

ANNUAL REPORT



21



Union for the Mediterranean
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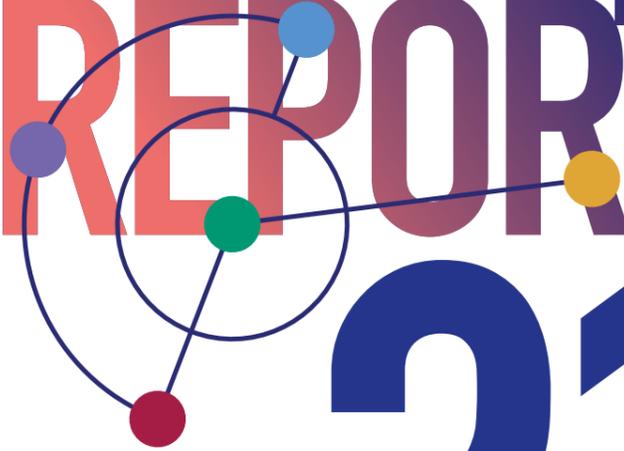


DAY OF THE
MEDITERRANEAN
NOVEMBER 28



The UfM Secretariat
is co-funded by the
EUROPEAN UNION

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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL NASSER KAMEL



The history of the Mediterranean has always been one of resilience and recovery, of overcoming adversities and coming back stronger following each crisis.

The year 2021 proved that the COVID-19 is an ill-curbed pandemic, and yet, since day one, we approached the crisis not with the pessimism of a sceptic, but rather with the maturity and the pragmatism of an organisation with a clear sense of strategic orientation, mobilising our resources, capacities and partners to tackle the ensuing disruptions and capture the looming opportunities for the good of our citizens.

In this spirit, the year 2021 witnessed significant progress in the five priority areas identified by our Member States in November 2020, namely: environmental and climate action, sustainable and inclusive economic and human development, social inclusiveness and equality, digital transformation, and civil protection.

We held three Ministerial Meetings on the blue economy, energy, and environment and climate change where for the first time, the UfM Member States formulated ambitious plans and adopted strong political commitments — despite their differences — to protect and preserve our unique, yet fragile, ecosystem.

We have also launched the first-ever progress report on regional integration in the UfM region; and managed to adopt new roadmaps on research and innovation in the areas of climate change,

health, and renewable energy, among other significant milestones that you can read about in this report.

While advancing on these strategic sectors, we ensured the alignment of our activities to the new EU Agenda for the Mediterranean launched in February 2021, following close consultations between the UfM Secretariat and the European Union.

Lastly, 2021 saw the launch of the Day of the Mediterranean, on 28 November, a day to celebrate our cooperation and culture, to strengthen ties between our two shores, embrace diversity and deepen our understanding of each other. The outreach and impact of this first edition were remarkable, and we are grateful to all our partners and stakeholders for their engagement in making it a success. From the regional video campaigns, logo projections, and official statements, to the seminars and cultural activities organised: each initiative has further shed light on the great diversity of our common region and its richness.

May 2022 continue bringing us closer together as we co-create value and stand united in the face of global challenges and accelerating disruptions.

In memory of Dr. Nabil Al-Sharif, Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Foundation and a great friend of the Union for the Mediterranean.

THE UfM AT A GLANCE

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an inter-governmental organisation that brings together 42 countries to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue through the implementation of concrete projects and initiatives addressing inclusive and sustainable development, stability and integration in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

As a direct continuation of the Barcelona Process, the launch of the UfM in July 2008 was a true reflection of its Member States' shared political commitment to the enhancement of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Established in March 2010, the UfM Secretariat is the first permanent structure dedicated to the implementation of this partnership. Ever since its creation, the organisation has continuously worked to promote political dialogue across the Euro-Mediterranean region, in view of creating an area of peace, security, stability and shared prosperity that addresses the legitimate aspirations of its citizens.

The last few years have marked a turning point for the organisation, exemplified by the adoption of a roadmap for action by the Member States' in January 2017. This roadmap, entitled **The Union for the Mediterranean: an Action-driven Organisation with a Common Ambition**, underlines the key role of the UfM as a unique framework for political dialogue and regional cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area, whilst focusing its work on the socio-economic root causes of the growing challenges that the region is facing.

In 2021, the roadmap for action remained the comprehensive strategic framework for the work of the UfM, reinforced by five priority areas recognised by its Member States to ensure the organisation plays a crucial role in the post-pandemic recovery.



How does the UfM operationalise its mandate?

