



The employment of Mediterranean university graduates: Bridging the employability gap between advanced skills and markets

Side event to the UfM Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour

Concept Note

**1 April 2019
Cascais, Portugal**

Background

One of the reasons for high levels of unemployment for Mediterranean youth is a persistent gap between the skills acquired at universities and the requirements of business. More than 32 percent of Enterprises in some Southern Mediterranean Countries have identified labor skill levels as a major constraint to hiring[1].

Despite Youth in the Southern Mediterranean being the most educated generational group [2] ever, young graduates in the region, especially in North Africa, experience the highest level of unemployment among higher education graduates in the world, at 25% according to the United Nations Development Programme[3].

The development of high-level skills through university degrees, PhDs, and research initiatives is an essential cross-cutting tool for supporting the implementation of an inclusive economy in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Additionally, the development of new regional solutions supported by the daily work of young researchers and students create new business opportunities out of challenges, benefiting society at all levels. Mobility, plastics transformation, water saving solutions, digital economy and sustainable maritime and agricultural practices are just a few examples.

Despite significant resources being invested in specialised training programmes, young graduates and researchers often face challenges in finding or creating meaningful job opportunities, increasing underemployment, brain drain and waste of knowledge. It is therefore essential to further bring closer the private and the higher education sectors for increasing the employability of graduates and researchers through an inclusive multilevel approach which takes into account higher education stakeholders, civil society, governments, companies, business accelerators, development institutions and the scientific community at large.

A particular cross-cutting issue is the still low participation levels of girls and women to research and science aiming to create sustainable economic growth.

The workshop

A dedicated interactive workshop will be a venue for sharing best practices, highlighting standing challenges and offering recommendations on employability of highly trained youth. It will also be an opportunity for networking and building partnerships among like-minded institutions.

The participants will have the opportunity to contribute to the debate, enriching the discussion with their experience on the ground.



Topics to be covered include business and university partnerships (such as industrial PhDs, accelerators), synergies with the private sector, skill gaps, innovation agenda, soft skills for graduates and researchers, networks of alumni, etc.

Targeted participants

Participating Stakeholders should have a strong background on connecting successfully academia and industry such as international institutions universities, innovative, research institutes, employers' associations, and networks of universities. Their success stories and experience in tackling relevant challenges could pose basis for interactive discussion, in view of preparing viable and concrete recommendations.

Main questions to be addressed

What are the main challenges experienced by young graduates and researchers in finding employment opportunities after education? What skills could have been strengthened during education? How to strengthen entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean through Research and Innovation?

How relevant is a greater understanding of the innovation-related job market when designing curricula and research proposals? The case of the agriculture-water-energy nexus and blue economy.

Which tools could be further fashioned for developing the employability of students and young researchers? Industrial doctorates, graduate networks, the technical and soft skills needed for employment and entrepreneurship, traineeships, training on research opportunities and pitches, transition schemes, accelerator programmes, etc.

Outcomes

Rapporteurs will provide inputs after the sessions, both from speakers and participants intervening. The format will be of practical recommendation that could feed into the follow-up of the UfM Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour. The outcomes of the side event will be collected and shared with the participants after the meeting.

Registration

To register, please contact EMPL-UFM-MINISTERIAL-2019@ec.europa.eu adding in copy registration@ufmsecretariat.org and referring to the side event *The employment of Mediterranean university graduates: Bridging the employability gap between advanced skills and markets*. Please be informed that it is also possible to register for the main Policy Conference *Addressing the employment and labour challenges in the UfM region*, that will be held the next day, 2nd of April, at the same location.

Registrations are opened until the **15th of February**.

Venue

The event will take place in **Hotel Cascais Miragem**. Av. Marginal 8554, 2754-536 Cascais, Portugal.



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Agenda

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15.00	Opening. Institutional greetings
15.20	<i>Session 1</i> University and job markets. (4 main speakers, plus sharing of experiences and debate with audience) Topics: - Alumni/student networks - Internships - Industrial PhDs - Euro-Mediterranean curricula and employability - Gender challenges in the Mediterranean - University services for entrepreneurship - Mobility and employability
16.40	Networking break.
16.55	<i>Session 2</i> Research and market needs for a sustainable growth. (4 main speakers, plus sharing of experiences and debate with audience) Topics: - Blue careers - Agriculture, Water and Energy Nexus - Women, Innovation and Job Creation - Cooperation between Research Centers and Private sector - Innovation and job creation - Transforming research outputs into startup
18.15	Practical recommendations emerging through rapporteurs
18.25	Closing