



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE N.13

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EDITORIAL

The UfM Secretariat is committed to further contribute, through its activities, to tackle the socio-economic root causes of the current security and migration challenges through an enhanced common agenda for human development, stability and integration in the Mediterranean.

The UfM Ministerial Conference: "Towards a common development agenda for the Mediterranean", held on 26 November 2015 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Barcelona declaration, the conclusions of the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 14 December 2015, and the new European Union Neighbourhood Policy for the period 2014-2020 open new perspectives for the UfM and recognise its role as the central platform for regional cooperation in the region.

The UfM Secretariat's team

DID YOU KNOW?

The potential need for increased regional economic integration



Trade flow distribution in the region:

90%

within the EU

9%

between the EU and its Southern neighbours

1%

among the Southern Mediterranean neighbours.



EU GDP per capita **6 times higher** than in the Southern Mediterranean countries



EU Trade balance with UfM Southern countries had a **surplus of €49 billion (2014)**

2nd most important trade surplus

Compensating more than a 1/3 of the EU trade deficit with China

Harnessing the potential of regional integration - UfM currently works on:



41 region-wide cooperation projects on

Inclusive Growth & Youth Employability, Women's empowerment and Sustainable Development



Budget UfM projects representing **> €5bn investments** in the region

UfM Member States further enhance regional cooperation in 2016 by endorsing 4 new development projects

- At their first meeting of 2016, the Senior Officials of the Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) approved four new regional projects in the fields of Inclusive Growth, Sustainable Development and Women's Empowerment.
- The meeting also provided an opportunity for the 43 Member State representatives to highlight the achievements of 2015 with a view to further develop regional cooperation and integration in the Mediterranean within the framework of the UfM.



The Senior Officials of the UfM member countries met on 16 February in Brussels and approved four new regional projects by according to them the UfM label, bringing up the total number of UfM-labelled regional cooperation projects to 41.

The 4 new UfM-labelled projects will contribute to strengthening regional cooperation in the following areas:

- private investments for renewable energies
- marine litter
- shipping services
- women's health

The endorsement of new regional projects by UfM Member States confirms the 2015 dynamics of development and implementation of the [UfM's pipeline of labelled projects](#): by December 2015, 19

projects had been already launched. From 29 projects in 2014, 8 more were endorsed by the UfM Member States in 2015, representing close to €5 billion in investments for the region, reaching around 115 000 beneficiaries in the fields of Youth Employability and Inclusive Growth and targeting 58 000 beneficiaries in the field of Women's Empowerment.

In addition to the labelling of 4 new projects, two other new projects were presented to the UfM Member States with the aim to be labelled at the next SOM:

- The first project aims to set up a regional demand-driven toolbox for youth-orientated labour market services in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. This regional project is promoted by "GIZ" (Global Initiative on Innovative Labour Market Services for Youth

– YouMatch), commissioned by the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany, and in cooperation with the UfM Secretariat under the [Med4Jobs Initiative](#).

- The second project, "OPTIMED IMPLEMENTATION, Implementing a new Mediterranean Corridor: from South-Eastern to North-Western ports", is promoted by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy) with the objective of optimising trade relations in the Mediterranean Basin through the improvement of commercial connections between public and private operators in maritime transport and logistics sector in Spain, France, Italy, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and Cyprus.

The representatives of the 43 Member States commended the activities undertaken by the UfM Secretariat in various fields throughout 2015. Over the last year, the UfM Secretariat continued to act as the platform for regional dialogue and operational cooperation in the Mediterranean engaging relevant actors and stakeholders as well as institutional partners, and addressing a number of strategic issues related to regional integration and development.

Brief summary of the four new UfM-labelled projects

• SEmed Private Renewable Energy Framework ("SPREF")

is an innovative framework to boost the development of private renewable energy markets in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan with efficient policy dialogue and financing mechanisms promoted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). With a total budget of ca. €835 million, the project will aim to overcome barriers that can prevent the development of private renewable energy markets and provide technical cooperation support through policy dialogue. Most importantly, the framework will aim to develop efficient financing mechanisms for the realization of renewable energy project to directly stimulate an estimated €600 million in investments and encourage local private energy companies in renewable energy in beneficiary countries.

