



Union for the Mediterranean
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DIGITAL EVENT

Higher Education and Vocational Training as tools for employability: Which strategies for the UfM region?

January 27th, 2022

Online | via Zoom Platform

CONCEPT NOTE

Digital Event

Higher Education and Vocational Training as tools for employability: Which strategies for the UfM region?

January 27th, 2022 | Online meeting | 10.00 AM – 12.00 PM CET

Youth unemployment in the Euro-Mediterranean region is a multi-faceted issue. It can undoubtedly be justified by macro-economic factors (slow economic growth, regional instability, pandemic, global recession, etc.); however, it seems that skills mismatch is increasingly reported as a fundamental factor behind unemployment and underemployment of youth. Several regional reports have shown that there exists a skills gap between what private sector employers are seeking and what skills the education systems are offering. The skills mismatch resulted in a surging youth unemployment in an increasingly complex regional labor market.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) puts Higher Education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training at the core of its agenda. It has been actively working for bridging the employability gap between advanced skills and markets as well as the promotion of VET as a pillar of youth employment through multi-stakeholders' consultations and Ministerial Declarations on Research and Innovation (Valletta 2017), Employment and Labor (Dead Sea 2016 & Cascais 2019), and Higher Education and Scientific Research (Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area, Cairo 2007), as well as the conduct of a cross-sectorial flagship initiatives such as Med4Jobs towards strengthening cooperation on VET sector in the Region. Besides, the UfM recently released a Handbook in the framework of its initiative 'Reinforcing the innovation employability nexus in the Mediterranean' targeting universities, research centers, policymakers, industry, and intermediary institutions, to collaborate in addressing unemployment of highly qualified graduates.

Also, the Higher Education system strives to diversify the curricula to cope with the workforce readiness and facilitate its transition from education to work. This is accomplished through the integration of 21st Century skills, the implementation of active methods of teaching and learning, and the stimulation of a learning culture that encompasses innovation and entrepreneurial attitudes. Aware of the need to reinforce cooperation in a cross-cutting issue as the higher education and VET systems playing a central role in fostering transformative agendas in the region, BUSINESSMED has been entrusted by the UfM to investigate possible linkages between higher education and vocational pathways, paving the way for a strategy on its potential added value in the field subject of broader discussion with the key stakeholders. The study includes an operational strategy assessing the state of the art, best practices, gaps, existing policy tools, available opportunities, niches for action and recommendations on higher education vocational pathways in the Mediterranean.

The proposed strategic action plan outlines how to reduce the skills gap to guarantee decent employment for the region youth. An urgent reform of the education system seems to be a priority in the policy makers' agenda. Effective skills development initiatives that respond to the specific needs of the Euro-Med region labor market settings are essential. These initiatives must be undertaken by secondary and tertiary education, and they should focus on vocational pathways. Higher education institutions are invited to look for innovative approaches to forge strong and sustainable linkages with the private sector and respond effectively to important occupational skill areas by developing the required technical skills of vocational pathways.

To conclude this effort, a digital event is organized to present the results of the analysis and mapping efforts as well as the several consultations, parties and expert's exchanges of best practices and expertise. The event intends to increase understanding and visibility among participants of the proposed strategy and reflect on way forwards to discuss and present proposals and possible pilots. The digital event is also an opportunity to facilitate engagement from relevant stakeholders to develop immediate actions. The meeting is structured in a way to discuss and present proposals and possible pilots, as a general reflection of how the UfM region could mobilize Higher Education and possible vocational pathways at the service of its citizens.

AGENDA

January 27th, 2022 | Online meeting | 10.00 AM – 12.00 PM CET

10.00 AM

Welcome Address & Opening Remarks

- **Itaf BEN ABDALLAH**, Senior Advisor on Higher Education & Research, Union for the Mediterranean - UfM
- **Jihen BOUTIBA**, Secretary General, Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises – BUSINESSMED
- **Johannes LAEPPEL**, Head of Project, GIZ

Video presentation of the strategy proposal

10.15 AM

Presentation of the UfM Strategy proposal (regional dialogue)

The session will be dedicated to presenting the proposed strategy for UfM and highlight the recommendations for successful linkages between higher education and vocational pathways to improve youth employability in the region.

- **Giuseppe PROVENZANO**, Project Manager, Higher Education and Research, UfM
- **Boutheina LASSADI**, Senior expert on Vocational Training - BUSINESSMED
- **Hella TURKI**, Senior expert on Higher Education – BUSINESSMED

Insights from the Steering Committee members

10.35 AM

- **Sabina NARI**, Country Manager, European Training Foundation - ETF
- **Giulia MARCHESINI**, Human Capital Senior Programme Manager, Center for Mediterranean Integration - CMI

10.45 AM

Open discussion on the strategy proposal

11.00 AM

Display/ presentation of success stories

This session will be an opportunity to highlight one/ two major initiatives that have revealed a considerable impact in the fields of VET & HE at the regional level.

- **Youmatch TOOLBOX: Hamed EL ETREBY**, Senior Economic Advisor, Economic Development and Employment Division, UfM
- **Blue Skills project: Mounir GHRIBI**, Director, International Cooperation and Research Promotion– ICAP

11.15 AM

ROUNDTABLE

The purpose of the roundtable is to hold a close discussion on the proposed action plans and to discuss the sustainability action plan shaping the way forward to the adoption of the UfM Strategy paving the way to a regional dialogue on the linkages between VET & HE.

- **EU Representative**
- **Silvia MARCHIONNE**, Project Manager, Mediterranean Universities Union - UNIMED
- **Shaimaa BAHAA ELDIN**, International Relations Director, Federation of Egyptian Industries – FEI
- **UTICA Representative**
- **Soukaina EL BOUJNOUNI**, Professor at University Mohammed V- Ecole Supérieure de Technologie- Salé Morocco
- **Mahmoud ABU-HUSSEIN**, Director of International Cooperation, Higher Council for Science and Technology of Jordan

11.45 AM

Main Conclusions & Closing Remarks

* The event will be moderated by: Boutheina LASSADI, Senior expert on Vocational Training - BUSINESSMED

Working language: English and Simultaneous interpretation to French - Arabic will be provided

Focal Points

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