

**WEBINAR 13****PRIMA and the Western  
Balkans: Advancing  
Sustainable Innovation  
through Euro Mediterranean  
Collaboration****Antonella Autino**

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**17 July 2025  
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BALKANS  
Info Hub****PRIMA****PARTNERSHIP FOR RESEARCH  
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN  
REGION**

- EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP

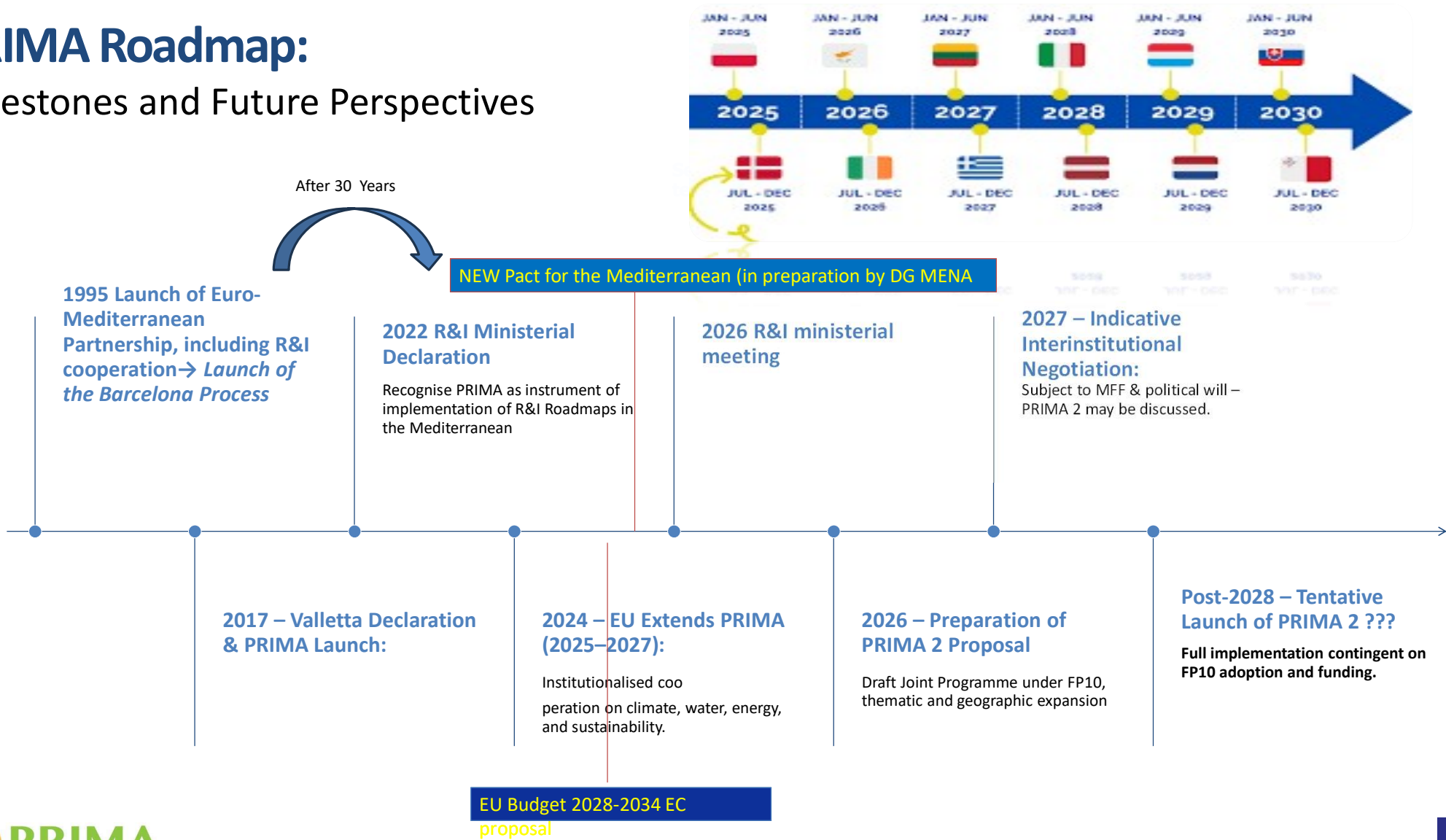


Science Diplomacy in the Mediterranean

## **What is PRIMA: A European Partnership for Innovation in the Mediterranean**

**EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP**

# PRIMA Roadmap: Milestones and Future Perspectives



# PRIMA Partnership in a nutshell



**Policy option: EU institutionalized Partnership**



**Legal Basis:** Established under Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) [Decision \(EU\) 2024/1167](#) amending [Decision \(EU\) 2017/1324](#) as regards the continuation of the Union's participation in the PRIMA under Horizon Europe.



**Timeframe:** 2018–2031 (calls from 2018 to 2024 under H2020 RfP: from 2025-2027 under HE)



**Funding:** €325M from EU (Horizon 2020 & Horizon Europe) + €384M from Participating States



# Why PRIMA?

## Mediterranean at Risk: Climate Crisis Hotspot



### Warming 20% Faster

+1.4°C since pre-industrial era



### Severe Water Scarcity

10-30% precipitation decline by 2050



### Agricultural Stress

Up to 50% crop yield reduction



### Ecosystem Degradation

48% wetlands lost since 1970



# Objectives

## General Objective

To build **research and innovation capacities** and to **develop knowledge and innovative solutions** for water management, sustainable agriculture, and food systems in the Mediterranean region, enhancing resilience, sustainability, and socio-economic growth.





# Vision

**“Inclusive, healthy and prosperous Mediterranean societies through innovative solutions in agro-food and water systems, contributing, by the end of the programme, to sustainable use of natural resources, economic growth and stability.”**



# Thematic Focus

PRIMA's objectives are articulated around three interlinked thematic area pillars

## 1. Sustainable Water Management

Develop integrated and sustainable water management solutions.

Enhance the resilience of water resources to climate change, drought, and extreme events. Improve water availability, quality, efficiency, and equitable access for agriculture and food systems.

