



Outcomes of the Second UfM Med4Jobs Stakeholders' Dialogue *United for the Post-Pandemic Recovery*

Thursday, 29 October 2020

Acting upon the recommendations of the First UfM Med4Jobs Stakeholders' Dialogue that was held on 8 October 2018 in Barcelona, Spain, the UfM Secretariat held the second edition of this Stakeholders' Dialogue online on 29 October 2020 to take stock of the state-of-play of the Initiative and to address the COVID-related repercussions and challenges.

The Second Med4Jobs Stakeholders' Dialogue brought together over 50 participants from the UfM Region, representing a broad spectrum of stakeholders. The discussions focused on the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the employment landscape in the region, the prospects for the near future, and the actions that can be taken in order to contribute to the development of more resilient labour markets and the creation of jobs. The participants discussed their respective experiences in the wake of the pandemic, shared lessons learned and conceived potential actions for the future.

The UfM Med4Jobs Initiative

Med4jobs is a flagship initiative of the Union for the Mediterranean meant to help increase the employability of youth and women, close the gap between labor demand and supply, and foster a culture of entrepreneurship and private sector development. Med4jobs is a cross-sector initiative driven by the need for an integrated regional initiative in the area of job creation. Launched in 2013, Med4Jobs currently has 14 labelled projects under its umbrella.

The UfM-labelled projects represented in this Dialogue were:

- *PWE II: Promoting women empowerment for inclusive and sustainable industrial development in the MENA region, second phase (promoted by UNIDO).*
- *CEED GROW: Growing and Scaling Small and Medium-Sized Businesses (promoted by CEED Global)*
- *Developing Youth Employability & Entrepreneurial Skills – Maharat MED (promoted by BDC Jordan)*
- *High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executive Recruitment (HOMERe) (promoted by HOMER France)*
- *BlueSkills: Blue Jobs and Responsible Growth in the Mediterranean (promoted by The National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics (OGS))*
- *The Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) (promoted by the UfM Secretariat)*

In addition to the projects, representatives from UNDP, OECD and ETF shed light on their work and/or studies they have prepared. OECD presented a proposed roadmap for recovery based on social protection, fiscal stimulus and reformed labour market policies. ETF presented its strategies on “Youth in Transition: Untapping the Youth Potential in the SEMED Region” as well as “Skills for Smart Specialization”, emphasizing the importance of addressing the skill gap in the post-



pandemic aftermath as a prerequisite for a robust socio-economic landscape., and the need for investing in quality education and training.

In a dedicated session, UNDP shared statistics and findings on MSMEs and Labor markets in the Arab region before COVID-19, as well as a proposed application of a Tele-workability index to selected Arab countries.

The key messages and takeaways from the Dialogue included the following:

- *In spite of the challenging context and trends, the crisis can be seen as an opportunity to “**build back better**” making future economies and societies more inclusive, sustainable and resilient.*
- *For the Post-Pandemic recovery to be one conducive to the creation of resilient societies and economies, **economic progress and social cohesion** need to go hand-in-hand, as already pointed out by the UfM Ministers in the 2019 Cascais Ministerial Declaration;*
- *Employment-related challenges are vast and diverse, which calls for a comprehensive, holistic and multi-stakeholder approach to addressing them;*
- *Some segments of the population in the region have been hit harder than others by the current pandemic. Women in particular have suffered more, which makes **socio-economic empowerment of women** a prerequisite for any inclusive recovery;*
- *The case for a **green recovery and low-carbon transition** is clear in light of the accelerating pollution, the persistent climate change, environmental degradation and resource scarcity;*
- *Investing in **new technologies** and digital solutions are no longer a matter of choice, but rather a matter-of-necessity. Companies that are able to harness the potential of the Fourth Industrial Revolution will have clear competitive advantages in the post-pandemic era;*
- *A strengthened **Social Dialogue** is essential to a post-pandemic horizon where good governance and participative decision-making are emphasized, and where socio-economic causes and conflicts are resolved democratically;*
- *Some of the **economic sectors** that are expected to generate economic opportunities and create jobs in the COVID-19 aftermath are the Social Economy, Digital Economy, Creative Economy, as well as Green-Blue Economy;*
- *In the short term-term **avoiding disruptions in critical supply chains**, supporting business continuity and local production of personal protective equipment (PPE), also through re-purposing, will be key;*
- *Supporting **entrepreneurship, innovation and building the capacities of MSMEs, and small and medium-sized industries (SMIs)** in conjunction with the promotion of **responsible business** and of **decent work**, are all conducive to the generation of incomes and employment;*
- ***Trade facilitation and capacity building, impact investment and reinforced industrial cooperation** are vehicles of economic regional integration and job creation in the UfM Region, which remains to be one of the most economically-fragmented regions worldwide.*
- *The persisting **skill gap** and the need to reskill and upskill further confirm the pressing **need to invest in skill development and VET**;*
- ***Inclusive and sustainable industrial policies, stimuli and development** can play a crucial role in the socio-economic recovery. Transformation of industries and diversification of production can make economies more resilient and safeguard jobs.*

The Med4Jobs Stakeholders’ Dialogue was followed by the Sixth Med4Jobs Advisory Board Meeting, held at the UfM Secretariat. The participants stressed the need for connecting the dots and synchronize the already ongoing efforts and activities, the importance of the reformed UfM labelling mechanism and the role of Active Labour Market Policies in building resilience.