• PLASTIC-BUSTERS for a Mediterranean free from litter

is a truly regional initiative aiming to tackle the issue of marine litter on a regional level through an integrated approach. Promoted by the University of Siena (SDSN – MED Solutions) with a number of Mediterranean partners, the four-year project will be working to closing knowledge gaps, identifying hot spots and launching concrete pilot demonstration activities on the collection of marine litter and prevention measures, including joint activities with the

fishing communities to remove the so-called 'ghost fishing nets' that can cause serious damage to marine environments as well as prevent and reduce marine litter overall. The findings and information is then aimed to be fed into awareness raising campaigns, providing information and elaborating recommendations to facilitate effective policymaking at regional, national, local levels with regards to the reduction of marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea. The budget of the project is of €8.8 million and 10 countries are currently participating in the project.

• UfM MoS: The Turkey-Italy-Tunisia Project

aims to propose and develop a "Motorway of the Sea", i.e. a seamless intermodal goods transport service bridging Turkey with Maghreb area with calls in the Ports of Bari, Brindisi and Taranto in Italy, offering a door-to-door Roll-on-Roll-off service which combines Short Sea Shipping with other modes of transport (road, rail). In addition to Turkey, Italy and Tunisia other Maghreb countries could take advantage of the new maritime services, which will be developed in the framework of the Trans- Mediterranean Transport Network (TMN-T) implementation strategy and of the connection between the TMN-T and the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). The project costs are estimated at €500 million for the service with a revenue estimation of €600 million over the life cycle of 20 years. The Promoter of the Project is the Turkish Chamber of Commerce in Italy, with the technical support of the Italian

College of Railway Engineers (CIFI) and of "Titi Shipping", a maritime company based in Brindisi, under the patronage of the Honorary General Consulate of Turkey in Brindisi.

• Women's Right to Health – The WoRTH Project

aims to implement a comprehensive cervical and breast cancer control strategy through multi-sectoral partnerships anchored in relevant national policies and plans in Albania, Montenegro and Morocco. With a budget of just over €4.1 million, WoRTH will target, in addition of health professionals, 15 000 women disadvantaged women living in vulnerable situations who will be offered the opportunity to be tested for free for cervical and breast cancer. The project will be carried out in a comprehensive approach: National diagnostics, training activities for policy makers, health professionals, other relevant actors, women's awareness campaigns, early detection activities for disadvantaged women, establishment of national networks for exchange of updated information and knowledge on CC and BC early detection and screening, strengthening of the existing Mediterranean network to promote translational and implementation research, and North-to-South and South to South cooperation and concluding policy recommendations. The project is promoted by the Centre for Epidemiology and Prevention of Cancer in Piedmont (CPO) in partnership with the World Health Organization and will be implemented over 4 years.

Significant progress on the UfM labelled project “Desalination Facility for the Gaza Strip”

- On 15 February, the UfM Secretariat organised a meeting in Brussels with the participation of the Government representatives of Palestine, Israel and representatives of both the European Commission and the Office of the Quartet to advance on the implementation of the Desalination Facility project for the Gaza Strip, endorsed by the 43 Member States of the UfM.
- The Israeli Delegation confirmed the Government’s political support to the project and its commitment to facilitate the construction of the facility.
- The Palestinian Delegation emphasised its readiness to take all necessary measures for the project’s implementation.
- The large-scale desalination facility is aimed at addressing the water crisis in the Gaza Strip, where 95% of the water is not drinkable due to the over-pumping of the Coastal Aquifer, the only available water source in the strip.



Delegations from Palestine, Israel, the European Commission and the office of the Quartet met on Monday 15 February in Brussels under the auspices of the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean to discuss the next concrete steps for the launch of the UfM-labelled [Desalination Facility project for the Gaza Strip](#).

The meeting consolidated the ground for the forthcoming Donor Conference. All the participants agreed on the project’s vital importance for the region in terms of humanitarian and development impact. The large-scale desalination facility and its associated water supply infrastructure will supply drinking water to more than 1.8 million of Palestinian inhabitants, thereby presenting a sustainable solution for the chronic and longstanding water shortage in the Gaza Strip. The Donor Conference should

secure the necessary funds for the construction of the facility.

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The Palestinian Delegation emphasised its readiness to take all necessary measures for the project’s implementation.

Michael Koehler, Director for Neighbourhood South at the European Commission expressed the European Union’s full support to the project through contributing to the financing of the project. The Commission also expressed its commitment to participate in the ongoing efforts aiming at reaching significant progress in the coming months at both political and technical levels.

