

Open Call

Mutual Mentorship Programme (MMP) 2026

A platform to enhance EU-MENA Cooperation through cross-regional learning & exchange

The *Mutual Mentorship Programme* (MMP) brings together a diverse group of individuals from Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including the GCC countries, to engage in structured peer learning, meaningful networking, and continuous knowledge-building on issues of shared interest to the regions. Building on the EU's renewed Pact for the Mediterranean (2025) and the EU's Strategic Partnership with the Gulf (2022), the programme contributes to advancing people-to-people cooperation and deeper cross-regional understanding across Europe and the MENA-region.

Launched in 2025, the pilot MMP targeted some 50 participants from across Europe and the MENA-region, pairing them to ensure cross-sectoral and intergenerational exchange. The programme follows a mutual mentorship model, where all participants act both as mentors and mentees, engaging in the exchange of perspectives and the joint development of ideas, and sharing insights and experiences with a view to fostering enhanced EU–MENA relations.

The programme is implemented by the [Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa](#) (SDI), a governmental agency that serves as a platform for dialogue and cooperation between Sweden and Europe, and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. SDI addresses political, economic, and social development, strengthens mutual understanding in culture and religion, and promotes the EU's Mediterranean Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood, with a focus on peace and security, sustainable development, and inclusive participation.

Scope and Objectives

The overarching theme of the 2026 Mutual Mentorship Programme (MMP) is advancing EU–MENA relations on the basis of the EU's *Pact for the Mediterranean* (2025) and the EU's *Strategic Partnership with the Gulf* (2022). The programme seeks to contribute to meaningful exchange and collaboration guided by the core pillars of these strategic documents, including in relation to: **(1) Enhancing people-to-people links**, including by strengthening education, civil society and youth engagement, **(2) Contributing to more sustainable, and integrated economies** by advancing trade and investment and the green transition; and **(3) Cooperation on Security and Stability**, addressing issues of peace and conflict, as well as migration. The programme will also touch upon the issue of the use of AI for good.

Participants will be selected on the basis of their prior engagement and experience of these topics as well as their interest in advancing EU-MENA relations. SDI encourages individuals working in policy-making, academia, civil society, and the private sector to apply.

The programme will run from March to November 2026 and consist of a total of seven (7) meetings for the full group (50 participants in total), including: Two (2) in-person meetings and Five (5) online meetings.

In addition, each mentor pair (a total of 25) is responsible for scheduling and holding one-to-one meetings ahead of every full-group meeting to ensure continuity.

The MMP aims to promote:

- Knowledge exchange between participants on areas of shared interest between Europe and the MENA-region in relation to EU-MENA frameworks for cooperation, including the 2025 *EU Pact for the Mediterranean* and the 2022 EU's *Strategic Partnership for the Gulf*.
- Knowledge exchange on AI, including in relation to advancing AI for good.
- Networking and building a robust platform for collaboration across regions, sectors and generations.

MMP Activities:

- Five (5) online meetings: SDI will convene all MMP participants every month between March and November 2026, with a break between July and August. *A kick-off online meeting will take place on 4 March to introduce participants to the programme and to each other.*
- Two (2) in-person meetings; one in mid-May (location TBC), and one in Amman/the MENA region in November 2026 to participate in SDI's annual conference and to wrap up the MMP.
- Six (6) one-to-one meetings (primarily online): Mentor pairs will meet to exchange perspectives and experiences, reflect on the full group discussions, and shape their ongoing collaboration within the mutual mentorship framework.

Who Can Apply:

The MMP is open to applicants from countries in Europe and the MENA-region¹. This year SDI particularly encourages applicants from Syria and the GCC countries. Applicants should meet the following requirements:

- Participation is open to individuals aged 18 and above.
- Current or former experience in either economic or sustainable development, AI, and/or peace and security.
- Demonstrate a strong interest in EU–MENA relations.
- Be able to commit to the full duration of the programme including the monthly meetings with the full group, the in-person meetings, and one-to-one bilateral meetings in pairs.
- Be ready to contribute with their reflections to the programme and to engage in thematic areas outside their expertise.
- Have not participated in SDI's previous mentorship programme.
- A good level of English is required; the programme will be conducted entirely in English.

Practical Information:

- Participation in the programme is free of charge.
- The MMP is not a funding opportunity.
- All travel and accommodation costs, except visa costs, for the two scheduled in-person meetings will be covered by SDI for participants residing outside the host country.
- SDI can provide supporting documentation for visa-related processes but is not liable for any costs incurred by applicants, regardless of the decision.

¹ Algeria, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Morocco, Norway, Netherlands, Oman, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine and Yemen.

How to Apply

Applications to join the programme are open [and can be accessed by clicking here](#). Applications are open until 3 February. Selected participants will be notified by 12 February 2026, and applicants who are not selected will be informed thereafter.