



## Outcome Document

### UfM Social Economy Workshop 2021

#### *“Towards a new Social Economy agenda for a sustainable and inclusive Mediterranean”*

4 November 2021

Unlocking the full potential of the social economy is a key factor to stimulate a strong and fair recovery based on inclusive growth compatible with a sustainable economic and environmental development of the territories in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

In line with the mandate to foster an enabling environment for the development of social economy established in the Ministerial Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Employment and Labour Ministers (2-3 April 2019, Cascais - Portugal), the new Agenda for the Mediterranean of the European Union integrates social economy in economic development planning for the region<sup>1</sup>. As the European Commission has pointed out, “thanks to its business models that put people and the planet at their core, the social economy holds the potential to address many societal challenges and increase our society’s resilience in times of crises.”<sup>2</sup>

**The convergence of several factors makes it possible to adopt a Euro-Mediterranean work agenda to promote the Social Economy.** Social Economy is a relevant stakeholder in the private sector across the Mediterranean region, with more than 3.2 million enterprises and organisations of different sizes, present across all sectors of activity and providing 15 million jobs:

1. The European Commission will approve the European Action Plan for the Social Economy at the start of December 2021, renewing the EU’s leadership in Social Economy globally. This Plan will foster the Social Economy outside the EU, including cooperation with the southern Mediterranean neighbours.

The Action Plan is, therefore, an opportunity to lay the foundations for an **ambitious Euro-Mediterranean initiative with sufficient resources, contributing to foster a favourable eco-system for these enterprises and organisations in the Euro-Mediterranean region.**

This initiative would provide the Mediterranean with a strategy to promote this enterprise model. The strategy would complement the array of programmes already financed by the European Union towards the social economy in the Mediterranean and the social economy initiatives promoted globally by The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Social and Solidarity Economy.

<sup>1</sup> Council conclusions on a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood - A new agenda for the Mediterranean. April 2021

<sup>2</sup> Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean. February 2021.



2. The main stakeholders committed to the development of the Social Economy in the Euro-Mediterranean region have identified a set of priorities on which to build a work agenda<sup>3</sup>.

The proposals made by the UfM online event “The Social Economy and Recovery after the Pandemic: Challenges and Perspectives” (2020) set up a “Road Map” on which to define a Euro-Mediterranean work agenda for Social Economy:

- To save jobs and entities in the Social Economy, especially through financial instruments, by applying guarantees and facilitating the access to funds with low or no interest rates;
- To establish a financial eco-system that favours the social economy, including by the strengthening of already-existing initiatives;
- To speed up the digitalisation process of Social Economy enterprises and organisations in all sectors;
- To promote the development of social economy in emerging and innovative sectors, such as the blue economy or those related to the green transition as well as any other that contributes to SDGs;
- To strengthen the value chains between Social Economy enterprises through greater business and commercial cooperation, both at national and Euro-Mediterranean level;
- To encourage the adoption, in those countries where they do not exist, of legislative frameworks that give the Social Economy legal protection and promote public policies to encourage these enterprises and organisations;
- To strengthen the incubators, development poles and clusters with the aim of consolidating and increasing the advisory and support services to Social Economy entrepreneurs;
- To strength the visibility of Social Economy, its values and enterprise models in particular throughout the education system, from school to university and in vocational training systems;
- To strengthen the role of the Social Economy representative organisations at national and Euro-Mediterranean levels as interlocutors with the public authorities in order to adopt effective measures and initiatives to promote the contribution of Social Economy to the economic and social recovery of the UfM region.

<sup>3</sup> Proposals to strengthen the Social Economy in the Euro-Mediterranean Social Economy Network ESMED (2016); joint report of the Economic and Social Committees in the Euro-Mediterranean region: “Social Economy and entrepreneurship in the Euro-Mediterranean region” (2018); Vision and Actions to Promote Employment in the Southern Mediterranean. Role and contribution of the Union for the Mediterranean (2021)



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- Southern and northern Mediterranean countries have adopted legal frameworks and count on favourable ecosystems for the Social Economy to flourish. These experiences can serve as a reference to the governments in other countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region to build conducive ecosystems to promote and unlock social economy entrepreneurship, in line with the work carried out by 19 governments of EU Member States through the Monitoring Committee of the Luxemburg Declaration. This Committee is currently chaired by the Portuguese Government, which prioritises, together with the Spanish Government, cooperation within the Mediterranean as agreed in the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation on Social Economy signed between both countries in September 2021.

A structured and permanent exchange on policies to promote and support the Social Economy enterprises between Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean (UpM) through a working forum would contribute to advancing in the creation of an enabling environment for the Social Economy in the Mediterranean region.

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