<p>42 Member States Meet on a regular basis at Ministerial level and at the level of "Senior Officials" from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and partner institutions.</p>	<p>2 Co-Presidents: Jordan and the EU Ensure co-decision and shared responsibility between the two shores of the Mediterranean.</p>
<p>A Secretariat based in Barcelona Operationalises decisions taken by Member States.</p>	<p>A Secretary General elected from the South</p>

Six Deputy Secretary Generals (DSGs) in charge of the following sectors:

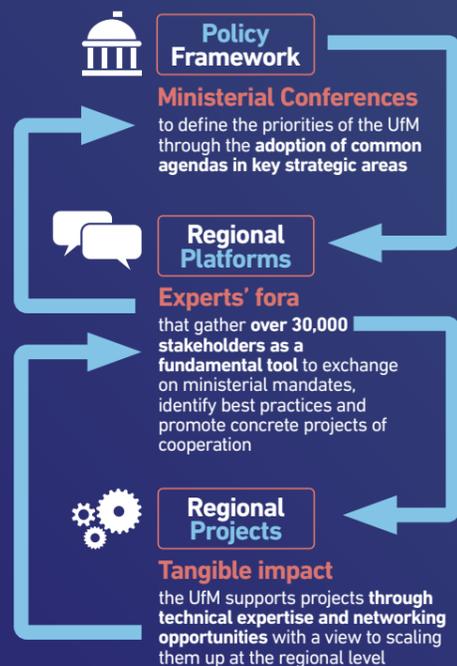
Three DSGs are appointed by EU countries and three by Southern and Eastern countries.

The UfM is committed to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) through its activities.



- Economic Development and Employment
- Higher Education and Research
- Social and Civil Affairs
- Water, Environment and Blue Economy
- Energy and Climate Action
- Transport and Urban Development

3 Ps Methodology



A RENEWED POST-2020 MEDITERRANEAN AGENDA

1. Building integrated, inclusive and sustainable post-pandemic societies: five new priorities for the UfM

In November 2020, on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the 42 UfM Member States recognised the need to prioritise, in the years to come, five areas of action where the UfM can play a crucial role and provide for comparative advantages towards a sustainable post-pandemic recovery, paving the way for the creation of more resilient societies and economies in the region.



Starting in 2021, the UfM has focused its work on the following areas:

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE ACTION	SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT	SOCIAL INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUALITY
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION	CIVIL PROTECTION	

During the 6th UfM Regional Forum, held on 29 November 2021 in Barcelona, the 42 Foreign Ministers reviewed the progress achieved by the UfM, which was set out in a document prepared by the Secretariat highlighting the milestones achieved in these five priority areas.

Go through this report to know more about the UfM activities in the five priority areas!

2. The EU new Agenda for the Mediterranean

Following consultations with the Southern Mediterranean countries to relaunch and strengthen their strategic partnership, and in close consultation with the UfM, the EU adopted in February 2021 an ambitious and innovative new Agenda for the Mediterranean.

The Agenda aims to join forces in fighting climate change and speeding up the green and digital transitions, to renew the commitment to shared values, to jointly address forced displacement and migration, and to promote peace and security in the Mediterranean region.

The new EU Agenda coincides importantly with the five priority areas of action laid out by UfM Member States in 2020, and will contribute to addressing the pressing challenges faced in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The Agenda further underlines the EU's renewed confidence in the UfM's indispensable role in enhancing regional cooperation, and as a privileged dialogue forum for its 42 Member States.

“With the Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood, we are presenting a new beginning in our relations with our Southern partners. Based on common interests and common challenges, developed together with our neighbours, it shows that Europe wants to contribute directly to a long-term vision of prosperity and stability in the region, especially in the social and economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

—Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement

The Agenda includes a dedicated Economic and Investment Plan to spur the long-term socio-economic recovery in the Southern Mediterranean. Under the new EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), up to €7 billion for the 2021-2027 period would be allocated to its implementation, which could mobilise up to €30 billion in private and public investment in the region in the next decade.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN: CELEBRATING THE MEDITERRANEAN TOGETHER

The Day of the Mediterranean was declared in November 2020, following a unanimous decision taken by the 42 UfM Member States, to create annual momentum to reinforce Mediterranean unity, celebrate our shared identity and enhance the visibility of a positive agenda in the region.

Through the different collaborations and campaigns organised in 2021 to celebrate the first edition of the Day of the Mediterranean, one element was highlighted above all else: the tremendous sense of attachment Mediterranean citizens feel towards their region. Meant to connect people, this first celebration allowed to increase our understanding of each other in view of building the future we all want to see: through art, culture and education but also through public policies and cooperation initiatives.

First things first: a visual identity chosen by YOU

The logo was chosen, among four options, through an open vote on social media with the participation of 3000+ people.



