

Women's Socio-Economic Empowerment: *Projects for Progress* Barcelona · March 26-27, 2014



Union pour la Méditerranée
Union for the Mediterranean
الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط

The Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean organised a project-oriented international Conference entitled “**Women’s Socio-Economic Empowerment: Projects for Progress**” on 26-27 March 2014, at its headquarters in Barcelona, as mandated by the Third Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (Paris, 11 September 2013).

This two-day international multi-stakeholder Conference gathered some **200 participants from 35 countries**, including governmental representatives, civil society and non-governmental organisations, international organisations dealing with gender equality, private sector representatives, think tanks and university networks.

The Conference was aimed at:

- Identifying priority initiatives, programmes and funding in the field of socio-economic empowerment of women in the Euro-Mediterranean region;
- Developing stronger synergies and coherence among key stakeholders in the Euro-Mediterranean region;
- Encouraging the submission of regional project proposals to the UfM Secretariat;
- Bringing Northern and Southern Mediterranean funders and project promoters on the ground together to develop partnerships;
- Launching projects and announcing project-based partnerships.

Outcomes of the Conference

The Conference identified major needs and challenges for advancing women’s agenda in the Euro-Mediterranean region and analysed public policies and private sector development programmes for women’s empowerment. Three workshops allowed participants to share concrete proposals and recommendations on ways to improve the value chain for income generating activities, facilitate transition from education to work and improve women’s access to decision-making positions.

Participants exchanged experiences and success stories and discussed recommendations on how best to address women’s empowerment and gender equality. Four main elements were highlighted:

- The critical role not only of governments but also of involving civil society, with emphasis placed on the need to use an **integrated approach** to enhance gender **mainstreaming**;
- The importance of the **cultural dimension**, including the influence of gender-sensitive education and the media’s role in the process of mentality change, also stressing that the involvement of men is critical;
- The **need to increase the pace and scope of action** and learn from the lack of progress achieved on many issues in the past;
- The need to gather forces and energy, **network and create synergies** to respond to challenges.

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Concrete results

The Conference provided an opportunity to officially launch a call for new projects. **In addition to the 25 projects already in the UfM's pipeline, 10 new projects have been received from civil society, organisations and Governments.** The Secretariat will continue working with all project promoters on preparing the projects for funding and implementation.

Three UfM-labelled projects were presented:

- The project **"Skills for Success: Employability Skills for Women"**, promoted by America Mid-East Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST), was officially launched. It will be implemented in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.
- Promoted by the Association of Organisations of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFAEMME), the second phase of the project **"Young Women as Job Creators"** was officially launched, to be implemented during 2014 in Albania, Egypt and Tunisia, in addition to Morocco, Jordan, Palestine and Spain. A joint UfM-AFAMME **Award** for the best business idea resulting from the project's seminars was presented to a young female student from Jordan.
- The UfM-labelled project **"Developing Women's Empowerment"**, promoted by the Foundation of the Women of the Euro-Mediterranean, presented its goals and missions and announced its official launch in the second half of 2014.

The **funding agreements with the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs** were signed for an amount of approximately €1 million, to cover projects and initiatives carried out by the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean in the field of gender equality.

Next steps

Through this Conference and its follow-up, the UfM Secretariat plays the role of a platform for the creation of partnerships and the launching of regional projects in the Mediterranean region. Next steps include:

- ✓ Launching a **comprehensive mapping of key players, initiatives and funding in the field of women's empowerment in the Euro-Mediterranean region;**
- ✓ **Studying all project proposals, encouraging the submission of new regional proposals and submitting those responding to the UfM criteria for labelling;**
- ✓ Facilitating the **networking of all participants** present in the Conference;
- ✓ Organising a series of **seminars and workshops** on specific issues such as job creation, creating value in the production of handicrafts, social and solidarity economy, social security, education and vocational training and women's access to positions of responsibility;
- ✓ Planning a subsequent **project-oriented conference on women's empowerment** to ensure a permanent dynamic and the continuity of the process.

Key elements of the Conference

- Regional Euro-Mediterranean approach: change agents working for women's advancement from 35 countries represented. All Eastern and Southern Mediterranean countries represented;
- An operational perspective that interlinks public policies and the project dimension;

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- A multi-stakeholder and interactive approach building on the diversity of perspectives, with the presence of 86 NGOs, 53 governmental representatives, 20 international organisations, 23 research institutes, think-tanks and Universities and 20 representatives from the private sector;
- Exchanges and networking among major funders and programme managers working on the ground – about 60 bilateral meetings took place on the margins of the Conference.

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