



UfM Regional Dialogue
**SHARED VIEWS ON
KEY ISSUES IN** 22-23
MAY 2019
THE MEDITERRANEAN

A contribution to the 

Report

More than 140 representatives of the civil society, youth organisations, institutions and international/regional agencies from the Euro-Mediterranean Region had the opportunity to participate in the UfM Regional Dialogue entitled “Shared views on key issues in the Mediterranean”, held in Barcelona on 22-23 May 2019. The event was organised by the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean in collaboration with the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF), the United Nations Fund for the population Directorate of the Arab Region (UNFPA) and the Spanish Youth Institute (INJUVE).

This event was an opportunity to discuss in an open and participative way, the priorities of the Euro-Mediterranean Region, notably key challenges in the fields of environment, water, energy and sustainable development, economic and social challenges for women and youth and education as an opportunity to strengthen youth and women’s empowerment. Participants were mainly youth (the average age of participants was 34 and there was parity of women and men) from 25 of the UfM member states.

This Regional Dialogue served as a stepping stone towards proposing regional initiatives in the Mediterranean. It is a contribution to the Summit of the Two Shores (S2R). The outcomes of the event were shared with the organisers of the S2R putting forward the views of the Euro-Mediterranean future generations. A selection of project proposals discussed during the Regional Dialogue will be submitted to the “100 qualified personalities” who will meet on 11 June in Tunis to prepare for the Summit.

The discussions held during the Regional Dialogue led to recommendations and project proposals which will feed the UfM Strategy for Youth. A selection of the projects could also be labelled by the UfM if they meet the required criteria.

The event began with the welcoming address of Ambassador Pierre DUQUESNE, French Interministerial Delegate to the Mediterranean (DIMED), who stressed that this event was “an opportunity to discuss what



unites the Mediterranean countries and not what separates them”. He also presented the process leading to the Summit, the five preparatory fora, the link between the UfM and the S2R and he stressed the positive contribution from youth and the Civil Society of the 43 countries of the UfM to the summit of Marseille.

After the opening session, the participants were divided in 3 workshops:

- 1- Roundtable on Environment, Water, Energy and Sustainable development;
- 2- Roundtable on Regional Economic and Social Challenges for Women and Youth;
- 3- Rethinking education: An opportunity for strengthening youth and women’s empowerment.

The second day was dedicated to the presentation of the conclusions, recommendations and proposals discussed and agreed during the three workshops in a plenary session. It was followed by an exchange between the qualified personalities of the “100” who attended the regional dialogue and participants.

The closing ceremony, marked by the participation of Mr. Nasser KAMEL, Secretary General of the UfM and representatives of the partner organisations, commended the dynamic exchanges and innovative proposals that will feed into the work of the organisations and will also be presented to the preparatory bodies of the S2R.

Mr. Nasser Kamel stressed the importance to continue to act together to truly deliver on the commitment of tackling key regional challenges and amplify the positive impact. He added that the goal of this dialogue is to combine the efforts of the 5+5 Dialogue with broader regional efforts while putting forward the views of the future generations.

KEY MESSAGES FROM THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

Workshop 1- Roundtable on Environment, Water, Energy and Sustainable development

- It was acknowledged that the Mediterranean region is particularly vulnerable to the deterioration of the environment, due to natural as well as to man-made conditions ranging from water scarcity, demographic growth, rapid coastal urbanization, pollution from plastics and other pollutants, rising water, growing energy, water and food demand, and is a major hotspot for climate change impacts. At the same time, it also suffers from societal challenges that include significant rates of unemployment, particularly among youth, gender disparities, as well as the need to address rural depopulation. The region also suffers from political instability, migration and refugee issues.
- One of the themes coming out from the discussion was that nonetheless these challenges can represent opportunities as well to influence future models of development and steer the region towards healthier and more sustainable forms of development, compatible with the preservation and better management of our natural resources.