Translated into **13** languages

#MediterraneanDay: a collaborative campaign

On the occasion of the first Day of the Mediterranean, the UfM Secretariat launched a regional campaign to mobilise Member States, regional actors and local stakeholders to celebrate the Mediter-

anean. A central webpage, with a collaborative agenda, was created as a hub for activities on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and initiatives, to give more visibility to every event that took place across the region under the framework of the Day.

75+ activities in 18 countries from the region (Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey).

Check out all the activities organised for the Day of the Mediterranean!



21k visitors from all over the region

Furthermore, the UfM Secretariat launched the "Mediterranean in 1 word" campaign, aimed at fostering a shared Mediterranean identity and that served as a reminder that our similarities largely overcome our differences.

The campaign invited citizens to reflect on what the Mediterranean means to them and benefitted from the involvement of 25+ Mediterranean personalities including renowned artists, entrepreneurs, journalists, ministers and high-level officials, and key stakeholders from the region, as well as 10 EU Goodwill Ambassadors from several countries of the Southern shores of the Mediterranean.



A strong network of engaged partners

1000+ Euro-Mediterranean stakeholders working in the areas of cooperation and culture, government officials and local authorities were briefed and invited to join the celebration.

- 50+ official partners of the Mediterranean Day.
- Foreign Affairs Ministries and their network of embassies in the region joined the digital campaign as well as 17 European Union institutions and EU delegations, including a dedicated campaign coordinated by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission.



- The Mediterranean Day logo was projected on renowned buildings from the two shores of the Mediterranean on 28 November.



They talked about the Day of the Mediterranean

5500+ publications from partners using the official hashtag #MediterraneanDay

Features in more than 1700 media articles, radio and TV shows and news reaching a potential audience of 700M

Opinion articles published in more than 13 countries

300+ posts/tweets/stories across UfM social media platforms, including visuals, videos and quizzes 3.7M views, 45k engagement actions and 30K clicks on the UfM or the Mediterranean Day webpages



6th UfM Regional Forum

The 6th UfM Regional Forum took place on 29 November 2021 in Barcelona, Spain, in the framework of the celebrations of the Day of the Mediterranean. The Forum gathered the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the 42 UfM Member States and was chaired by the UfM Co-Presidency, assumed by the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, and by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Ayman Safadi.

+150 high-level participants

High-level conference on regional integration

In light of the importance of achieving Mediterranean unity and integration, the UfM Secretariat also organised a high-level conference to examine the key takeaways of the first UfM Progress Report on Regional Integration, back-to-back with the UfM Regional Forum.

I. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE ACTION

Coming together on climate and environment

Giving the region's green agenda highest priority

The urgency of action needed to fight the climate emergency in the Mediterranean is being felt daily by countless threatened ecosystems and millions of the region's citizens. Since no country can reverse these dangerous trends on its own, achieving the objectives set by the Paris Agreement on climate change, as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), needs to be the priority for all.

agenda to strengthen efforts in the Euro-Mediterranean region to urgently tackle the multiple climate and environmental challenges it faces. The agenda, named **"Towards 2030: Agenda for a Greener Med - Contributing to Achieving the Environmental SDGs in the Mediterranean" (2030GreenerMed)**, is conceived as an agenda by and for all Mediterranean stakeholders. Owned, steered, and developed by UfM Member States together with partner organisations, the agenda builds on the conclusions and aggregate results of the H2020 Initiative for a Cleaner Mediterranean, and is linked to the UN Agenda 2030 and its SDGs.

The Mediterranean region is using about three times more natural resources than its ecosystems can provide.

Source: Global Footprint Network, 2021

On 4 October 2021, the 42 Member States of the UfM adopted the 2nd Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action. Through the declaration, the ministers agreed on a common

The challenges posed by climate change are all-encompassing, and societies' mitigation and adaptation actions should be too. The Mediterranean region is using about three times more natural resources than its ecosystems can provide. So far, no country in the Mediterranean meets the two key minimum conditions for global sustainable development: living within the planet's resource budget, and satisfactory well-being for its residents. Mainstreaming

Mediterranean human story

Tackling the climate crisis

How local actions are confronting a global challenge

Read the stories of three local champions in the fight against climate change, in the framework of the UfM-supported project *Clima-Med*



“The way I see it, the importance of sustainability is not only in issuing laws and decrees. The problem is how to implement them.”
—Marwan Kaiss,
 Mayor of the Batloun Municipality, Lebanon

Read the full "2030GreenerMed" agenda here:



environment and climate action across all sectoral policies, including energy, industry, agriculture, and transport, while mobilising and scaling up resources to support the green transition is thus of paramount importance.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has proved to be a stark reminder that our health and our planet's condition are inextricably intertwined with climate change and increased human pressures on biodiversity and ecosystems, increasing the risks for outbreaks of zoonotic diseases with pandemic potential. In an effort to provide a holistic approach to the post-pandemic recovery, the 42 UfM Member States linked recovery plans to environmental conservation and restoration, especially through nature-based solutions, as well

as to green economy principles, ensuring that social and environmental aspects are fully taken into account.

