

Conclusions and Key Messages UfM Workshop on Social Economy in the MENA region and the Balkans

Barcelona, 5 July 2019

The first **UfM Workshop on Social Economy in the MENA Region and the Balkans** was organised by the UfM Secretariat at its premises in Barcelona, Spain, on 5 July 2019 in partnership with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and in partnership with the Spanish Confederation of Social Economy Enterprises (CEPES) and the support of the ESMED Network and Social Economy Europe.

This event corresponded to the mandate emanating from the **4th UfM Ministerial Meeting on Employment and Labour** (Cascais, Portugal, 2 & 3 April, 2019) which emphasized the importance of Social Economy, *“not only an alternative way of delivering economic, social and environmental value, but also a smart way of unlocking resources, creating sustainable employment, and generating inclusive economic growth in the region.”*

The Workshop brought together 45 stakeholders to engage in discussions and exchange of views focused on two interrelated thematics, namely Entrepreneurship and Job Creation in the Social Economy and Social Innovation approaches for a positive Socio-Economic Impact.

During his keynote speech, the UfM Secretary General stressed that the Workshop is only the first step towards a more structured engagement by the UfM Secretariat in promoting Social Economy in the UfM Region, to be followed by other activities.



In her welcome address, Acting Secretary of State for Employment, Spanish Ministry of Labour, Migrations & Social Security, H.E. Yolanda Valdeolivas, welcomed the growing presence of Social Economy in multilateral cooperation frameworks. The State Secretary to the Minister for Tourism, Air Transport, Craft and Social Economy; Responsible for Crafts and Social Economy, Morocco, H.E. Jamila El Mossalli, highlighted the need for advocates that would promote the cause of Social Economy given its clear contribution to sustainable and inclusive human development.

For his part, the President of CEPES and Social Economy Europe and General Coordinator of the ESMED network, Mr. Juan Antonio Pedreño welcomed the engagement of the UfMS in a way that would strengthen the Euromed and international dimension of the Social Economy; an enterprise model that accounts for 7% of the world GDP, according to the United Nations.



The discussions and exchanges among participants yielded the following general considerations and key messages:

General considerations:

- The Social economy is an enterprise model based on participatory management, on the primacy of people over capital and on solidarity, where profits are reinvested in the creation of new jobs or in achieving goals that encourage sustainable development or that favour the public interest. This model makes social economy a key player in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and in reducing inequalities in the Euro-Mediterranean region.
- The social economy constitutes a relevant part of the private sector in the Mediterranean region, with 15 million jobs and 3.2 million enterprises of all sizes, present across all sectors of activity.



- o Social economy fosters economic growth, it eradicates poverty, it builds up sustainable local development and it improves labour market access and decent working conditions especially for women and young people, as well as for various categories of disadvantaged communities.
- o Several EU Member States and Governments from the Southern Mediterranean countries, as well as the European Commission have strategies and policies in place to boost social economy. These can be benchmarks for other countries that are interested in unlocking the potential of these enterprises and organisations. Furthermore, the European Commission carries out programmes and initiatives to strengthen the social economy of the Balkans and Southern Mediterranean countries and to promote the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the field of the social economy.

Key Messages:

1. Social economy is a transversal actor in the main socio-economic policies of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.
2. There is a need to launch a coherent and joint Euro-Mediterranean strategy for the promotion and development of social economy enterprises and organisations, with the following objectives:
 - a. *To support the establishment, in those countries where they do not already exist, of regulatory and legal frameworks that give the social economy legal protection and promote public policies to encourage those enterprises and organisations;*
 - b. *To improve the visibility of Social Economy enterprises and organisations and of their values and characteristics;*
 - c. *To strengthen the management capabilities of social economy enterprises and organisations and their productive processes through training programmes, improvements to their working conditions and their levels of social protection;*
 - d. *To establish a financial eco-system that favours the social economy, including by strengthening already-existing initiatives;*
 - e. *To increase and strengthen support and advice services for social economy entrepreneurs, also through north-south and south-south exchange and cooperation programmes;*
 - f. *To improve the digital competences of the social economy, and increase development in emerging and innovative sectors, in accordance with new challenges arising from the future of work and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development;*
 - g. *To promote increased technical and financial business cooperation between the social economy from both shores of the Mediterranean;*
 - h. *To draft studies on the situation of the different forms of social economy, shedding light on the statistical reality and the added value of the Social Economy for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.*
3. To incorporate the Social Economy increasingly into initiatives and programmes aimed at strengthening the private sector in the MENA region and the Balkans.



4. To generate a space for dialogue aimed at promoting and developing the Social Economy in the Mediterranean, through the concerted efforts between the Union for the Mediterranean, the European Commission and national Governments, in dialogue with social economy organisations and stakeholders.
5. To facilitate the development of Social Economy representation and coordination networks across the region, recognising the Euro-Mediterranean Social Economy Network (ESMED) as the benchmark on which to keep on building greater coordination between the Social Economy organisations in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Social Economy is both the agent and the instrument of inclusive and responsible growth in the UfM Region at varying degrees of progress that correspond to the heterogeneity of the Euro-Mediterranean region in terms of enabling environments and business cultures. The potential for job creation through Social Economy in the MENA Region and the Balkans remains to be largely unexplored in comparison to other regions, which presents an opportunity and poses question marks about the optimal path ahead in order to unleash the potential of a significant player with more than 3.2 million enterprises and 15 million jobs in the EU + 8 southern Med countries.