



## **THE EUROMED PERMANENT UNIVERSITY FORUM CREATED IN TAMPERE, UNDER THE FINNISH PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The Rovira i Virgili University has been chosen as the headquarters of the Executive Secretariat of the network of Euro-Mediterranean universities.

Between the 9th and 11th October, the conference of rectors of the Euro-Mediterranean universities was held in Tampere (Finland). It was organized jointly by the Polytechnic University of Tampere (Finland) and the Rovira i Virgili University (Spain), under the Finnish presidency of the European Union. The conference received the support of the Finnish and the Catalan Government.

On 11th October, 62 universities and institutions belonging to the member countries of the Euro-Med partnership of the European Union constituted the EuroMed Permanent University Forum, a network of universities and higher-education institutions from the Euro-Mediterranean region. It should be pointed out that member universities from the ten countries of the southern Mediterranean shore took part and that the Permanent Forum will be open to other institutions willing to become members.

The aim of this network is to create a Euro-Mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research by promoting the knowledge society, collaboration and dialogue between the educational institutions of the European Union, from the east and south of the Mediterranean countries, and the greater quality of teaching and research, as well as guaranteeing the basic right of education for everybody.

The EuroMed Permanent University Forum has elected a Management Committee consisting of 21 members (see Constitution Agreement), and has chosen Francesc-Xavier Grau, rector of the Rovira i Virgili University (Spain) as coordinator, rector Hassan Nadir Kheirallah from the Alexandria University (Egypt) as the deputy coordinator, and vice-rector Driss Ouauicha (Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco) as secretary. It has also been agreed that the Rovira i Virgili University will be the headquarters of the Executive Secretariat of the network and that the network's first ordinary general assembly will be held in Alexandria or Rabat. On the other side, five work groups have also been agreed, which will be designed by professor Giuseppe Giliberti, from the Università degli Studi di Urbino "Carlo Bo" (Italy).

Finally, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has congratulated not only the universities for their initiative but also the Polytechnic University of Tampere and the URV for organizing the meeting. The Ministry has also informed that it intends to discuss the constitution of the EuroMed Permanent University Forum and the conclusions of the conference at the next meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Union, which will also take place in Tampere next November. It will also deal with the development of the Barcelona Process.

The EuroMed Permanent University Forum represents the formal commitment among the universities of the Euro-Mediterranean region for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Area of

Higher Education and Research that will strengthen bonds and promote joint academic and scientific projects. It is the result of the debate and accumulated experience of the three Mediterranean University Forums that have been held so far (Alicante 2004, Tarragona 2005 and Malta 2006) and the importance of the Tarragona Declaration for Dialogue and Cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean Universities.