



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

In the framework of:  
**25 YEARS 1995 - 2020**  
**BARCELONA PROCESS**  
Union for the Mediterranean

#WOMEN4  
MEDITERRANEAN

# Women4Mediterranean Conference 2020

Accelerating gender  
equality in the context  
of COVID-19 pandemic



If conditions permit,  
this flagship event will take place on

**16-20 November 2020 | Barcelona**

In light of ongoing COVID-19 developments,  
the Conference may be held virtually,  
with possible additional days added



The UfM Secretariat  
is co-funded by the  
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5 GENDER  
EQUALITY





## Women4Mediterranean Conference 2020



The UfM High-level Women4Mediterranean Conference coincides this year with the **25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Process**, a vast dynamic cooperation partnership between the European Union and 12 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, that laid the foundations of the Union for the Mediterranean. This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action, also adopted in 1995 in Beijing, China, that is considered as the most pivotal global roadmap for the achievement of gender equality. These two important dates serve as a milestone for the UfM Member States to assess the progress made in advancing gender equality in the region, not only to address the remaining challenges but also to update their strategies for the years to come towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Since 1995, **four Ministerial meetings on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society took place in the Euro-Mediterranean region** - in 2006 in Istanbul, 2009 in Marrakech, 2013 in Paris and 2017 in Cairo - whereby strong commitments towards achieving gender equality have been endorsed by countries. Important legal reforms and supportive policy actions for gender equality and women participation have been undertaken since then by **UfM countries and the case for gender**

**equality has never been more obvious**, thanks to extensive data and research, and a growing transparency. However, despite the significant policy progress and the invested efforts that have taken place in the UfM countries, data from the region shows that the impact on women and girls is far from being fully achieved. While most countries are close to gender parity in education and health outcomes, important gaps still exist in employment, earnings, financial and property ownership, mobility, digital use and affordable access, and acquisition of soft skills such as

decision making and leadership. Discriminatory practices, social barriers, insufficient institutional protections and unequal access to services and resources continue to hinder women's progress in the region. The progress has also been stalled or slowed down because of the several pressing social, economic and security challenges faced by the region over the past 25 years. Women and girls are amongst those most severely affected by the impact of the financial crisis and the armed conflicts that occurred in the region.

**The Women4Mediterranean Conference this year is intended to serve as a milestone to appraise and take stock of what has been achieved over the past 25 years**, to learn from what has worked out and to further identify areas that still require improvement. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the scenario. The first preliminary data from the ground shows that the pandemic is deepening pre-existing gender inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic on women and girls' lives. All these impacts are further intensified in contexts of fragility, conflict, and emergencies where social cohesion is already undermined, and institutional capacity and services are limited.

While pursuing today the foundations for the coming years towards closing the gender gap in the region in the current context, **the Conference seeks to further analyse the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women and girls** and to highlight the key role played by women in addressing the pandemic. It also aims to identify what is needed to better value the role of women and foster

**Important gaps still exist in employment, earnings, financial and property ownership, mobility, digital use and affordable access.**

women's participation in policy and decision-making to address the pandemic. The Conference will be the appropriate occasion to launch the UfM Institutional Ministerial follow-up mechanism and its indicators, adopted this year by the UfM Member States, that will allow to monitor and measure for the coming years gender equality progress in the region and will provide policy and action-oriented recommendations to close the gender gap. Exchanges and feedback on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic will be significant to the agenda.



## Thematic Focus



### Women on the frontline of COVID-19

Women are at the forefront of the battle against the **COVID-19 pandemic, risking their lives to save others. If only one lesson should be drawn from the COVID-19 crisis**, it would be that women are crucial to quench the world's population vital needs: health, food security and care.

Today women account for **70% of the health and social care workforce and deliver care to around 5 billion people**. Women play a key role at every level of the food industry and are currently working in more difficult circumstances than ever before, to maintain food security during the pandemic, as farmers, workers, processors, entrepreneurs, buyers, service providers and employees. With shuttered schools, even with both parents working from

home, it is the women who are dealing with their children's care, education and house chores, in parallel with their other paid job.

Nevertheless, **women in the health sector remain largely segregated into lower-status and lower-paid jobs**. They are subject to discrimination, and, in some contexts, are under the constant threat of violence. As for the food and retail sectors, there is a strong gendered vertical division of labour in the industry, with the majority of women occupying low-revenue jobs, and men occupying the majority of higher paid management jobs. Yet, it is these low paid and stigmatised unskilled jobs by women that succeed to glue our societies together during the pandemic.

### QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE DISCUSSION

- **How can we ensure women's equal representation in all COVID-19** response planning and decision-making, in health, care services and the economy at large?
- **What can be done to bring about transformative change for equality** to address issues of paid and unpaid care?
- **What policy actions are needed to better value the role and leadership of women in health, care, food and retail sectors?**



## Women's economic participation and the impact of COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 across the global economy will be profound. **Markets and supply chains have been disrupted, businesses were closed, and millions have or will lose their jobs and livelihoods.** Travel restrictions, and the cancellation of many planned visits,

flights, business and leisure events are severely affecting many sectors. And this is likely to persist for some time. The ILO has estimated that full or partial lockdown measures now affect almost 2.7 billion workers, representing around 81% of the world's workforce, while the IMF projects a significant contraction of global output in 2020.

Emerging evidence suggests that women's economic and productive lives **will be affected disproportionately and differently from those of men.** Across the globe, women earn less, save less,

hold less secure jobs, and are more likely to be employed in the informal sector. **They have less access to social protections and represent the majority of single-parent households.** Their capacity to absorb economic shocks is therefore less than that of men.

Such impacts risk rolling back the already fragile gains made in female labour force participation. In many countries, the first round of layoffs has been particularly acute in the services sector, including retail, hospitality and tourism, where women are overrepresented.



## QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE DISCUSSION

- **What policy measures and direct support are needed to effectively address** the economic impact of COVID-19 on women and girls?
- **How to adapt targeting methodologies of pre-existing national social protection programs** to ensure income for sectors affected by COVID-19 and especially where women are heavily represented (tourism, teaching, retail, restaurants, hospitality, etc)?
- **What actions are needed to reach and protect women workers** from informal sectors?
- **What role can women's networks and civil society organisations**, including microfinance and savings groups, play in dire economic situations impacted by a pandemic?



## Ending violence against women and girls (VAWG)

According to recent data, 243 million women and girls aged **15-49 have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence worldwide**, perpetrated by an intimate partner in the last 12 months.

VAWG tends to increase during every type of emergency, including epidemics. **The Ebola pandemic demonstrated that multiple forms of violence** were exacerbated within crisis contexts, including domestic violence, trafficking, child marriage, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Emerging data shows that since **the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, that has deepened economic and social stress coupled with restricted movement and social isolation measures, VAWG has surged in many countries including some UfM countries.** In addition, with a strained health system, access to vital sexual and reproductive health services, including for women subjected to violence, is likely becoming more limited. Other services,



Plenary session.

such as hotlines, crisis centres, shelters, legal aid, and protection services may also be scaled back, further reducing access to the few sources of help that women in abusive relationships might have. **This is worse for women who are displaced, refugees, and living in conflict-affected areas who are particularly vulnerable.**

**While recognizing that COVID-19 has placed an immense burden on health systems** including frontline health workers, there are urgent steps to be undertaken that can help mitigate the impacts of violence on women and girls during this pandemic.

## QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE DISCUSSION

- **How can policy makers and national authorities include services to address VAW** in preparedness and response plans for COVID-19, how to resource them, and what are the best ways to make them accessible in context of physical distancing measures?
- **How can information at the local level be made available and facilitated about services** (e.g. hotlines, shelters, rape crisis centres, counselling) for survivors, including opening hours, contact details and whether these can be offered remotely, and establish referral linkages? How can such services prove to be effective during a pandemic?
- **What can be done to improve the Health system**, so it can manage to continue providing the necessary support to women and girls victims of violence, even during a health crisis?
- **What actions are needed to raise awareness among community members** and families about the increased risk of domestic/partner violence during this pandemic, and the need to keep in touch and provide support safely to women subjected to violence?



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# Women4Mediterranean Conference Overall Objectives

*UfM Women4Mediterranean  
Conference 2018, Lisbon,  
Portugal.*



## Creating impact by connecting advocates and decision makers

Organised every two years since 2013, **the UfM high level Women4Mediterranean Conference** is one of the major regional events that promotes gender equality and women's equal participation in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Over the years, the Conference has created impact by bringing together hundreds of stakeholders and policy leaders from the Euro-Mediterranean region —go-

vernments, parliaments, private sector, international organisations, civil society, academia, media, young women and men— to work together as a collective intelligence platform that discusses, generates ideas and solutions, exchanges experiences and identifies concrete actions toward advancing gender equality in UfM countries.



*Side-event - "UfM  
Regional Dialogue on  
Women Empowerment".*

## Acting regional for national and global gender equality agenda

The Women4Mediterranean Conference became one of the main regional tools to assess the progress made in implementing countries and stakeholders commitments on advancing gender equality and provide policy recommendations, as a contribution towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. For almost 5 years, the conference has been a catalyst for policy advocacy, concrete initiatives and projects, new ideas, multi-stakeholders' collaborations and partnerships.