Back-to-back with the 2nd UfM Ministerial on Environment and Climate Action, the UfM Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organised a high-level event to promote the political and operational efforts towards conservation of biological diversity and ecosystem restoration, with a special focus on food systems within the wider shift to a green, blue and circular economy at the Euro-Mediterranean level. This gathering helped establish the first steps towards implementing the recommendations outlined in the Ministerial Declaration in this specific area.



Zoom on UfM projects

EURO-MED GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

The Euro-Med Governance initiative aims at contributing to the transition towards a climate-neutral and resilient society while ensuring sustainable growth and the well-being of citizens in the Mediterranean area. It is promoted by the Joint Secretariat/Managing Authority of the Euro-MED Programme 2021-2027 and of the Interreg MED Programme 2014-2020, and the Region Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur.

How?

Strengthening an innovative sustainable economy

Protecting, restoring and valuing the natural environment and heritage

Promoting green living areas

Enhancing sustainable tourism

Consolidating a competitive innovation ecosystem & promoting the transition to a circular economy.

Location

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain

Beneficiaries:

- National and local public authorities engaged in policy-making
- Universities, research centres & higher education institutions
- Environmental and energy agencies, business support organisations
- NGOs, local communities and associations

Learn more:



The Mediterranean: a model sea by 2030

At the initiative of the French Government, eight Mediterranean governments and five international organisations got together in 2021 to launch an action plan: “The Mediterranean: a model sea by 2030” (PAMEx) that aims to reverse the dramatic loss of marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean Sea by 2030 through concrete and collective actions. Indeed, the Mediterranean Sea is one of the most biologically diverse seas in the world but this diversity is threatened by the consequences of certain human activities such as climate change, overfishing, marine pollution, including marine litter, and unsustainable maritime transport practices. The UfM has been a partner of this action plan since its inception, and participated in its launch during the 2021 IUCN World Conservation Congress.

Rewarding climate adaptation, inspiring change

By the end of the century, average temperatures in the Mediterranean are predicted to rise by up to 5.6°C, rainfall to drop by 20% and sea levels could increase by an average of up to 90 cm. The Mediterranean will therefore be exposed to new stresses when accessing resources, leaving it at risk of a great deal of unrest. Yet, the region is full of individuals seeking innovative solutions to manage disaster risks, adapt infrastructure, protect ecosystems and design public policies to make societies more resilient. Awards are a great way to shine a light on them, while raising awareness on innovative solutions, allowing people to connect and providing much-needed funding opportunities.

For the past three years, the UfM Secretariat has supported the Mediterranean Climate Change Adaptation Awards promoted by the French Agency for Ecological Transition (ADEME). The Awards aim at putting the spotlight on committed

regions and individuals, and showcase concrete mitigation projects by public and private figures in urban, rural, or coastal areas surrounding the Mediterranean, in an effort to reward exemplary and replicable practices.

The 2021 edition saw three winners under different categories, selected from among more than 50 projects submitted, while the main prize went to Algeria’s National Sanitation Office. The project was rewarded for its innovative water treatment plant with filters in the Tamacine area which helps combat desertification, protect water resources, and support local development. The pilot project has already been rolled out in two other communities and twenty new projects are in the pipeline. This sustainable, low-cost, low-energy and easy to use solution can be replicated in several rural areas with dry and arid climates to protect water resources and increase crop cover. The other two winners were the National Technical University of Athens who launched the HYDROUSA project in 2018 to experiment with innovative, regenerative, and circular solutions applied to water loops in the Mediterranean region. Also, the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, for its climate adaptation strategy based on promoting a culture of adaptation throughout all the key sectors in the area and creating partnerships between its 18 towns and villages.

Review the 3rd edition of the Awards ceremony and discover the three winners here:



Ensuring equal access to climate data for all stakeholders in the Mediterranean region

A wealth of scientific literature exists on the Mediterranean. Detailed risk assessments and data on climate can be found, yet resources are unevenly distributed and some of the most vulnerable regions’ public and private decision-makers have inadequate access to trusted and up-to-date research. Societies are increasingly suffering from climate hazards and informed policy-making based on hard data is now more important than ever.

In 2021, Europe witnessed its hottest summer on record, with wildfires raging in several countries along the Mediterranean coastline, while other countries experienced their worst flooding in decades.