UfM Secretary General Sijlmasi presented a roadmap of activities leading to the Donor Conference, possibly to be held at the beginning of June 2016.

ABOUT THE DESALINATION FACILITY FOR THE GAZA STRIP

On 22 June 2011, the 43 member countries of the UfM unanimously endorsed the [Desalination Facility for the Gaza Strip project](#). The project, developed with the Palestinian Water Authority, aims to address the water crisis in Gaza; where over **95% of the water is not drinkable**.

The investment of the project is of **350 million Euros**. The UfM Secretariat is working closely with the Government of Palestine to help secure the engagement of a number of international financial institutions and international organisations. Outstanding efforts have been led by the European Investment Bank to advance technical preparations for the desalination plant, including the preparation of all tenders for different studies and engineering work, procurement and construction.

Youth employability in the Mediterranean region: a top priority for the UfM

- Youth unemployment is a key major challenge for both European and Southern Mediterranean countries. It is a major issue to be addressed within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean as it holds a very significant connection with the overall objective of regional integration in the Euro-Med region.



Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries are experiencing rapid growth in their working age populations. Almost 60% of the regional population is today under the age of 30 and the number of young people under the age of 15 is forecasted to increase over 18% by 2020. This represents an asset for the region, and therefore, a positive and action-oriented regional agenda on youth employability is indispensable to unleash the region's human and economic potential capital.

As requisite for peace and stability in the region, priority actions must be built on promoting competitiveness and enhancing job opportunities, in particular for youth, through education and employment, vocational training initiatives and improved connectivity.

The UfM is promoting **15 projects** directly addressing the challenges of youth employability and inclusive growth. Framed by the political mandate (in particular the Ministerial conferences on industrial cooperation and digital

economy) and nourished by the priorities expressed in the regional dialogues, **these projects target approximately 200.000 beneficiaries**, mostly young people, and **involve more than 1.000 small and medium private enterprises**.

Fostering youth employment in the region is a **top priority for the UfM**. Through its labelled project **HOMERe – High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executive Recruitment**, the UfM Secretariat promotes international professional training placements in companies as a way to reduce transition from university to the labour market and facilitate access to employment for high-potential graduates.

The first beneficiaries of the project, which was launched in **March 2015**, strongly value the opportunity that they were given to put their skills into practice and to experience a real professional environment in an international context (see the **interview of Yousef Barghane** on UfM's website). On the other side, employers show a

great interest in the assistance provided as regards the identification of the right young profiles. The first outcomes have been very positive, as all the students concerned so far have been offered a job position from their hosting company.

UfM Secretariat representatives and the promoter of the project, the Mediterranean Network of Engineering and Management Schools (RMEI), alongside some of their partners, namely the **Conseillers du Commerce Extérieur Français (CCEF)** and the **Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME)** met on 13 January at the UfM headquarters, in Barcelona. They discussed the next steps of the project's implementation and the possibility of upscaling the experiment so as to rapidly reach more students and employers in the region.

2016 will witness a strengthening of the management's approach in close connection with the academic and business communities with the aim to increase the number of beneficiaries. "Young people aged between 15 and 25 are the major target of the UfM action through this project", said UfM Secretary General. "The role of education is key to prevent radicalism", he added.

As part of a two-year pilot phase (2015-2017), and labelled under the **Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (Med4Jobs)**, the project will be implemented in nine Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Spain, Morocco and Tunisia.

Within the framework of its global sustainable development strategy the UfM launches a new blue economy cooperation initiative in the Mediterranean

- Ministers, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Co-Presidency and UfM Secretariat gather in Brussels on the occasion of the first Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy.
- Ministers stressed the potential for sustainable growth through improved maritime governance and an environment conducive to promote jobs, innovation and knowledge-based business opportunities through the development of key maritime sectors.
- A regional and collaborative approach is crucial to capitalise fully on the blue economy's potential, as the challenges affecting the Mediterranean Sea call for shared and integrated responses. A constructive path of cooperation to help the stability of the region, which is now even more important to follow after the tragic events in Paris.

Ministers in charge of maritime affairs from 43 countries comprising the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the UfM Co-Presidency and the UfM Secretariat committed to closer cooperation on blue economy and maritime governance two weeks before the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 21 held past December in Paris.