## 2. Sustainable Farming Systems

Develop resilient, productive, and sustainable agricultural systems and practices.

Foster climate-smart agriculture to improve productivity, resource efficiency, and biodiversity. Enhance adaptation strategies for farmers against climate variability and socio-economic challenges.

## 3. Agro-Food Value Chains

Improve the efficiency, safety, and quality of Mediterranean agro-food value chains.

Foster innovation and technological uptake to increase competitiveness and market access.

Reduce food losses, waste, and environmental impact through circular economy approaches.

### cross-cutting goals:

- *Capacity Building: Strengthening scientific, technological, and managerial capacities across the Mediterranean countries.*
- *Soil Sustainability*
- *Digitalisation*

## Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda





# PRIMA: Pioneer of the WEFE (Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems) Nexus Approach at regional level

## Mainstreaming WEFE Nexus in all calls\_ WEFE demo sites

PRIMA projects integrate the WEFE approach beyond dedicated Nexus projects.

## WEFE Community of Practice (CoP)

established to engage stakeholders and drive policy integration.

## Nexus Regional Strategy with UNEP-MAP, UfM & EC

Leading role of PRIMA in implementing Action Plan to operationalize the WEFE nexus adoption in the Med region

# PRIMA: Strategic Alignment with EU and Global Policies

- Brings EU and Southern Mediterranean countries together in joint research, fostering trust and collaboration across borders.
- Anchored in shared governance principles—mutual benefit, equality, inclusive co-funding—making it a model for diplomatic engagement through science.
- Aligns with geopolitical and sustainability goals (e.g., European Green Deal, SDGs, water resilience strategies)

*“PRIMA is a landmark Mediterranean science diplomacy program using innovative water management projects as a central theme. It fosters regional collaboration, supports systemic WEF solutions, and exemplifies diplomacy through science, with shared governance between the EU and Mediterranean partners to address water scarcity, climate resilience, and sustainable development”*



Contributes to the implementation of the following EU thematic policies:

[EU Competitiveness Compass](#)  
[Widening participation and spreading excellence](#) in line with policy objectives of the [ERA](#)