- A recurring theme from many participants was that despite there being great knowledge from both scientific and academic point of view, there is difficulty in effectively channeling all this knowledge to policymakers. That is why the different networks must be used to promote known models of success in the different areas, transmit them to knowledge clusters in which a variety of stakeholders are involved, bring together and present these models to policymakers so they can be implemented in different countries.
- To this end, partnerships and stronger integration and coordination are seen as essential to bridge the gaps among sectors (academia and policy makers but also private sector, entrepreneurs, international agencies,) and countries (from the same or different shores) and create synergies among different actors (from energy, climate change, environment, etc.).

The Nexus is thus not only between sectors or between institutions working on different sectors, but between stakeholders from across the range of institutions, organizations, women and men who can contribute to informed policy making.

A number of networks of this nature were present such as MedYWat, RAED, Arab Youth Sustainable Development Network, Water Youth Network, Mediterranean Youth Climate Network, Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development, among others, and proposed a wide range of initiatives and ideas in that direction.

The MEDECC network of Climate scientists, created in 2015, also participated at the conference. MEDECC is based on an open and independent international scientific expert network acting as a mechanism to complete the gap in terms of information accessible to decision-makers about the Mediterranean environment and the current and future impacts of climate and environmental changes. Some publications are already available (<http://www.medecc.org/>).

- A young, informed and educated population in the Mediterranean is a key driver for change. Young Green Entrepreneurs who create new solutions to address environmental challenges can be a source of inspiration for others, an opportunity to create new jobs and markets and a driver for sustainable growth the Mediterranean. Entrepreneurship developed according to the principles of sustainable consumption and production can help manage better scarce natural resources (water, land, energy, etc.) ensuring economic growth that is socially inclusive, efficient and sustainable.

Communication and education

- The crucial importance of education for sustainable development at different levels of the curricula, but also with regard to journalists and parliamentarians was highlighted, capacity building on key topics (such as transforming data into information for decision making process) and the creation of relevant curricula to address the mismatched youth skills was highlighted.
- Similarly, increasing the communication towards the general public, youth, policy makers and other stakeholders (through specific awareness raising campaigns and increasing follow up by in the medias) was deemed as crucial to engage all stakeholders.



Challenges and opportunities

The range of responses go from the application of a circular economy approach, in its green and blue dimensions, to the extension of integrated management practices and Nexus approaches, harnessing the benefits of innovative technologies, as well as the deployment of renewable energy sources, the implementation of energy efficiency measures, the multiplication of climate mitigation and adaptation actions, all of which can contribute to the preservation and restoration of the environment, as well as to job creation.

Circular economy applied to the green and blue dimensions

- There is a broad consensus on the need to support the transition to a green, circular and socially inclusive economy based on sustainable consumption and production practices and nature-based solutions. At this level it was also reminded that the prevention and reduction of the pollution on land, sea and air were key for the region as the protection, preservation and restoration natural resources in the Mediterranean region within an integrated ecosystem approach.

Water and sanitation

- SDG 6 calls for “ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”. However, achieving this goal, and its different targets, will require improving the decision-making processes and engaging all stakeholders, in particular youth. In this regard, young water professionals and researchers in the Mediterranean region can lend their contribution to connect, to produce and exchange knowledge, raise awareness on key water issues, develop innovative water solutions such as water reuse, ecological restoration, decentralized approach, etc. through a collaborative spirit to facilitate an integrated water management strategy.

Climate Change, energy

- Climate Change adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer, means of implementation, including climate finance, and capacity building represent the range of responses to develop more intensively in the region. The Mediterranean region, encompassing a unique community of developed and developing countries, with differentiated commitments to UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, can work together to achieve solutions to the benefit of all parties and the whole population. The involvement of civil society, including of climate researchers and of youth is of the utmost importance to ensure actionable knowledge, local and global ownership and sensitivity to key issues for the region.

We had a number of insightful contributions yesterday from key actors such as MedECC, the Mediterranean Youth Climate Network, RAED, etc. inviting to work on that direction. Capacity-building needs are particularly important, and represent huge opportunities in terms of cooperation between the two shores, in application of the Paris Agreement.

