



EuroMeSCo Workout 2026

TRACK II & 1.5 DIPLOMACY LAB FOR THINK TANKS

As part of **EuroMeSCo's capacity-building initiative**, implemented with the financial support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), a new edition of the **"EuroMeSCo Workout Courses"** will take place online in 2026. The programme aims to strengthen the capacities of EuroMeSCo think tankers and researchers by responding to needs identified through consultations across the network.

This year, the EuroMeSCo Workout Courses will be organised around a common thematic focus on **diplomacy, dialogue, and strategic anticipation in times of crisis. In this context, two online courses will be held in May and June 2026.** The first course examines the role of Track II and Track 1.5 diplomacy in fostering dialogue and generating policy-relevant outcomes across the Mediterranean. The second course focuses on applying foresight to diplomacy in complex crisis contexts. Participants will explore Backcasting as a practical tool to imagine desirable future scenarios, identify the diplomatic steps needed to reach them, and strengthen decision-making, strategic thinking, and policy responses in situations of uncertainty.

Designed as practical and interactive training programmes, the courses place strong emphasis on peer-to-peer exchange, with trainers coming from the think tank and research community themselves.

These courses will be **free of charge** for the selected participants. Priority will be given to researchers and think tankers affiliated with institutes or think tanks from the [EuroMeSCo network](#).

Taken together, the two courses offer a coherent training cycle that combines conflict-sensitive dialogue design with future-oriented diplomatic thinking. Participation in both courses is not compulsory, and applicants may choose to apply for only one of them. While the courses are complementary in scope, each is designed to stand on its own. For the second course, prior experience in this field will be considered during the selection process, based on the information provided by applicants in the application form.

[EuroMeSCo Workout 2026 | CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS – Fill in form](#)



TRACK II & 1.5 DIPLOMACY LAB FOR THINK TANKS

Mediterranean Track II & 1.5 Diplomacy

Lead trainer¹: Ahmet Sözen. Chairman, Department of Political Science & International Relations, Eastern Mediterranean University.

Format: Online (Zoom)

Number of Sessions: 4

Schedule: Mondays 11, 18, 25 May & 1 June - 10:00-12:00 (CET)

Course overview

In an increasingly polarized Mediterranean environment characterized by protracted conflicts, geopolitical rivalries, and shrinking diplomatic space, Track II and Track 1.5 diplomacy remain essential tools for fostering dialogue, confidence-building, and policy innovation. Over the years, and across various conflicts, such processes have proven diplomatically significant, especially during periods of regional transformation and escalation, as the Mediterranean is currently experiencing. However, the rise of transactional diplomacy and the dominance of Track I state-centered approaches have limited opportunities for sustained unofficial dialogue. Most track-II processes in the Mediterranean have been initiated and led by non-Mediterranean actors rather than by institutions and experts from within the region.

This course aims to equip think tank professionals and policy practitioners who focus on the Mediterranean with the analytical tools and practical skills necessary to design, facilitate, and translate Track II initiatives into locally-owned and people-centered policy-relevant outcomes.

Drawing on comparative experiences from the Mediterranean region - including Cyprus, Greek-Turkish relations, the Eastern Mediterranean, Israeli-Arab wartime engagement channels, and Morocco-Algeria dynamics - the course will combine conceptual discussions with hands-on exercises and simulations.

¹ With contributions from regional experts.



Learning objectives

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

1. Distinguish between Track I, Track II, and Track 1.5 diplomacy and understand their interaction.
2. Assess the strategic role of think tanks in conflict resolution and dialogue processes.
3. Design context-sensitive Track II initiatives in complex political environments.
4. Apply practical tools for facilitation, trust-building, and stakeholder mapping.
5. Identify ethical and political challenges in unofficial diplomacy.
6. Translate Track II outcomes into policy-relevant recommendations for Track I processes.

Teaching methodology

The course adopts an interactive and experiential learning approach, combining:

- Short lectures
- Case studies from Mediterranean conflicts
- Small-group discussions
- Simulation exercises
- Peer-to-peer learning

The course will leverage the diverse backgrounds of the participants to enrich the learning experience, foster peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, and enable deeper engagement with specific regional contexts.

Throughout the four sessions, participants will progressively design a Track II initiative addressing a real-world Mediterranean conflict dynamic. This practical component will be called “The Track II Design Challenge”.