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It is therefore of critical importance to improve the ways in which scientific evidence is constructed, integrated and communicated, so it can contribute more effectively, and quickly, to policy formulation. Because of this, the UfM Secretariat joined forces with the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) through a partnership agreement signed in October 2021, with the ambition to support the UfM countries’ access to the critical data they need to tackle Mediterranean climate change challenges.

Over the next few years, the UfM Secretariat and ECMWF will work closely together and undertake joint initiatives to develop targeted training sessions

and materials for knowledge transfer and capacity building in the region. They will also develop a free and open data dashboard with easy-to-use indicators and information for the UfM countries to maximise the uptake of climate and atmosphere monitoring data products, in all relevant regional initiatives.

More on partners

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF)

Operates two services from the EU’s Copernicus Earth observation programme: the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) and the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S). Copernicus is a component of the European Union’s space programme, and is its flagship Earth observation programme, which operates through six thematic services: Atmosphere, Marine, Land, Climate Change, Security and Emergency. It delivers freely accessible operational data and services providing users with reliable and up-to-date information related to our planet and its environment.

Check out their website here:



Streamlining access to climate funding

Large-scale investments are needed to significantly reduce carbon emissions, as well as to prepare cities and societies for the adverse effects of a changing climate. Financing – either public, private or drawn from alternative sources – that seeks to support these mitigation and adaptation actions is known as climate finance. International climate agreements call for parties with more financial resources to assist those that are less endowed with resources and more vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change. However, while bilateral climate finance made up 37% of the overall amount committed to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region in 2019, multilateral climate funds represented only 2%. The Mediterranean is missing a regional approach to climate finance to foster concerted, innovative and blended financial solutions and catalyse investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation projects.

In the framework of its partnership agreement with the Regions of Climate Action (R20), the UfM Secretariat is supporting the creation of a “Subnational Climate Fund” (SCF), developed to be exclusively focused on the Mediterranean Basin. The fund would target sectors and geographical areas complementary to the already existing SCF-Global fund in the region, therefore giving special attention to coastal areas and with a significant adaptation component. In that context, the UfM Secretariat, together with its partner R20, held two milestone meetings with the private investment partners of the consortium: Pegasus Capital Advisors and BNP Paribas, while contacts with IUCN-Med were established.

 **More on partners**

Regions of Climate Action (R20)

The partnership agreement with **Regions of Climate Action (R20)**, seeks to promote climate finance opportunities, notably at the level of regional and local authorities, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with the help of private funds leveraged through public finance. R20 is a not-for-profit international organisation that works to create inclusive, resilient, and low-carbon societies by accelerating sub-national infrastructure investments in the green economy, with the goal of contributing to the SDGs.

Learn more about R20 on their website, here:



 **A Mediterranean climate finance one-stop-shop**

In the global commitment to fight climate change, the current lack of data regarding international private climate finance is a significant obstacle as it limits the ability of governments to make informed decisions in their attempts to scale up climate projects.

The UfM Secretariat has launched a one-stop-shop on climate finance to facilitate the sharing of climate finance information among decision-makers, including data, climate-related funding opportunities and climate tracking requirements.

Check it out here:



Sustainable development driving change in the Mediterranean

Movement towards common solutions on water

As a critical climate change hotspot, the Mediterranean region already has over 180 million people who are considered water poor. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that water is more precious than ever and a vital element in the sustainable rebuilding of our region. Moreover, the crisis has amplified disparities within and across countries and has exposed the ease with which international targets towards sustainable development and climate resilience can be sidetracked due to emergency re-prioritisation. The Mediterranean is no exception, with countries across its shores looking for responses that not only address the COVID-19 crisis, but

strived to organise each year multiple national workshops across the region to present the Water Agenda and foster the exchange of best practices on financial strategies, notably on how to attract investments for the water sector.

In 2021, the UfM Secretariat kick-started the year with an online conference engaging young water professionals, to include them in tomorrow’s solutions to key water challenges in the region. Organised together with the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), the World Bank and the Mediterranean Youth for Water Network (MedYWat), the conference also saw the participation of the Head of the Palestinian Water Authority, Mazen Ghunaim. Providing a blend of technical sessions and policy dialogues, the conference created a space for reflection and knowledge-sharing between young people and leaders of the water sector, increasing the much-needed regional synergies between civil society and policymakers.

In November that year, the UfM held a webinar seeking to build a strategy that contributes to the alleviation of youth unemployment and water scarcity by fostering youth entrepreneurship in the sector.

also tackle long-standing challenges in the region, including ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and access to water supply and sanitation services for their populations.