- Energy (with the deployment of renewable energy sources, the development of inter-connections, the implementation of energy efficiency measures,) must be at the core of climate mitigation



measures. The transition to low-carbon pathways in Europe, as called for by the EU Energy Strategy (and its implementation instrument the “Clean Energy for All” Package), represent a unique opportunity for SEMed countries that are endowed with vast renewable energy resources—sufficient to meet their fast growing demand to feed economic growth, while satisfying the appetite of neighboring Europe for low carbon sources of energy. Ensuring a fair and equitable energy transition in the region that supports also economic growth requires cooperation, coordination and integration throughout the Mediterranean.

We had also a number of insightful contributions yesterday from organizations such as the Renewable Energy Cluster from Egypt, Green Course, Ecoservei highlighting the need to change the mindset and ensure strong engagement on the energy transition. Some organization stressed the need for the region to begin the planning of phasing-out of fossil fuels.

- A number of projects were presented during the round table in the field of:
 - Involve youth in the climate and energy planning of their municipalities and regions
 - The digital revolution at the service of agriculture
 - Launch, finance and manage local energy projects
 - To create an Observatory of Social and Environmental Entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean
 - Green Investment fund promoting the employment of women and young people
 - Plastics: depollution and pollution prevention (of micro and macro plastics) in the Mediterranean Sea

There were also projects mentioned on creation of green jobs in the green and blue economy, education for sustainable development, circular food consumption and production, water reuse, decentralized wastewater management, policy dialogue, freshwater submarine springs, renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable energy planning

WORKSHOP 2: Roundtable on Regional Economic and Social Challenges for Women and Youth

Round 1. Partnering with Youth for Job Creation

- There is a dire need to address the current skills gap and to develop skills for the future;
- Youth should not be conceived as a problem that needs to be solved, but rather as a source of creativity that can bring innovative solutions to existing problems;
- Competition breeds creativity that is capable of turning difficulties into opportunities;
- Inclusiveness is an agent of building positive and active citizenship in the Euro-Mediterranean Region;
- There is a lack of an enabling environment, especially for women entrepreneurs whose access to markets is more limited;



- Business organizations can bring about a meaningful social change through inclusion, social responsibility and accountability;
- The entrepreneurs of tomorrow are in school today. The role of education is part-and-parcel of a functioning labour market.

Projects presented:

1. EBSOMED (Enhancing Business Support Organizations and Business Networks in the Southern Neighbourhood)
2. Med DYNAMICS

Round 2. Social Economy and Inclusion of Women and Youth

- Social Economy is a smart, resilient and responsible model for unlocking resources, creating sustainable jobs, stimulating inclusive growth, and delivering social, economic and environmental value;
- Social Economy contributes significantly to the GDP in many Euro-Med countries (reaching 8-12% in many countries) and accounts for considerable share of employment. In 2017, the EU had 2.8 million Social Economy organizations;
- The return on investment in the socio-economic empowerment of youth and women is both high and long-term;
- There is a clear need to support innovation, embrace creativity and connect young entrepreneurs to business communities;
- Women account for considerable percentages of Social Economy employment, and yet gender pay gaps and gender barriers persist in Social Economy;
- The limited market access and market confidence in Social Economy enterprises calls for a more dynamic social dialogue and a more inclusive multi-stakeholder's approach;
- Emphasis must be given to education, awareness-raising, skill development, advocacy and the development of clusters and regional networks to support Social Economy;
- A special mention is given to the ongoing efforts and initiatives undertaken by UfM Partner organizations like OECD, ILO, ETF, UNIDO and Social Economy Europe in areas including the Future of Work, Building Inclusive Labour Markets, the Transition from Informal to Formal Economy, Digital Transformation and Skills for the Future.