Course Structure

Session	Title	Objectives and key topics	Practical component
Session 1	Track II & 1.5 Diplomacy in the Mediterranean: Concepts, Contexts, and Roles	Introduces the conceptual foundations of Track II and Track 1.5 diplomacy; examines their relevance in the Mediterranean geopolitical context; explores the role of think tanks as facilitators and conveners. Key topics include the evolution of multi-track diplomacy, the differences between Track I, II and 1.5 processes, and case studies from Cyprus, Greek-Turkish relations and the Eastern Mediterranean.	Track II Design Challenge 1/4 – Understanding and Mapping the Conflict Ecosystem. Participants conduct a stakeholder-mapping exercise for a hypothetical Mediterranean dialogue initiative, identify conflict dynamics and divisions, and explore possible entry points for dialogue.
Session 2	Designing and Facilitating Track II Processes in Times of Conflict: The Israel–Arab Experience	Focuses on the challenges of initiating and sustaining dialogue during active conflict. Key topics include designing unofficial diplomatic interventions under extreme polarisation, agenda-setting, identification of shared policy goals, and risk management and confidentiality in Track II processes.	Track II Design Challenge 2/4 – Designing Dialogue under Conflict Conditions. Building on Session 1, participants define the objectives of the dialogue, establish criteria for participant selection, and design the agenda, facilitation approach, and confidentiality and risk-management rules.
Session 3	Track II Diplomacy amid Regional Rivalries: The Maghreb Experience	Examines opportunities and constraints for think tanks operating in contexts of regional rivalry. Key topics include the evolving role of think tanks in the Mediterranean policy ecosystem, navigating political sensitivities and institutional barriers, and identifying realistic policy outcomes. Includes the Morocco–Algeria case as an example.	Track II Design Challenge 3/4 – From Dialogue to Policy Impact. Participants develop policy outputs and recommendations, communication strategies, and possible links with Track I diplomacy.
Session 4	From Dialogue to Impact: Policy Uptake and Mutual Conflict Resolution	Focuses on how Track II initiatives can inform and influence Track I diplomacy. Key topics include linking Track II outputs to official diplomacy, policy communication strategies, sustainability of dialogue initiatives, and monitoring and evaluation.	Track II Design Challenge 4/4 – Presentation of Final Proposals. Participants present their proposals and receive feedback from the trainer and their peers.



Diplomacy and Foresight

Trainer: Silvia Colombo. Researcher and Faculty Advisor, Research Division, NATO Defence College.

Format: Online (Zoom)

Number of Sessions: 3

Schedule: 8 June from 14:00 to 16:00 CEST, 10 June from 14:00 to 16:00 CEST, 12 June from 11:00 to 13:00 CEST.

Course Overview

Diplomacy is a complex endeavour, something that requires both analytical, communication and decision-making skills, brought together and made actionable thanks to deep understanding and empathy. For diplomacy to be successful, it also needs a capacity to look beyond current, often dire, realities and to imagine futures. Futures need to be anticipated before acting upon them.

This training contributes to fostering the skills of participants of practicing diplomacy by proposing a practical foresight exercise more than addressing the theoretical bases of diplomacy. It makes use of Backcasting as a foresight tool. Backcasting enables participants to explore and shape a desired future. It begins by envisioning a compelling, positive, plausible future state in relation to a specific crisis. By working backward from this future vision, participants can identify the critical diplomatic pathways and the gradual steps that are necessary to bring that vision to fruition. The primary output of Backcasting will be a future vision related to the specific crisis being explored accompanied by a timeline mapping a pathway that delineates sequential steps leading from the present to that future (the decisions to be taken, the changes to be made, the compromises to be made, the taboos to be broken). This pathway will serve as a foundation to develop diplomatic strategies and enhance decision making to navigate uncertainty and complexity.

In dealing with conflicts and other complex, long-term crises (i.e., set in 2030-2035), Backcasting can be particularly useful when desired futures can be somewhat readily described but the steps to reach them are not easily achievable or even plausible within current circumstances and frameworks. This approach to future thinking allows to challenge current assumptions and explore alternative visions of the future.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

1. Assess the added value of foresight techniques for diplomacy and decision making.



2. Understand the differences among foresight techniques and in particular the elements of Backcasting.
3. Engage in a context-specific discussion over a crisis scenario.
4. Apply the steps of Backcasting in a guided simulation exercise.

Teaching Methodology

The course adopts an interactive learning approach, combining:

- Lecture
- Working-group discussion
- Guided simulation exercise
- Scenario development

Course Structure

Session	Title	Objectives and key topics	Practical component
Session 1	Foresight & Backcasting Basics	Introduces the role of foresight in diplomacy and decision making. Examines the advantages and limitations of foresight as a diplomatic tool, presents different foresight techniques, and explores the specific logic and steps of Backcasting.	Conceptual grounding and discussion. Participants reflect on the value of foresight for diplomacy, compare different foresight methods, and familiarise themselves with the Backcasting approach that will guide the simulation exercise.
Session 2	Backcasting in Practice	Focuses on the first part of the guided simulation exercise. Participants work in groups to discuss a real-world crisis scenario, develop a desirable future vision, and apply Backcasting to identify the sequence of steps needed to move from the present to that future	Group simulation exercise. In working groups, participants analyse the crisis scenario, formulate a future vision, and build a timeline with decisions, changes, compromises, and diplomatic actions required to achieve that outcome.
Session 3	Results & Policy Insights	Brings together the outcomes of the group work in plenary. Each group presents its Backcasting pathway and policy recommendations, with a focus on diplomatic actors, actions, and tools. The session also promotes peer exchange and collective reflection on decision making in complex crises.	Presentations and peer discussion. Groups present their Backcasting results and recommendations, followed by discussion and feedback from the other participants to encourage peer-to-peer learning.