- [Water Framework Directive](#)
- [EU Water Resilience Strategy](#)
- [Vision for agriculture and food](#)
- [The Bioeconomy strategy](#)
- [Circular Economy Package including the EU strategy for plastics and waste management.](#)

NEW Pact for the Mediterranean (in preparation by DG MENA)



global policy targets: [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#):

# Common Challenges for the Mediterranean and Western Balkans Regions

## Environmental & Resource Challenges

Land degradation (soil erosion, intensive agriculture)  
Biodiversity loss  
Water pollution (agriculture, industry, urban waste)

*“These risks are shared across PRIMA’s Partner Countries and the Western Balkans—demanding coordinated R&I-driven responses.”*

## Socio-Economic Challenges

Youth unemployment (especially rural)  
Rural depopulation & migration  
Energy insecurity  
Limited market access (small-scale producers)

## Governance & Institutional Challenges

Weak policy implementation  
Fragmented governance  
Insufficient cross-sector collaboration

## Technology & Infrastructure Challenges

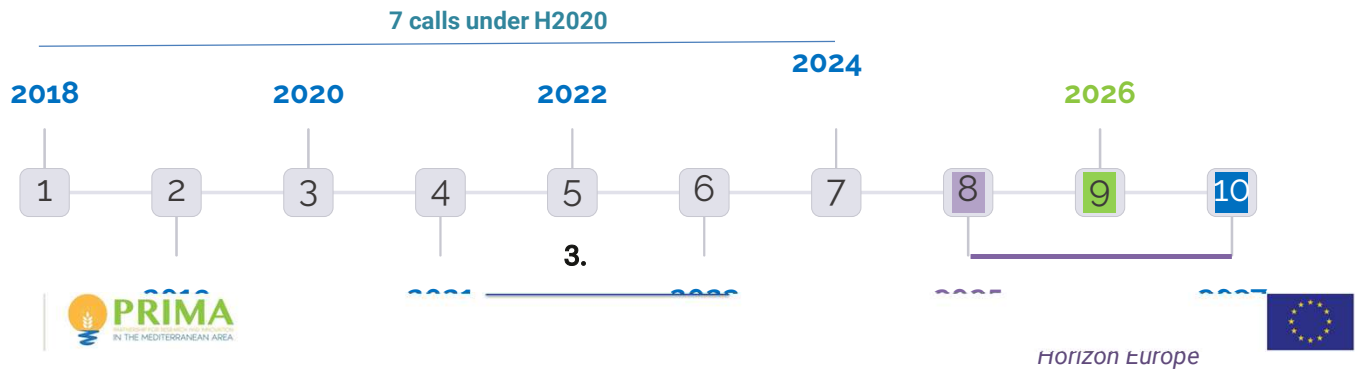
Limited digital infrastructure (IoT, precision agriculture)  
Poor rural infrastructure (transport, logistics)



# What we do?



**1. Joint transactional calls to:  
Increase capacities, knowledge and develop innovative  
solutions**



**2. Valorize outstanding solutions through awards:**

- WEFE Nexus
- Woman Greening Food Systems Award ! July 31th (17.00 CET)
- Youth innovation solutions