Projects presented:

1. Youth Empowerment Program (YEP)
2. Young Women as Job Creators – Phase III
3. CitESS Med
4. Medical Caravans for Rural Areas (template not yet presented to the UfMS)

WORKSHOP 3: Rethinking education: an opportunity for strengthening youth and women's empowerment



- When it comes to education and training, the Euro-Mediterranean region is faced with structural challenges: persisting skills mismatch, weak transitions from education to employment, high exposure of young people and in particular young women to unemployment and underemployment as well as increasing numbers of youths who are not in education nor in training nor in employment (NEETs). In addition, profound changes are expected to happen to the nature of work and the nature of skills required for youth to fulfill their full potential and become changemakers.
- Collaboration between all actors is imperative to adjust education in the Mediterranean region to best serve the future generations. No single actor or country is capable of solving the complexity of this issue on their own. The importance of building collaborative environments and strengthening connections between networks, initiatives and projects instead of developing things in silo was a recurring issue in the discussions, including with the purpose to better know what works and what doesn't and why. Fluid bridges and dynamic exchanges between higher education and vocational education and training systems and with the socio-economic environment should also be reinforced.

Round 1. New learning paradigms in a comprehensive approach to education

- Highlights from the World Development Report 2018 “Learning to Realize Education’s Promise” were shared with the participants in order to set the stage for discussions.
- Interestingly, both the learners and those who are in charge of the learning process (school managers, civil society organisations, institutional representatives...) converged in the analysis of the situation and the ways to address the challenges. There was a consensus on the fact that it is time to rapidly build responsive educational systems where learning is in the centre - which involves entirely new teaching and learning approaches.
- Several testimonies emphasized how learners should be given a more active role in the learning process, being put in a position in which they have to try to come up with solutions to the situations in which the teachers place them. Giving more responsibility and more freedom to the learners in the way they can approach a problem will make them feel more involved.
- Discussions also outlined the importance of shaping educational systems which foster critical thinking and help learners develop the habit of thinking by themselves when a situation arises, hence preparing them for being resilient.
- Additional soft skills need to be developed and cultivated from the youngest age as emotional intelligence will be paramount in tomorrow's labour market. Several interventions reflected the relevance of linking complementary learning experiences undertaken through various learning frameworks (from formal to informal education and non-formal such as sports, arts...), taking into consideration education as a lifelong journey.



- Such changes towards quality education and training are expected to play a critical leverage effect on youth and women employability and empowerment, on tackling gender stereotypes, on preventing violent radicalization and on fostering sustainable growth and inclusive development.
- Mobility (including south-south mobility) at secondary and higher education levels, intercultural learning and global education were also advanced by participants as key tools to develop new skills in demand in the labour market and empower youth and women for more democratic and stable societies.
- The involvement of the younger generations in shaping the future of education in the region was considered essential, not forgetting the potential role that diaspora can play in this regard too.

Round 2. The specific challenges posed to vocational training

- The European Training Foundation introduced the discussions by stating that vocational education and training (VET) systems have greatly improved over the last decade but access, quality and relevance still remain critical challenges in the region.
- Information on the needs of the labour market suffers from fragmentation, which raises the issue of how to make informed decisions when it comes to deciding one's training path. What do VET students need to be prepared for? Are we ready to train our youth for jobs that do not yet exist and how can we do this?
- VET systems and access to VET are high on the political agenda in the Mediterranean region. There is a need to further coordinate multi-stakeholder efforts to promote VET - which should not be a "second best choice" - and to modernize VET equipment and curricula through increased investment, networking, peer-learning and cooperation between providers, including the private sector. A proposal was made to green VET to make it more attractive for youth and women.
- Several interventions also tackled the question of how to reach out to the most vulnerable youth. In this regard, over the years, the Mediterranean New Chance project has become a powerful network to share and spread good practices at local and regional level between both shores of the Mediterranean to deploy innovative solutions for those young people far from employment or training. Virtual mobility was also introduced as a means to bring rural youth closer to informal learning opportunities.

Round 3. Women and Youth in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education



- STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects cover skills which are critical to prepare for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. STEM education is also important to create entrepreneurs. Everyone has to be digitally literate, including women. That opens up all opportunities.
- The untapped potential of women who might be interested in STEM, but who choose not to obtain degrees in these fields or decide to change careers because of obstacles, represents an important lost opportunity for the whole society. Schools, universities, civil society organisations and public institutions play a key role in building the capacity of youth and women in STEM.
- Young women need to be unapologetic for their aspirations and take leadership positions because they are a perfect fit for women too.
- Changing the traditional culture regarding employing youth and women is an essential step to build inclusive sustainable development.



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