The launch of this new Blue Economy initiative falls within the framework of the global UfM sustainable development strategy, which entails activities in the fields of energy, climate change, urban development and water and environment.

Gathered in Brussels on the occasion of the first UfM Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy, participants stressed the need for the Mediterranean region to make best use of the potential of the blue economy to promote growth, jobs and investments and reduce poverty. They noted that clean and healthy seas are drivers and enablers for national and regional economies and advocated building a clear vision

for the sustainable and integrated development of marine and maritime sectors at national and sea basin levels.

Ministers emphasised the need to strengthen the potential of the blue economy in the Mediterranean region, as well as improving maritime governance and achieving an environment conducive to promoting jobs, innovation and knowledge-based business opportunities through the development of key maritime sectors.

Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, Fathallah Sijilmassi, said: "Considering the current challenges in the region, we must continue strengthening regional cooperation with the aim of ensuring sustainable inclusive growth in our region. I believe Blue Economy has a great potential to that end".

H.E Mr Ayman Hatahet, Minister of Transport for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan assured that: "this is the first UfM Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy, setting

a roadmap for investment in the blue economy and job opportunities in the Mediterranean. This Conference is also the 7th sectorial ministerial meeting to be held since Jordan assumed the Co-Presidency of the UfM in 2012". He stated that "our efforts today comes as one of the instruments we use as partners to reinforce development, investment opportunities, and creation of job opportunities, especially for youth, which represent a principal axis that calls for action, both for a better future and for the integration of this youth in beneficial causes and projects that would make them a cornerstone, rather than leaving them vulnerable to radical ideas that could further escalate the conflict in the region".

H.E. Mr Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner in charge of Environment, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs for the European Union stated: "The Union for the Mediterranean is gaining momentum and today's Declaration cements our partnership even more. I want it to mark a turning point in the agenda for

the Mediterranean blue economy – an agenda that fosters innovation and job creation; an agenda that plans and manages the seas and coasts sustainably, that cleans up the marine environment and, last but not least: this agenda will help us plan and build a more secure and prosperous future for the people of the Mediterranean”.

H.E. Mr Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner in charge for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations stressed that: *“The topic of this particular meeting, Blue Economy, is essential, given the geography that we share. The Mediterranean Sea, with its multitude of resources offers a wide range of possible uses, but we need to optimise these in a sustainable and collaborative manner. For this reason, this is a very pertinent area for engagement under the Union for the Mediterranean”.*

Ministers affirmed the relevance of putting in place a UfM mechanism for regional dialogue, stakeholders’



involvement and the launch of concrete actions in areas of common interest. This regional and collaborative approach is crucial as the challenges affecting the Mediterranean Sea call for shared and integrated responses through coherent and efficient regional cooperation and coordination. They also highlighted the important role of the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean in coordinating these efforts by enhancing policy dialogue, regional networking among

stakeholders and cooperation on key areas and joint actions.

This regional effort towards Blue Economy is crucial in the wider context of the newly approved UN Sustainable Development agenda “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which aims to promote globally shared economic prosperity, social development and environmental protection.

43 Member States give strong political support to the UfM

- The UfM Co-presidency, the EU and Jordan, and the 43 Member states gave a strong political commitment to the UfM and called for unity and collective work to face the challenges of the Mediterranean region during their informal high level meeting held on 26 November 2015 in Barcelona.

The UfM Co-presidency, the EU and Jordan, and the 43 Member states gave a strong political commitment to the UfM and called for unity and collective work to face the challenges of the Mediterranean region during their informal high level meeting held in November 26th in Barcelona. Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European

Commission, Nasser Judeh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Jordan, and José Manuel García-Margallo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, stressed the importance of the UfM as the regional framework for political dialogue and cooperation in the Mediterranean.

Three years after the European Union and Jordan assumed the Co-presidency

of the Union for the Mediterranean – established in 2008 in Paris –, and 20 years exactly after the Barcelona Declaration launched the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, the UfM held in Barcelona an informal meeting of the 43 member States, 26 of them represented at ministerial level.

“Today, as we are facing increasing challenges, such as terrorism,



extremism and illegal migration, I would like to assure before you the determination of the Secretariat to continue to accelerate and amplify our work in order to reach a wider impact on the level of regional cooperation and integration. Member States political support and the strong and positive reference in the European Neighbourhood Policy Joint Communication gives new impetus to the UfM in 2016 and beyond", underlined Fathallah Sijilmassi.