**3 Upscale**



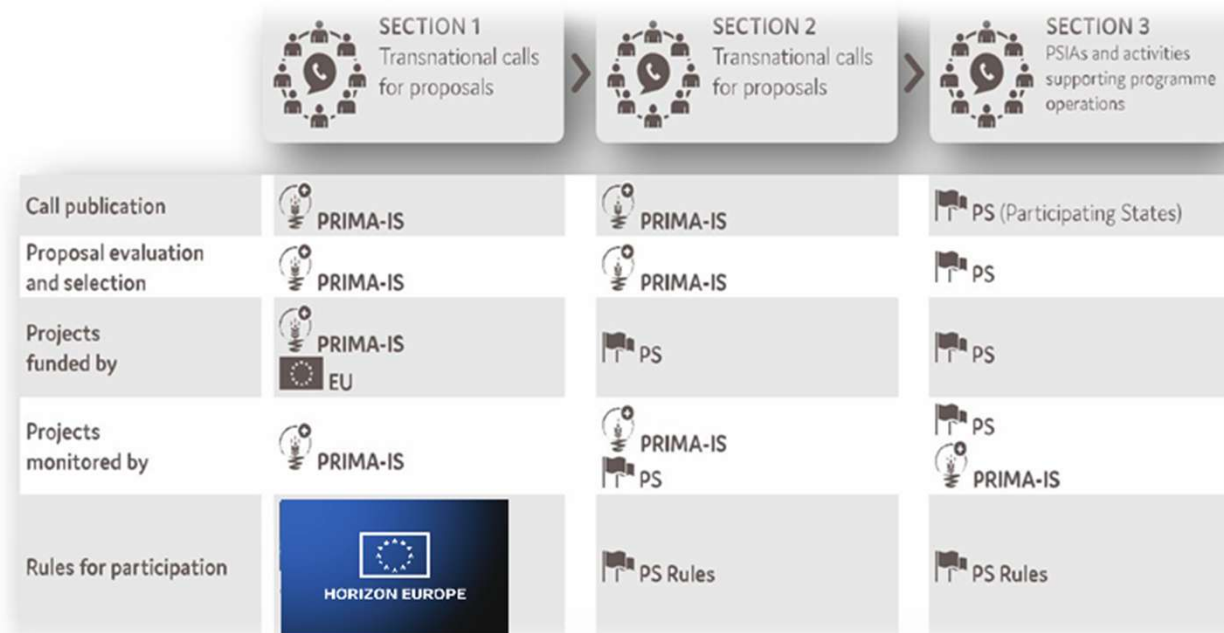
Sustainable solutions for agri-food systems and water management in the Mediterranean through an integrated approach (systemic approach WEFE)

Innovation  
upscaling




Go-to-Market

# PRIMA Funding Structure



# PRIMA actions\_PRIMA Derogations HE

-  **3-year R&I projects**
- **Actions: CSA, RIA, IAs**
- **Call and evaluation process: Derogation to HE in the EU Decision 2024/1167 (PRIMA extended Decision**
- **Minimum of 3 partners from PRIMA Participating States**
  - At least one partner from an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country
  - At least one partner from a Mediterranean Partner Country (MPC)
  - Specific additional eligibility conditions
    - i.e additional legal entity MPC
    - For profit organization from PS in Innovation actions



## Additional Eligibility Conditions

PRIMA in WP 2025



### For All Calls:

Consortia must include at least one additional independent legal entity established in a Mediterranean Partner Country (MPC).



### In Innovation Actions (IAs) under Section 1:

In addition to the above, consortia must include at least one Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) established in a Participating State.



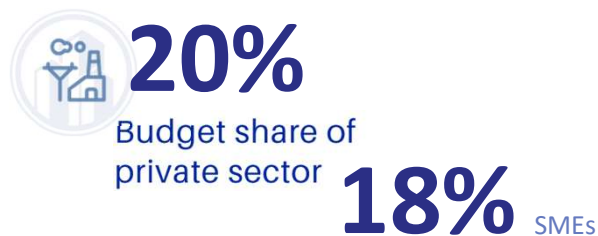
**ONLY FOR  
Section 1 IAs**



# PRIMA dashboard (2018 - 2024)



<https://prima-med.org/booklets/>



Project portfolio:  
[Project booklets](#)



## AWESOME

**Automated Water-Energy-food WEFE Nexus Optimization and System-of-Systems Management**

EU R&I Framework Programme  
PRIMA partnership

AWESOME developed innovative hydroponic and aquaponic systems that reduce pressure on freshwater resource and compete with traditional agriculture by using 90% less water. Developed a model-based platform offering over 1.000 integrated solutions across the water, energy, food, and ecosystem sectors.

## SIMTAP

**Sustainable and Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaponic**

EU R&I Framework Programme  
PRIMA partnership

Project designed demonstration integrated multi-trophic aquaponic systems utilizing brackish water and recycling, resulting 50% water savings and 40% reduction in associated emissions.