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## Focusing on the key role of women and girls as agents for change

The Conference focuses on women leadership as **catalysts for change** and as **drivers of solutions** to address regional challenges. It raises awareness about the untapped capacity and talents of women in the region and the need to overcome cultural and social barriers to drive actions for gender equality.



Main hall - Photo exhibition on  
"Women in action: ending  
stereotypes in the Mediterranean".



Side-event - "Euro-Mediterranean Youth Forum: shaping the digital future".

## Harnessing the power of youth

The Conference, over years, has given a voice to young leaders and young advocates from the region by connecting them with each other and with policy makers to increase and improve their impact and work towards gender equality. In 2018, more than 50% of the Conference's participants were young

women and men. We work to increase this proportion in the future editions. We believe that achieving gender equality will only be possible by dedicating efforts, actions and policies to further involve young people, as they are the present and future of our region.

## Date and venue

**16-20 November 2020 in Barcelona**

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## Participants

The conference is expected to gather **about 400 participants** representing diverse stakeholders from all sectors involved in gender equality and women's empowerment in the Euro-Mediterranean region, including country representatives, ministers, local authorities and

public institutions, parliamentarians, international organisations, civil society platforms, youth, academics, private sector actors, project promoters, media and personalities with an outstanding commitment towards gender equality.

## 2018 Conference Highlights



**400+**  
participants  
from **30+** countries

**3** days  
**6** side-events

**5** panels

Women leaders; Breaking stereotypes; Private sector & media; Combating violence against women; Youth for women empowerment

**3** workshops  
Women in rural areas; Women in science; Investing in sexual health

**65** speakers  
from **all** sectors of society

More than **20** new regional projects and initiatives presented

## Attendees

**36%** from the Southern & Eastern Mediterranean

**32%** from the Northern Mediterranean

**31%** from Portugal (host country)

**1%** others



## Heard and Seen



Balanced media coverage

**38%**

Southern Med

**41%**

Northern Med

**250** articles  
reaching a potential  
**140 M** audience

**40** interviews

in tier-1 national media across the region

**4**

Media Partnerships

France Medias Monde, Lusa, Radio Liban, BBC Arabic

**6,500** visits

to the Women4Mediterranean web pages



**205K**

interactions

**+1,500** mentions of the hashtag on Twitter

**+80%** in mentions compared to the 2016 edition

Trending Topic on Twitter in

**Spain and Portugal**





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## Format

*H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca,  
President of the Republic of Malta  
(2014-2019) at the high-level  
Opening Session.*



## Plenary Sessions

**One day and a half of plenary sessions** with high level keynote speakers, policy makers, experts, practitioners and youth representatives to explore the most recent developments, initiatives and innovative thinking around the main selected topics through engaging presentations and discussions

with the audience. The objective will also be to present the progress made in implementing the UfM Ministerial commitments, in particular the Regional Dialogue's outcomes and the Ministerial follow-up mechanism and its indicators under development.

*Side-event - "UfM  
Regional Dialogue on  
Women Empowerment".*



## Workshops

**Parallel workshop sessions** led by key experts, offer spaces to learn more in depth about the most pressing issues regarding gender equality and to co-create ideas, find solutions and policy recommendations to drive forward the agenda on gender equality and women's empowerment in the region.



Side-event - "Behavioral insights for women's economic empowerment".



## Side events

A number of exciting **side events** are organised in partnership with international or regional partners, with specific outcomes, that will engage special audiences in the format of reduced expert working groups and regional dialogue meetings for sharing experiences, insights and progress towards achieving concrete goals for improving women's rights and participation.

Potential partners: **CIHEAM, CMI, UNDP, UN Women, Barcelona City Local Authority, WHO, UNFPA, Konrad Adenauer Foundation.** The idea behind the partnership is to jointly build the event's expected outcomes and agenda while the partner leads the organisation of the side event.

## The Women Business Forum

**3 days' event dedicated to women in business.** The objective of the event is to grow women in business leadership and skills by learning from successful business models and by networking and building connections with diverse and high-level business leaders, policy makers and business experts from the region.

**About 100-150 participants are expected.**

The programme includes special panels with international business and industry experts, B2B & Networking, new business model presentations and site visits to leading companies in the targeted sectors.



Plenary sessions.

## B2B & Networking

People and organisations engaged in advancing progress for women and girls can connect, have 1to1 discussions and exchange ideas, build partnerships and collaborations, share news on latest projects and research.

## Youth Space

Young people will be an important part of this conference and will have their own space to get together, connect and engage in discussions on how to advance gender equality, or just take a break from all the events going on.



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