The [reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy](#), issued on November 18, opens new perspectives for the Union for the Mediterranean. The organization embodies the potential of regional cooperation in providing sustainable responses to the current challenges in the region through sustainable development and economic and social cohesion. In addition to the strong political support, participants recalled the importance

of the UfM concrete development projects that have direct impact on the lives of our citizens. Following the informal high level meeting of official delegations, the Co-Presidencies, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain and the Secretary General of the UfM opened the conference to representatives of civil society and private sector, regional actors, international financial institution and socioeconomic projects promoters to discuss the way forward on the three main priorities of the UfM: inclusive growth and youth employment; sustainable development and women empowerment.

Fathallah Sijilmassi recalled that the Secretariat had developed by November 2015 33 regional labelled projects – 18 under implementation – along these three main strategic lines. The UfM Secretariat promotes projects and initiatives on women's socio-economic empowerment

targeting more than 50,000 beneficiaries from 20 countries and on youth employability and inclusive growth targeting more than 200,000 beneficiaries and 1,000 SMEs.

During the conference, the UfM project "[Réseau Entreprendre en Méditerranée](#)" was officially launched under the framework of the Med4Jobs initiative. The project seeks to support the creation of "Réseau Entreprendre" business associations in Morocco and Tunisia to provide mentoring to new business starters with entrepreneurial potential. It encourages SMEs development and job creation in beneficiary countries, leading to the creation of more than 450 companies by 2017 and around 5000 jobs within the next 5 years.

Several UfM cooperation agreements signed with Microsoft Morocco, the Centre for Transportation Studies for the Western Mediterranean (CETMO) and the Energy Charter Secretariat. The Norway Government announced a contribution of €650 million to finance UfM projects on gender equality such as [Young Women as Job Creators](#) and the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) and the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes (UEMF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding in order to strengthen cooperation in the Higher Education and Research domain.

Union for the Mediterranean granted observer status at the United Nations

The United Nations General Assembly adopted in December 2015 the Resolution A/70/124, granting observer status to the Union for the Mediterranean, at the initiative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Co-President of the Union for the Mediterranean, and with the

sponsorship of the UfM Member States. The UfM welcomes another international recognition of its global role as a driving force for regional cooperation and integration in the Mediterranean and looks forward to actively participating in this capacity in the work of the General Assembly.



COP21 Paris Agreement: UfM to support achievement of climate action objectives in the Mediterranean

- UfM welcomes the adoption of the Paris Agreement by all the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a major breakthrough in tackling climate change.
- The UfM Secretariat will continue working on a regional dimension, by ensuring operational support to all UfM Members in the implementation of their climate policies and the achievement of the common objectives.
- The next COP22 will be held in Marrakech in November 2016, taking stock of the progress achieved in the regional process.



The Paris Agreement signed last 12 December 2015 will contribute to better link national priorities with the international framework in full respect of sovereignty and particularities of each UfM Member State. It will also **allow for the adaptation of international goals to the specific context of the Euro-Mediterranean region.**

To that end, **the UfM Secretariat is determined to ensure that the UfM Member States receive adequate support in the update and follow up of their intended nationally determined contribution**, in line with the [article 4 of the Agreement](#). In particular, the **UfM Climate Change Expert Group** constitutes a relevant platform to discuss the clarity, transparency and understanding of the Euro-Mediterranean States' contributions

and could therefore facilitate the work of the UNFCCC Secretariat in its preparation of the global synthesis report.

The UfM action towards climate change is already taking part of the global process by contributing, at a regional scale and through practical action, to the achievement of international commitments. This is being done through the **promotion of regional dialogue and the implementation of specific projects to deploy renewable energy and energy efficiency** (such as the Tafila Wind Farm Project) as well as **promote sustainable consumption and production patterns**, such as the Med RESCP – Post Rio+20 Project –.

