Parliamentary Secretary, Hon. Chris Agius, heads the Ministerial Conference on Strengthening Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation through Research and Innovation

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Today, Hon. Chris Agius, Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sports, chaired the Ministerial Conference on Strengthening Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation through Research and Innovation. The Conference, which was organised by the Maltese Presidency with the collaboration of the Malta Council for Science and Technology and the European Commission, was open to all EU and EFTA countries, as well as the non-EU countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. It marked the 10th anniversary from the last meeting of its kind. High-level guests and speakers included Commissioner for Research and Innovation, Carlos Moedas, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella, Princess Sumaya Bint El Hassan of Jordan, MEP Miriam Dalli, MEP Sofia Sakorafa, and the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, Fathallah Sijilmassi.

The Conference focused on three topics of particular relevance for the Euro-Mediterranean region. The first session focused on the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), a legislative proposal which is being negotiated during the six months of the Maltese Presidency. This initiative will be the first public-public partnership, based on Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which will integrate the non-EU countries of the Mediterranean region. Its focus is on the development of innovative solutions for sustainable water management and food production in the region.

During the second session, Ministers were invited to exchange views on how research and innovation (R&I) could address the root causes of migration. This session, which tied in to discussions on the PRIMA proposal, stimulated the proposal of ideas on harnessing opportunities through research and innovation to bring about further stability and prosperity in the Euro-Med region.

In the final session, the focus shifted on how research and innovation should be placed at the heart of the blue growth and jobs agenda. The inclusion of this topic was the culmination of a number of efforts made throughout the Maltese Presidency to shine a spotlight on "blue initiatives". The BLUEMED Project, an event on which was held on the 18th and 19th April in Malta, was supported by Ministers as a vehicle...
04.05.2017

fostering greater cooperation in R&I efforts across the Mediterranean region on marine and maritime issues.

At the end of the Conference, the Valletta Declaration on Strengthening Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation through Research and Innovation was endorsed by all EU and non-EU research ministers as a symbol of the renewed commitment towards the promotion of stability, economic growth and sustainability in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Parliamentary Secretary Hon. Chris Agius, said “This conference is a milestone for the Maltese Presidency and we have worked hard to bring together Euro-Med Ministers to discuss a number of topics of interest to our region at the highest political level”. He stated that Malta, hopes this is the just the first step of a lifelong collaboration on the subject between the EU and the Mediterranean countries.

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