The webinar specifically addressed how to create jobs in the water, energy, food and ecosystems (WEFE) sectors while increasing synergies with existing organisations. In that sense, the UfM collaborated in carrying out a mapping of youth organisations in the region. This exercise highlighted that one of the main challenges faced by youth organisations is the lack of training and capacity building exchanges. For that reason, the UfM Secretariat is pursuing the creation of a Mediterranean water innovation mechanism to boost knowledge-transfer and pave the way towards a future water entrepreneurial platform.

The Mediterranean region already has over **180 million people** who are considered **water poor**



Source: MedECC

The UfM Water Agenda and its financial strategy provide a necessary focus and direction for policy and resources tailored to the specific needs of each UfM member state. It serves as well as a technical vehicle to promote knowledge-transfer and to facilitate the application of integrated water resource management approaches. Since its launch in 2019, the UfM Secretariat has

More on partners

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency has supported the activities of the UfM Secretariat since 2017, with a total budget of more than 8 million euros.

The cooperation agreement between the two organisations aims at enhancing and amplifying the UfM Secretariat regional activities in the MENA region, in three priority areas of common interest: water, environment and the

blue economy; women empowerment; and energy and climate action.

The agreement foresees dedicated support to the UfM water agenda implemented in collaboration with the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med).

Learn more here:



Aiming to further address the interdependencies between WEFE sectors, in September 2021 the UfM Secretariat co-organised, together with the European Commission, PRIMA and the Cyprus Institute, a conference bringing together government representatives and more than 40 experts, where all parties agreed on the creation of a Community of Practice focused on building the capacity of Mediterranean stakeholders to operationalize adaptation, conservation and mitigation measures over WEFE resources.

Tackling another regional challenge when it comes to water management, the UfM Secretariat organised in October 2021 the EU-UfM Water Investment Policy Forum in an effort to fill the significant financing gap that exists in the Mediterranean water sector. The Forum provides an annual platform for policymakers and stakeholders to discuss how to further improve water investment policies in Southern Mediterranean countries. One of the key takeaways was the importance of further engaging with civil society in a structured and systematic way. Experience from best practices shows that stronger collabo-

A review of job trends in the water sector

In both the Mediterranean and the world at large, indicators show that meeting the right qualifications of select water jobs has proven to be difficult. In response to the existing **gap between youth in the Mediterranean and the labour market**, the UfM Secretariat has developed a **report** providing a review of job trends in the water sector amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and opportunities for Mediterranean youth employment. **Read the full report here:**



Read the full report of the 4th Mediterranean Water Forum here:



ration between public administrations and other stakeholders leads to better and more effective water policies and investment planning decisions.

The UfM is uniquely placed to provide an all-inclusive regional platform where stakeholders, that would not have met under regular circumstances, can exchange and learn from each other. Joining forces with the *Institut Méditerranéen de l'Eau* (IME) and the Energy and Water Agency of Malta, the UfM Secretariat co-organised the 4th Mediterranean Water Forum, held every three years in alignment with the themes defined by the World Water Forum. Given its specificity as an intercontinental crossroads, a target region for water scarcity and a climate hotspot, the Mediterranean region is a dynamic platform to a large number of solutions and experiences on water issues that aim to be highlighted during the World Water Forum. The 4th Mediterranean Water Forum outlined how the Mediterranean region is developing an integrated implementation framework through the UfM's Water Agenda, while also servicing other important political and technical regional and sub-regional frameworks, which ensure that different water management actions reinforce each other, thereby providing a comprehensive solution for evolving needs. In doing so the Forum presented the Mediterranean region's value in the development, adaptation and implementation of effective and integrated water resources management solutions. It also showcased the potential of these solutions to be replicated elsewhere as they address emerging problems on a global scale, including as a contributor to jobs, prosperity, stability and peace.

The push towards energy savings and renewables

The United Nations defined 2021 as the "make or break year for action on energy transition", while current trends will likely lead to a 37% increase in the region's overall energy demand by 2050. To face

today's urgent energy challenges in the Mediterranean, clean energy plays a strategic and fundamental role enabling solutions for climate change, environmental degradation, health services, post-pandemic recovery, job creation, and building behavioural change in our societies.

Sensing the urgency, the 42 UfM Member States gathered in Lisbon in June 2021 for their third Ministerial conference on energy, which resulted in a declaration aimed at raising the ambition of the region to contribute to a just and fair energy transition, supporting the inclusive recovery and tapping into all the existing opportunities through a bottom-up approach.

Concentrated solar plants could generate 100 times the electricity needs of the MENA and EU put together.