Regarding the mobilisation of financial resources, the UfM Secretariat

welcomes the mobilisation of USD 100 billion per year by 2020. In line with the decision of UNFCCC Parties to “urge the institutions serving the Agreement to enhance the coordination and the delivery of resources to support country-driven strategies”, the UfM Secretariat will use its experience of working closely with International Financial Institutions acting in the Mediterranean region to ensure complementary and consistency of actions. To that end, as its first specific contribution to this process, **the UfM Secretariat will organise, will organise, in 2016 and with the support of the ClimaSouth Project, a regional workshop on climate finance.**

In line with the Paris Agreement, and acknowledging the importance of the contribution of non-governmental actors to country-driven objectives, **the Secretariat will also present in 2016 a regional initiative involving regional and local authorities, which aims to deliver collective emissions reductions from the Mediterranean cities.** The UfM Secretariat is also supporting the involvement of the private sector through several projects, such as the Tafila Wind Farm in Jordan or the Energy University by Schneider Electric.

UfM launches new Regional Cooperation Project

- The BlueGreen Med-CS project seeks to promote water and environment cooperation in civil society.
- The project is based on a capacity building programme that will enable more than 120 civil society organisations (CSOs) to acquire skills in various environmental areas.
- With a starting budget of €3.3 million, it will be initially implemented in Albania, Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia during 2015-2017 in partnership with the Horizon 2020 Initiative and the United Nations Development Program.



General for Environment and Water Almotaz Abadi highlighted the added value of the project ensuring that *“fostering regional cooperation in the field of sustainable development is key to effectively advance regional integration, stability and human development in the Mediterranean. This project represents a clear opportunity to involve civil society organisations in environmental and water-related policy dialogue with a view to developing synergies and implementing coordinated regional and national actions that can contribute to these common goals”*.

A participatory and multi-stakeholder approach on environmental cooperation is at the core of the UfM-labelled project **“BlueGreen Med-CS; Networking Civil Society in the Mediterranean region through environment and water issues”**, launched on 23 February 2016 in Brussels by a consortium comprised of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), the WWF Mediterranean Programme Office (WWF MedPO), the Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med), the Mediterranean Water Institute (IME) and the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (Med Wet) with the support of the UfM Secretariat.

The project is in line with the **UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change** which was adopted on 13 May 2014, highlighting the significant role that civil society organisations can play in achieving

environmental and water-related objectives.

A programme to promote the participation of Euro-Mediterranean CSOs in environment and water issues

By strengthening existing and promoting new cooperation and financial opportunities in the environment and water among CSOs in the region, BlueGreen Med-CS will contribute to linking national and regional environmental initiatives. The project will foster regular dialogue and collaboration between Northern and Southern CSOs working in water and the environment and will provide Southern CSOs with the opportunity to participate in the planned **H2020** capacity building activities which include mentoring, sharing information and possibly replicating best environmental governance practices and projects.

UfM Acting Deputy Secretary

BlueGreen Med-CS is in line with the **2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the UfM strategic objective of promoting sustainable development in the Mediterranean region through initiatives and projects on environmental protection, climate action, sustainable urban development, access to water and de-pollution. Currently 650 million tons of sewage is discharged annually into the Mediterranean Sea, while its waters are only renewed every 90 years.

An operational partnership with the **United Nations Development Programme/Global Environment Facility – Small Grants Programme** was recently concluded to strengthen coordination between programmes and processes run at national and regional levels.

The project's launch took place on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Capacity Building sub-group of the **H2020 Initiative for a Cleaner Mediterranean**, which aims to tackle by 2020 the sources of pollution that

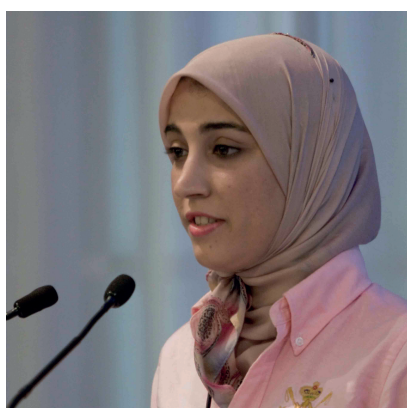
account for around 80% of the overall pollution of the Mediterranean Sea: municipal waste, urban wastewater and industrial pollution. BlueGreen Med-CS supports the civil society dimension of the H2020 Capacity Building Programme.

Around 80 Southern and Northern Mediterranean representatives from governments, civil society organisations, international financial institutions and regional partner organisations took part in this annual gathering.

FEATURED INTERVIEW

UfM interviews Soukeina El Bouj

Soukeina El Bouj is a young Moroccan woman, beneficiary of the UfM-labelled programme "Young Women as Job Creators".



UfM: In your opinion, what important role can women play in terms of job creation?

