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Oct 16, 2023 by [Zane Šime](#)

## **The Southern Neighborhood Context of the European Science Diplomacy** <sup>[1]</sup>

In the age of permacrisis and an ever-growing multiplication of risks that can gain major global and geopolitical resonance, research-intense and evidence-informed resilience-building measures are in perpetual demand. This blog post builds on some of the latest research on the science diplomacy and external action dimensions of various domain-specific EU policies. The latest thinking on technology diplomacy by [Muñiz](#), the link between postgraduate learning and diplomatic practice by [Šime](#) , and the Green Deal diplomacy towards the southern Mediterranean by [Sandri and colleagues](#), offers good grounds for a tailored study of the European Research Area, with a selective focus on the European Southern Neighborhood. The chosen thematic angle leads to the identification of some research gaps and suggestions for why addressing these blind spots matters to broader public diplomacy scholarship and for international development work in general.

Research  on the past Framework Programs of the European Union proves their worth as

targeted and versatile tools for engaging with the European Southern Neighborhood and crafting joint solutions to diverse challenges. Framework Programs, as one of the backbones putting the European Research Area in motion, prove their indispensable worth in the European Union's science diplomacy pursuits and the geopolitical ambition to offer a partnership to the Southern Neighborhood that is needs-driven and solution-oriented with a track record of sustainable results. Moreover, projects funded by the Framework Programs leave an enduring legacy of closer ties between the EU and its southern neighbors, making European scientific excellence felt on the ground and accessible to a wide range of entities.

The European Research Area embodies European geopolitical benevolence in action, with each engagement occasion rooted in the overarching goals and values that the area is envisaged to promote. This public diplomacy and science diplomacy value of the European Research Area and its myriad funding instruments remain under-researched. Therefore, the full scope and magnitude of the international resonance of the European integration project in its contemporary form are only fully understood by those expert circles that are either beneficiaries of EU instruments or specialists in the administration, research, or auditing of these instruments. This circulation of knowledge and awareness should reach wider audiences through an enhanced pursuit to diversify the research angles, theoretical and conceptual elements, and methodological approaches.

As with several recent noteworthy research initiatives in diplomacy studies, such as the EU public diplomacy issue of the Journal of Contemporary European Studies, the 17th-century European practices of public diplomacy unearthed by Lamal and Van Gelder, and the evolution of EU climate diplomacy described by Earsom and Delreux, the thematic thread placed at the center of this blog post resulted in recommendations for future research. Furthermore, this research enquiry addressing the external action and science diplomacy dimension of the European Southern Neighborhood engagement in the European Research Area led to coining the new term "Eranetization."

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***The suggestion to study Eranetization captures this forward-looking spirit and propensity to build on the scholarly tradition instead of merely reiterating its prevailing tropes.***

Eranetization describes the "incremental and multidimensional socialization process that leads to a growing competence, more actively shared expertise, and, with it, an emergence of shared understandings and assessments of viable options for action among the beneficiaries of various funding instruments," shouldering the European Research Area. Eranetization is instrumental for the future study of the European Union's public diplomacy and science diplomacy because it goes beyond the general soft power notions of attractiveness. Eranetization refers to a specific supranationally agreed, built, and steered governance framework—the European Research Area—as the core element that guides the flows, exchanges, and circulation of people, expertise, and know-how for the benefit of scientific curiosity and the entrepreneurial and industrial competitiveness of the European Union and its most like-minded partners and somewhat more distant interlocutors. Most importantly, Eranetization is tied to a specific intellectual infrastructure of supranationally defined

incentives, measurement, monitoring, and assessment tools. The term recognizes not only the individual agency of ambitious researchers, entrepreneurs, non-governmental leaders, and bureaucrats of regional and international organizations. Eranetization provides a fair acknowledgment that the policy framework and its governance architecture have a notable role in shaping the assessment and decisions of these agents of viable options for research-oriented bilateral and multilateral engagements.

To stress the nascent phase of the study of Eranetization, this notion has not been used in any other studies than the Ph.D. thesis, which introduces its contours. The initial findings inform that the success of Eranetization depends on a vast range of factors, such as the long-term compatibility of niche expertise among the consortium members for continued cooperation beyond one project timeframe. The administrative setting in which each consortium member must conduct project activities might play a constraining or enabling role. The timing of thematically relevant EU calls for project proposals that would prove conducive to extended collaboration beyond the timeframe of one project and several other factors are worthy of attention. Overall, Eranetization has shown its initial relevance in the European Southern Neighborhood setting. Nevertheless, its resonance in other ERA geographic coverage areas remains unknown. Perhaps it proves to be a misnomer elsewhere or within another timeframe than the studied 2014-2017 period. The improvement of the notion of Eranetization requires applying it to other case studies.

To conclude, the European Union remains an attractive and internationally salient source of inspiration for innovation and advancement of public diplomacy and science diplomacy scholarship. The suggestion to study Eranetization captures this forward-looking spirit and propensity to build on the scholarly tradition instead of merely reiterating its prevailing tropes.

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