participation](#) applying to the Horizon 2020 programme in order to include participating states with third-country status:

- > The minimum number of participants in the PRIMA projects should be three legal entities established in three different participating states, with one established in a Horizon 2020 Member State or associated country, and one established in a third country considered to be a participating state.
- > The minimum eligibility conditions for participation should be the participation of one legal entity established in a participating state regardless of its status under Horizon 2020.
- > Legal entities established in a participating state should be eligible for funding.
- > The PRIMA-IS may launch joint calls with third countries other than participating states.

Two funding routes planned for the initiative

In contrast to existing [Article 185 initiatives](#), the PRIMA initiative as presented in the proposal would offer two routes for the funding of transnational projects:

- > indirect actions funded by the PRIMA-IS with an EU contribution;
- > activities funded by the participating states without an EU contribution, either following transnational calls for proposals organised by the PRIMA-IS and managed by national funding bodies, or corresponding to activities under the national programmes of the participating states.

Activities taking either route can be funded under PRIMA only if they are set out in the PRIMA annual work plan.

Shifting Horizon 2020 funding

The EU contribution of €200 million to the PRIMA initiative would match the €200 million contribution already committed by the PS for the partnership. The EU contribution would be provided from the budget for [Societal Challenge 2](#) on food security, sustainable agriculture and water research and [Societal Challenge 5](#) on climate action and resource efficiency. The EU budget contribution would be implemented over the seven annual work plans of the initiative (2018-2024).

As the full EU contribution for this period would be provided under Horizon 2020, whose last work programme will be adopted for 2020, in 2020 the situation would require the front-loading of the EU contribution to PRIMA initiatives for the years 2020-2024. Whereas commitments for PRIMA under the Horizon budget for the years 2018 and 2019 would be €20 million, commitments for the year 2020 would be €160 million. Adoption of the proposed decision would extend in time the distribution of part of the Horizon 2020 budget (€176 million of payments) until 2027 or 2028.

[Advisory committees](#)[National parliaments](#)[Stakeholders' views](#)

Views

Advisory committees

The European Economic and Social Committee adopted its [opinion](#) on the PRIMA proposal on 26 January 2017. The Committee supported the use of Article 185 TFEU in order to establish a partnership with the Mediterranean area. It noted that the issue of water had to be tackled in a comprehensive manner, and in a manner covering the entire water cycle. It also stressed that the programme's formal requirements should be simplified, in order to ease the participation of third countries.

The Committee of Regions' Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC) received information on the PRIMA proposal at its [meeting](#) of 31 January 2017 but did not appoint a rapporteur for an opinion.

National parliaments

National parliaments in 11 Member States have [considered](#) the proposal. The [Italian Senate](#) adopted a positive resolution on the proposal wishing for more EU Member States and third countries to join the partnership.

Stakeholders' views⁴

As stakeholders were closely involved in the process to set up the PRIMA partnership, no key stakeholders has taken a position on the PRIMA proposal.

⁴ This section aims to provide a flavour of the debate and is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all different views on the proposal. Additional information can be found in related publications listed under 'EP supporting analysis'.

European Parliament

Council

Trilogue

Adoption

Legislative process

European Parliament

In the European Parliament, the proposal was assigned to the ITRE Committee. The rapporteur Sofia Sakorafa (GUE/NGL, Greece) presented her [draft report](#) to the committee on 25 January 2017. She supported the rationale of establishing PRIMA as an Article 185 partnership with the financial participation of the Union. The main amendments she proposes in the report regarding the proposal concern:

- > changes in the named participating states following the withdrawal of the Czech Republic, and the announced participation of Germany and Jordan;
- > the topics for the research projects to be funded under PRIMA to cover the entire agro-food system and the full cycle of water management;
- > the extension of the type of research and innovation projects that can be funded, from exploratory research to the development of systems;
- > the budget contribution from the Union set at a minimum of €200 million;
- > the restrictions for funding under PRIMA for institutions from non-participating states;
- > modifications concerning the governance of the PRIMA-IS.

The [amendments](#) tabled in committee mainly covered the same articles, and were in line with, although with some variations, most of the changes proposed by the rapporteur.

The Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) adopted its [opinion](#) on PRIMA on 9 March 2017. The proposed amendments underlined the importance of tackling water scarcity in the Mediterranean area. The committee also supported the broadening of the topics to water management and agro-food systems, and stressed that a full range of research and innovation activities should be undertaken under PRIMA.

The ITRE Committee adopted its legislative [report](#) on 22 March 2017. It adopted amendments regarding the concerns mentioned above. The committee requested the EU contribution to PRIMA be equal to the PS contribution, and to amount to at least €200 million. The PS were also requested to contribute to the financing of PRIMA 'with an adequate percentage of the total effort'. The committee also added restrictions to the use of EU funding for third-country institutions.

Council

The Commission proposal on PRIMA was examined by the Council's research working party between November 2016 and February 2017. The Council position in view of opening trilogue negotiations was finalised by the research working party on 27 February 2017 and considered by Coreper I on 8 March 2017.

[European Parliament](#)[Council](#)[Trilogue](#)[Adoption](#)

Trilogue

Negotiators for the Parliament and Council reached a [provisional agreement](#) on the proposal in trilogue on 11 April 2017. The list of countries participating in PRIMA was updated to include 11 Member States (Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain), three associated countries (Israel, Tunisia and Turkey) and five third countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco).

The Union contribution to PRIMA is to be equal to the contribution of the PS, with a ceiling of €220 million over 10 years. The initiative would fund a large range of research and innovation activities on agro-food systems and integrated water management. It was decided that PRIMA should aim to provide approximately 25 % of the annual Union contribution to institutions in third countries. The provisional agreement confirms stricter rules for the validation of PS' financial and in-kind contributions to the partnership. The agreement also slightly modifies the governance of PRIMA.

On 26 April 2017, the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee [endorsed](#) the trilogue's outcome. The Maltese Presidency briefed the Competitiveness Council on the agreement at its [meeting](#) on 30 May 2017. The Council thereafter adopted a [decision](#) to authorise the European Commission to launch negotiations with the five third countries participating in PRIMA in order to set out the terms and conditions of their participation.

Adoption

The ITRE Committee endorsed the provisional agreement on 30 May 2017, and the European Parliament subsequently adopted it at [first reading](#) in plenary on 13 June. The Council [adopted](#) the agreement on 26 June. The [decision](#) was signed by the European Parliament and the Council on 4 July. The final act was published in the Official Journal on 18 July 2017.



References

EP supporting analysis

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Other sources

[Partnership for research and innovation in the Mediterranean area \(PRIMA\): participation of the Union](#), European Parliament, Legislative Observatory (OEIL).

[PRIMA Joint Programme](#)

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