Soukeina El Bouj (S. E.): For me, a woman is already a leader. A woman who looks after the home, her children, her husband; she's already a female entrepreneur. We need to give women a place in society where they can play an active role, where they can drive female entrepreneurship to a higher level in the Mediterranean countries.

UfM: Tell us about your project.

S.E.: I'm currently working as a young entrepreneur in my own country. I've just set up my own company, with the aim of building a private school to provide pre-school, primary, junior and secondary education. The school will

be built in a rural area of Morocco, and not in a large city, to give children in rural regions the opportunity to benefit from the same high levels of education that children in big cities have.

UfM: How will setting up this school stimulate job creation?

S.E.: First and foremost, building this school will create jobs in terms of its physical construction. After that, the school will need to employ around 60-70 people for its day-to-day activities, such as administrative staff, teachers, school-bus drivers, cleaning staff and so on.

UfM: How has the UfM supported you to set up this project?

S.E.: Besides being a beneficiary of the UfM-labelled "Young Women as Job Creators" programme, I had the opportunity to undertake an internship at the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg, which enabled me to gain an insight into the working world and to understand professional working practices. It's also where I found the inspiration I needed to develop the idea for my project and realised that I was ready to join the world of female entrepreneurship, develop my skills and contribute towards the development of other people in my region.

UfM: What exactly does the "Young Women as Job Creators" project consist of?

S.E.: In addition to my internship, I had the opportunity to attend workshops given by the AFEM, Association des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises au Maroc (Moroccan Association of Women Entrepreneurs) on the importance of gender equality and giving women a place in civil society.

"I am currently a young entrepreneur in my country. I've just set up my own company, with the aim of building a private school to provide pre-school, primary, junior and secondary education in a rural area of Morocco".

UfM: How will your project help the young girls and women in your region?

S.E.: In terms of job creation, the development of my school will help women in the region to find employment and encourage them to work. In rural areas, the belief persists that women shouldn't work, that they should stay at home to raise

the children and look after the home. Through my project I am trying to dispense with these ideas that persist mainly in the male community and to raise awareness among women about the importance of being active, so that they can find their place in society.

UfM: As a young women setting up a project in a traditional society, what are the biggest challenges you face?

S.E.: I think I've been a bit lucky in this respect because I have been supported

by the Government and local officials in setting up the project, who share the same philosophy that it will help, first and foremost, to improve the situation of women in the region.

UfM: What would you say to women who, like you, want to set up their own project?

S.E.: I would tell them to believe in themselves, to believe in their potential. We don't have to worry anymore that men will always be

better placed in terms of business or decision-making. As women, we also have a role to play.

UfM: Are you optimistic about the future of women in your region?

S.E.: Fortunately, yes. I think that there has been a positive improvement in the situation of women generally in Morocco. We are more and more open to giving women decision-making roles, and encouraging them to improve their situation.

About the programme

The UfM-labelled project "Young Women as Job Creators" promotes self-employment and entrepreneurship among young female university students who are about to graduate from universities in Jordan, Morocco, Palestine and Spain, and who are interested in setting up their own business. This project is centred on the organisation of Women Entrepreneurship Days (WED), which are a series of seminars that offer participants

specific training and coaching in setting up businesses.

On 15 January 2014, AFAEMME and the Union for the Mediterranean signed a Global Project Memorandum, to ensure that the project would be replicated in other countries and universities in the Euro-Mediterranean region, in an effort to promote female entrepreneurship and contribute to the development of sustainable economies based on private

initiative, quality education and gender equality.

The second phase of the project will take place in seven countries, with Egypt, Tunisia and Albania joining the four countries that participated in the first phase. The third phase will comprise the seven countries that participated in phases one and two, plus Algeria, Croatia, Lebanon and Turkey. Once the three phases of the project have been completed in 2015, 11 countries in total will have taken part.

AGENDA

4 April 2016 Launch of UfM Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Platform

7-8 April 2016 Senior Officials Meeting. Barcelona

11-13 April 2016 Inclusive Growth: Annual Investment Meeting. Dubai

May 2016 Youth Employability: 3rd Arab-Euro Conference on Higher Education. Barcelona

2 June 2016 UfM Ministerial Meeting on Cooperation. Jordan

July 2016 Sustainable Development: Official Launch UfM project Integrated Programme for the Protection of the Lake Bizerte against Pollution. Tunis