

MEM Freethinking Platform

Middle East Mediterranean Summer Summit 16-26 August 2018

Contact

MEM Freethinking Platform
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MEM Summer Summit

The Middle East Mediterranean Freethinking Platform, established at Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) in Lugano, is offering the MEM Summer Summit: a ten-day summer program, consisting of a Seminar and of a Forum, addressed to young people from Mediterranean, European, North African and Middle East countries.

The Summit is based on the shared feeling that there is a strong need to encourage a critical and participative look at the events that disrupt today's world, particularly in the Middle East Mediterranean (MEM) region.

For the last five years, the region has been mired in a sequence of instability, violence, civil wars that have led to extensive loss of life, the destruction of countries, and massive displacements of populations.

It is high time for a new generation to take up the challenge of the future of the region, with strong relations to Europe, in order to create cultural bonds that enable them to overcome the prevailing short-term policies that have led to the catastrophic situation of today.

The Seminar will enable young people with the will and potential to work for the betterment of the MEM region, to develop a vision based on dialogue and a shared educational and cultural experiences, putting them in a position to strengthen their engagement. These proposals will form the basis of exchanges with figures having high-level responsibilities in the international political, economic and diplomatic arenas during a two-day Forum, which shall close the Summer Summit.

CONTEXT

Why Switzerland and USI

Switzerland, with its tradition of mediating in international conflicts and its neutrality, is well-placed to help these young people to take up the new geopolitics challenges. Lugano, with its unique location between the North and the South of Europe, the mountains and the lake, which give it its special Mediterranean feel, offers a perfect venue to enhance such a cultural program.

Università della Svizzera italiana is the most international university in Switzerland, with some 3000 students and over 800 professors and researchers from over 100 countries. USI has a long tradition of involvement in Mediterranean Studies. It runs several programs of relevance to the MEM region and its challenges, such as the *Master of Advanced Studies in Intercultural Communication*, the *Master of Advanced Studies in Humanitarian Logistics and Management*, the *Arabic Journalism Observatory* as well as several research projects in public management in the MEM region.

THE PLATFORM

Middle East Mediterranean Freethinking Platform

The Middle East Mediterranean (MEM) Freethinking Platform, under the direction of Professor Gilles Kepel, was created at Università della Svizzera italiana (USI), with the aim of encouraging the analysis and debate on what happens in the Middle East Mediterranean region, taking into account the global geopolitics equilibria. The Platform, which aims to be active both at the academic level and among international think-tanks, fills the lack of interdisciplinary programs on the Middle East Mediterranean in Southern Switzerland and Northern Italy. It was conceived to fulfill the function of platform linking different research entities and existent skills, both at international and local level. Its Scientific Advisory Board, composed by Prof. Riccardo Bocco (Geneva), Dr. Martino Diez (Milan), Prof. Gilles Kepel (Paris), Prof. Silvia Naef (Geneva), Prof. Hela Ouardi (Tunis and Paris) and Prof. Reinhard Schulze (Bern), ensures the scientific value of the initiatives promoted by the Platform.

MEM SUMMER SUMMIT Seminar (16 – 24 August)

The Seminar will be organized on the University's campus, around three lecture courses. The lecture courses, in English and in French, are as follows:

1. **The new Middle-East Mediterranean Dynamics** - Course coordinated by Prof. Gilles Kepel

- ✓ Europe and MEM Region: Migration, security and regional integration
- ✓ Rebuilding the Levant
- ✓ The Oil issue: the end of the Rentier-state model?
- ✓ Palestinian-Israeli conflict & American disengagement
- ✓ Sunni-Shia fault line and the reshuffling of the MEM region
- ✓ Turkey at the crossroads

2. **Nation Reconstruction and Rebuilding** - Course coordinated by Prof. Jean - Patrick Villeneuve in collaboration with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

- ✓ Switzerland's good offices and mediation role
- ✓ Humanitarian aid policies and development-cooperation
- ✓ Roles of the civil society in nation reconstruction and rebuilding
- ✓ Strengthening compliance with international humanitarian law
- ✓ Good governance and corruption

3. **Narratives: Understanding the Contemporary MEM region through Fiction (Arts, Literature and Cinema)** -

Course coordinated by Prof. Silvia Naef

- ✓ Relating to the past: heritage conservation
- ✓ Image making, image breaking: from the Qur'an to present-day positions
- ✓ The contemporary art scene
- ✓ Writing for living: literature as a mirror
- ✓ Narrating past and present: cinema and history

The lecture courses will be supplemented by plenary sessions, workshops, film screenings¹, art exhibits², sharing sessions and debates, intended to enable the participants to formulate shared proposals and questions in preparation for the concluding Forum. The proposals and questions will be prepared in groups. The Summit will also be punctuated by social activities³.

MEM Forum (25 – 26 August 2018)

The MEM Forum, organized at Lugano's functional Palazzo dei congressi⁴, is a unique opportunity for the young people engaged in the Seminar and its collateral activities to meet with major political and business figures as well as other important players in the MEM region such as civil society activists, to discuss the challenges the MEM region is facing.

The proposals and questions prepared at the end of the Seminar will be discussed by the guest speakers, so that they engage in a discussion with Seminar participants' representatives. The Forum is a common space for the discussion of ideas and visions. This model of exchange, heterogeneous and trans-generational, is innovative and promotes the dialogue between people, who do not usually have the opportunity to be in contact.

¹With the collaboration of the Locarno Festival, one of the most important film festivals in the world (see www.pardo.ch)

²With the collaboration of LAC-Lugano Arte e Cultura, Lugano's very recently founded art center (see www.luganolac.ch)

³Ranging from sports to local tourism.

⁴See <http://www.luganoconventions.com>

Partners

The MEM Summer Summit is organized in partnership with the *Chaire Moyen-Orient Méditerranée de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure* (Paris Sciences et Lettres). The project received the endorsement of the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron and of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs/The Middle East and North Africa Division (FDFA/MENAD), as well as of the highest Swiss authorities and of the city of Lugano

Media Partners

Media Partners of the MEM Summer Summit are, at this stage: *RSI Radiotelevisione svizzera*, as public broadcasting service (Switzerland); *Corriere della Sera* (Italy).

Invitation and Selection

Participants, suggested and pre-selected by different institutions in the MEM region (see below) and in Europe, will be invited to submit an application. A commission of experts will evaluate the dossiers and will make a selection. The online application form will be available by **15 January 2018**. The application deadline is **February 15, 2018**, and admission decisions will be announced **Mid-March 2018**.

MEM Summer Summit – List of Countries
(nomenclature according to the international standard)
Albanian Republic
People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Kingdom of Bahrain
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Republic of Croatia
Arab Republic of Egypt
United Arab Emirates
French Republic
Federal Republic of Germany
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Hellenic Republic
Islamic Republic of Iran
Republic of Iraq
State of Israel
Italian Republic
Lebanese Republic
Libya
Republic of Macedonia
Kingdom of Morocco
State of Kuwait
Sultanate of Oman
Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPT)
Portuguese Republic
State of Qatar
Republic of Serbia
Syrian Arab Republic
Republic of Slovenia
Kingdom of Spain
Swiss Confederation
Republic of Tunisia
Republic of Turkey
Republic of Yemen