Western Mediterranean countries have been severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This health crisis has uncovered the respective degree of unpreparedness of the different countries of the region, putting a huge strain on their health systems. Despite the international competition for medical equipment and potential treatments being on public display, this crisis has also shown that, facing a common challenge such as the COVID-19 pandemic, cooperation, coordination and solidarity are more than ever required. In the aftermath of the crisis, our capacity to cope with similar health hazards will be inevitably reassessed. It will eventually lead us to (re)build sustainable and resilient health care systems. Cooperation will definitely need to be a valuable part of this process.

Compared to other fields of regional cooperation, the health topic has not historically attracted deserved attention from Mediterranean partners. However, potential benefits are clear: by sharing practices and experiences and making the best of existing resources and capacities, Mediterranean countries would support health development and resilience, realise common health objectives and foster regional cooperation and eventually integration.

The 5+5 Dialogue gathering countries from the northern and southern shores of the Western Mediterranean Basin appears to be one of the most relevant frameworks to develop such a cooperation in the area of health. The Western Mediterranean Dialogue is in fact successfully covering a large scope of cooperation areas of since its inception in 1990. The Foreign Ministers of the 5+5 Dialogue countries have expressed their interest in making health issues a fully-fledged area of cooperation (foreign affairs ministerial declarations in Lisbon 2014 and Tanger 2015), but the initiative has not gone beyond the organisation of technical working groups. In face of the lessons learned of the COVID-19 health crisis, it seems now very timely for the 5+5 Dialogue to further engage in a long-term cooperation on health issues in the Western Mediterranean.

Following an introduction on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the different Western Mediterranean countries and their respective responses to the health crisis, this MedThink 5+5 webinar will aim at highlighting the potential benefits of an intensified cooperation on health issues at the level of the 5+5 Dialogue. It will identify and discuss specific priority issues where North-South and South-South cooperation could be stepped up with the aim to develop the basis for common health policies in the Mediterranean.
BUILDING RESILIENCE TO HEALTH CRISIS THROUGH ENHANCED COOPERATION IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN: THE ROLE OF THE 5+5 DIALOGUE IN A POST COVID-19 ERA

AGENDA

Welcoming Address
Josep Ferré, Director General, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

Introduction - Impacts of and Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Western Mediterranean

Views from the South
Larabi Jaidi, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South (PCNS)

Views from the North
Luca Barana, Researcher, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Roundtable - Towards an intensified cooperation on health issues in the Western Mediterranean: potential benefits and priority issues

Moderator
Roger Albinyana, Director of Mediterranean Regional Policies and Human Development, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

Speakers
Leire Pajín, Director of International Development, Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal), Former Minister of Health of Spain
Ahcène Zehnati, Senior Researcher, Head of the Health Economics Department, Centre de Recherche en Economie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD)
Ahmed Driss, Director, Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI)
Hicham Sebti, Dean of the Business School, Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez (UEMF)

The webinar will be in English and French without simultaneous translation.

Organised by: IEMed.