



Outcomes of the 7th UfM Med4Jobs Advisory Board Meeting *Connecting the Dots*

Thursday, 27 March 2021

In preparation for the third UfM Med4Jobs Stakeholders Dialogue envisaged for 2022, the seventh Med4Jobs Advisory Board Meeting took place online on 25 March 2021 to discuss a broad array of employment-related issues that range from informal employment and the future of work and skills to opportunities offered by Blue Economy and digitalization, the future role of MSMEs in economic transformation and labor generation, as well as the role of public employment services, among other issues. In addition, some of the UfM-labelled projects under the umbrella of the Med4Jobs Initiative were given the floor to share important updates on the state-of-play and the next steps for their work in the region.

The Co-Presidency Statement emanating from the V Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean stressed that “efforts must be focused on the crucial employment challenges, mainly for young people.” Ahead of the Fifth UfM Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour that is planned for 2022, the discussion is aimed not only at exchanging experiences and showcasing best practices and success stories, but also at generating pertinent and pragmatic ideas that could potentially feed into the 2022 Ministerial Declaration.

During the 2020 edition of the Med4Jobs Advisory Board Meeting, 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. The UfM Secretariat acted upon these recommendations, along with the key takeaways from the 2nd UfM Med4Jobs Stakeholders Dialogue.

Following a welcome address by the UfM Secretary General and an introduction by DG EMPL on Employment, social affairs and inclusion in the “European renewed Strategy with the Southern Neighbourhood - a New Agenda for the Mediterranean”, several interventions followed by representatives of European Training Foundation (ETF), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Business Development Center (BDC Jordan), THE NEXT SOCIETY (funded by DG NEAR), Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) Regional Hub - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and ICAP Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e di Geofisica Sperimentale (OGS).



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

- *There is a need to build back resilience in the UfM Region in a way conducive to a sustainable, responsible and inclusive post-pandemic recovery. The UfM Secretariat reiterates the need to focus on the areas of priority identified by the Co-Presidency Statement of the V Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean which took place on 27 November 2020.*
- *Youth and women should be at the heart of job creation and employment promotion initiatives and projects aiming at alleviating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Skills development initiatives (including upskilling and reskilling) will be key to ensure recovery in countries. In particular, they will be vectors to enter the labour market and remain relevant.*
- *Within the framework of the New EU “Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean”, there is an emphasis on taking advantage of trends, including the green and digital transition. The EU wants to contribute to a long-term vision of prosperity and stability in the region, notably in the socio-economic recovery for the covid-19 pandemic with an inclusive economy that works for people. Emphasis is also given to the need for co-ownership based on common values and on putting people at the center, especially youth and women. An Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern neighbours will help spur long-term socio-economic recovery.*
- *Due to the high impact of digitalization and automation across countries and economic sectors, two categories of job profiles emerge as more requested by the market, namely technical or technology-related occupations, and business services and related occupations. In parallel, other interesting segments include traditional jobs to which new skills are giving a new life, and new emerging occupations. For all these categories, new skills will be needed to fully grasp the opportunities offered by the transition toward new product models.*
- *Great part of future occupations requires highly skilled profiles. Their demand is expected to grow. However, the impact can be seen on all workers. It is not only digitalization & automation that impact and change the job profiles, but also other developments that encompass biotechnology, greening, globalization, regulations, etc. All these aspects have a profound impact on the new development models that can be boosted in countries.*
- *Digital and green transitions need a massive shift in skills sets in order to reap their full potential. The recovery plans should embed and bring forward structural reforms to move to new models of education and training systems, flexible pathways and learning opportunities. Similarly, economic recovery plans may also build on opportunities to move towards more digitalized and greener economies.*
- *There is an evident need to improve and boost Public Employment Services (PES) following the COVID 19 Pandemic, given the indispensable role that they play. Thereby, particular importance shall be attributed to the necessity to digitalize employment services and develop digital skills, multi-stakeholder approaches in PES, the role of employment service providers in re- and upskilling and the improvement of services for women and vulnerable groups (leave no one behind).*
- *Creating a conducive environment for fostering Innovation throughout the region can eventually unleash the full potential of Creative Economy and unlock its assets and capacities.*



- *Informality remains a major socio-economic challenge to the region, further aggravated by the current COVID-19 crisis. Women are particularly affected by the rise in informal employment, which accentuates the already existing disparities and calls for a holistic approach to addressing them. Comprehensive policies are fundamental to support the transition to the formal economy and to equip informal workers with tools and incentives to embark in this transition. Among other actions, skilling policies for informal workers can boost productivity and, in the medium to long term, boost this transition.*
- *There are several inspiring stories and best practices in the region that could be scaled up and replicated in order to successfully tackle the employment-related challenges facing both shores of the Mediterranean.*
- *Promoting the empowerment of women for inclusive and sustainable industrial development in the MENA region through the development of sustainable local value chains.*
- *Blue Economy holds a great potential for boosting youth employability in the Mediterranean. Science diplomacy can further consolidate cross border collaboration in this field.*
- *These outcomes can inform and inspire relevant future UfM events.*

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.