## Sustainable Production in Water Limited Environments of Mediterranean Agro-Ecosystem

EU R&I Framework Programme  
PRIMA partnership

NEWFEED has developed a pilot-scale prototype that transforms agri-food by-products – grape stems, orange peels, and olive cake – into sustainable animal feed through cost-effective, low-impact circular economy processes. Processing 10,000 tons/year of grape stems yields feed ingredients competitive

## Dairy Innovation for Mediterranean Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

EU R&I Framework Programme  
PRIMA partnership

DAINME-SME addresses challenges faced by South Mediterranean dairy SMEs by developing cost-effective technologies to valorize cheese whey into high-value products. The project achieved a 25% reduction in energy consumption and Nile River contamination through Innovations including functional prototypes.

- Newfeed project prototype at the "R&I for a Competitive Green Transition" exhibition.
- Brussels, Berlaymont 23<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025



# PRIMA's Contribution to WB Green, Digital & Diplomacy Objectives

## **Regional Synergies:**

- SME innovation, investment, competitiveness
- Capacity building (skills, training, knowledge exchange)

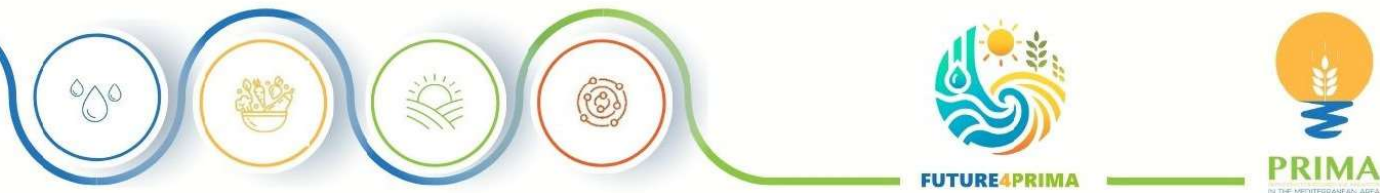
## **Green & Digital Objectives:**

- Sustainable water, climate-smart agriculture, biodiversity
- Digital agriculture, agri-food traceability
- Inclusive, gender-sensitive innovation

## **Science Diplomacy & Cooperation:**

- Platform for trust and collaboration
- Bridging Western Balkans & Southern Mediterranean
- Multi-stakeholder engagement (universities, civil society, policymakers)





## Shaping the Future with PRIMA

Operating from 2018 to 2031, PRIMA is already looking ahead with the [FUTURE4PRIMA project](#), which aims to expand PRIMA's reach by involving more ministries from current participating countries and welcoming new partners.

As the EU prepares for the next Framework Programme (FP10), PRIMA is positioned to shape the Mediterranean's future through research and innovation.



NEXT →



# Towards PRIMA 2: Strategic Evolution

Looking towards PRIMA 2 (the future phase), the programme aims to deepen its impact by:

Moving from sector-specific research towards an integrated, Resource Nexus-driven approach, PRIMA 2 focuses on cross-sectoral synergies (water, energy, food, soil, ecosystems), uniting fragmented R&I efforts into cohesive, scalable solutions.

PRIMA 2 emphasizes stronger science-policy-community linkages, frontier science integration, and community empowerment, driving regional resilience, sustainability, and shared prosperity.

Increasing digitalisation and technology integration in Mediterranean agriculture and water management.

Promoting inclusive innovation by engaging women and youth in research and entrepreneurship.

Advancing governance and policy harmonisation for regional cooperation and sustainable resource management.





# How to Participate in PRIMA

## Participate in PRIMA calls



<https://prima-med.org/>

## Participate in FUTURE4PRIMA activities: Join our expanding community



**Have your say in the Online Consultation on PRIMA2 strategy:  
1 August – 15 September**



**Participate in the F4P First widening Workshop in Sofia, BG, 6-7/10/25  
focusing on extending PRIMA to Western Balkans.**



<https://future4prima.eu/>



# PRIMA

**The Partnership for Research and  
Innovation in the Mediterranean Area**

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EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP

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