Source: UfM Ministerial Declaration on Energy, 2021

For instance, local authorities are in the best position to implement actions on the ground that best meet their needs. Street lighting in many places represents up to 40% of the electricity bills at a municipal level, with electricity use for lighting expected to grow about 50% in the next two decades. However, energy-efficient lighting solutions, such as LED, can help reduce demand by 40% to 60%. In the framework of the Ministerial declaration on energy, the UfM Secretariat has undertaken an exercise with the Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency to analyse the potential to improve the street lighting systems efficiency of several municipalities from Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Palestine.

The role of the UfM Energy Platforms, as the main dialogue forum in the region,

was highlighted by Energy Ministers as central to achieving the priorities set in the Ministerial Declaration, such as the need to take appropriate actions to attract private investments in sustainable renewables and in energy efficiency or the role of research, innovation and

Street lighting in many places represents up to 40% of the electricity bills at a municipal level.

Source: The United Nations Environment Programme

digitalization in supporting the transition towards fair, inclusive, resilient and low-emissions economies and societies. The region's wealth of renewable energy sources such as sun, wind and water mean that solutions can be found for a transition to a sustainable, low-carbon energy supply. Concentrated solar plants could generate 100 times the electricity needs of the MENA and EU put together. Opportunities in the region do exist, and it is up to us to seize them and build upon them.

Balancing urbanisation and sustainability

By 2030, nearly 80% of the Mediterranean countries' population is expected to be concentrated on 10% of the land – predominantly the coastline. In light of this urgent challenge, UfM Member States convened at the 2nd UfM Ministerial on Sustainable Urban Development in 2017 in Cairo and agreed to launch the UfM Urban Agenda.

The UfM Urban Agenda aims to support the creation of more resilient and inclusive cities in the Mediterranean region, with a focus on reducing inequalities and achieving the SDGs. It covers, among other things: urban development and governance; affordable and sustainable housing; access to services; digital connectivity; and economic opportunities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the need for sustainable urbanisation, putting further pressure on social security, health and sanitation systems, and the economic livelihood of millions.

In this framework, the UfM has developed a specific Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040 that establishes a common vision to tackle urban challenges in the region. It is the result of a three-year collaboration between the European Commission, the 42 UfM Member States and relevant partners, aiming to improve the quality of life for all citizens by creating better, more inclusive, climate-resilient communities.

The Action Plan promotes science-led, evidence-based, inclusive and integrated planning, investment and implementation of urban projects, with coordination at the local, national and regional governance levels. It involves cooperation between national and local authorities, intergovernmental organisations, international financial institutions, and other stakeholders.

The first axis of intervention that was developed for this strategy by the UfM Platform for Sustainable Urban Development is affordable and sustainable Housing. A specific action plan for this axis was developed and adopted by the Member States.

Housing fit for climate challenges

Urban activities are major contributors to the increasing emissions of greenhouse gases due to their relatively intense use of energy. Simultaneously, the rapidly growing populations in many urban areas are also the most vulnerable to the effects of climate and climate change.

In light of these interdependent realities, in 2021 the UfM Secretariat organised a series of activities on sustainable urban development including, among others:

Learn more about the UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040 in this video:



22 March 2021

An online workshop “Natural cooling: an indispensable element of future-oriented housing policies and projects in hot climates” organised in collaboration with the Programme for Energy Efficiency in Buildings (PEEB) and the Cities Climate GAP Fund, on planning, designing, and financing energy-efficient, thermally adapted large-scale building projects that are well embedded in climatic conditions in the Mediterranean region.



17 and 18 May 2021

An online workshop “Living with World Heritage: Adaptive Reuse and Regeneration for Sustainable Cities” organised in collaboration with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre discussed sustainable opportunities for urban regeneration in the Euro-Mediterranean region with a specific focus on historic cities.



19 May 2021

An online workshop “How to Address Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding in Urban Projects”, organised in collaboration with UN Habitat, reflected upon how urban projects should take into account coastal flooding and sea level rise, utilising adaptation measures in particular the promoting of nature-based solutions.



17 June 2021

A webinar on “Environment and Health in Seaport Cities”, organised in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, addressed environmental and health-related challenges in seaport cities, with a focus



on the consequences of port-related air, soil, noise, and water pollution on the health of inhabitants of seaport cities.

27 October 2021

A workshop on “City to city cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region: Successful practices and promising frameworks”, organised in cooperation with the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), UNEP-MAP and Med-Cities, that promoted city-to-city cooperation and peer-learning on current challenges such as environment and climate.



More on partners

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe is one of the five regional commissions under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. It was established in order to promote economic cooperation and integration amongst its Member States.

In 2021, the UfM Secretariat co-organised two events with UNECE to promote the UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040 and its related Housing Action Plan. The Regional Workshop “Housing governance to support housing affordability” was held in Slovenia on 23-24 February 2021, and the meeting “Housing and sustainable urban development in a world marked by COVID-19 and climate change” was held in Geneva on 6 October 2021.

Zoom on UfM projects
URBAN PROJECTS FINANCE INITIATIVE (UPFI)

How?

255 Million
urban dwellers
in the region by
2025

13
beneficiary
countries

€3 bn
of potential
global
investment

Around **39**
projects
identified

Location
Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Jordan, Kosovo*, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Palestine, Serbia, Tunisia

Beneficiaries:

- Public authorities in the targeted countries
- Public and private promoters
- General population of the urban areas where projects are implemented

The Urban Projects Finance Initiative (UPFI) supports project promoters in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean regions as well as in the Western Balkans, helping them to prepare and to finance ambitious urban development projects, which aim to create jobs, to reduce poverty and to upgrade the urban fabric.

The UPFI grew out of a partnership initiated and placed under the aegis of the UfM since 2011, when the organisation called on the *Agence française de développement* (AFD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) to pilot the UPFI initiative, financed by delegation of funds from the European Union. With the creation of the UPFI, the UfM launched an innovative coordination that enables several financial institutions to jointly provide technical and financial support in responding to the urban challenges of the Mediterranean.

Discover the projects supported under the UPFI here:



Future-proofing food supplies

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that an urgent system change is needed in the way we produce, process, distribute, consume, and dispose of food worldwide. Such transformation needs to consider each specific context and will inevitably involve trade-offs for countries and stakeholders. Sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems are the key to better production and consumption, better nutrition, a better environment, and ultimately a better life.

On 14 January 2021, the UfM signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and

the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) aimed at accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda through food systems transformation in the Mediterranean region. The MoU comes with a detailed work plan of concrete actions, to be jointly carried out between 2021 and 2024, that will span several technical areas, such as sustainable management of land and water resources, sustainable fisheries, climate-smart and organic agriculture, food environments and healthy diets, sustainable value chain development, food loss and waste reduction, and expanding interdisciplinary collaboration in all aspects related to health care for humans, animals and the environment.

Read the full report on "Food systems transformation – Processes and pathways in the Mediterranean" here:



Photo credit: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

In the framework of the 2021 UN Food System Summit, the three organisations, joined by the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), promoted three Independent Food Systems Summit Dialogues titled "Pathways for the Future of Sustainable Food Systems in the Mediterranean" on 27 April, 21 June, and 9 December, promoting the participation of regional stakeholders and representatives of UfM Member States. These dialogues focused on the specificities of food systems across the Mediterranean, connecting 300 diverse stakeholders from more than 30 countries. The main takeaways included the recognition of food systems transformation as an important entry point to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals. While solutions exist, means to implement them are also needed to achieve successful sustainable results on a large scale. Amongst other things, regional cooperation will be crucial to identify common priorities based on scientific evidence and local knowl-

edge. That is why the MoU signed in January 2021 included the development of a multi-stakeholder platform (SFS-MED Platform) to leverage the existing knowledge, experience and skills of institutions across the Mediterranean. This platform offers a forum to facilitate collaboration beyond the Summit, share a common approach to food systems transformation, mobilise funds and foster investments, capacities and innovation as a systemic response to the challenges hindering the region.

As a result of the dialogues, the three organisations also released a report titled "Food systems transformation – Processes and pathways in the Mediterranean", which takes stock of common challenges, priorities and opportunities specific to the Mediterranean context. The stocktaking exercise concludes by suggesting potential areas of collaboration between regional stakeholders and proposing possible next steps to move towards the implementation of pathways to transform agri-food systems.



II. SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Better together: regional integration is the way forward

The Mediterranean has long been a hub for trade, cultural exchange, scientific exploration and leaps forward in human development. In modern times, many of these existing networks and connections have been codified and deepened into formal processes of regional integration – an important means of orchestrating a regional response to regional challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged our conventional approach to cooperation and forced us into changing our worldview. It has disrupted our socio-economic progress and yet, it has also given the Euro-Mediterranean countries an opportunity to advance cooperation. Regional integration can enable countries to overcome global economic crises by building meaningful complementarities and optimising regional value chains.

Moving closer to common solutions for the common good

Acting upon the mandate tasked to it by the Member States, the UfM Secretariat prepared a first edition of the UfM Progress Report on Regional Integration in the UfM Region, commissioned by the German Development Cooperation for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The report was launched on 27 May 2021, during an online event where policy recommendations and insights on best practices of regional integration from around the world were presented.

The report takes stock of the progress and potential in five domains of economic integration, namely: **trade, finance, infrastructure, movement of people, and research and higher education**, along with specific performance indicators that can be used to monitor trends and progress over time.

The report shows that integration has progressed unevenly, across and within sub-regions of the UfM, in all policy domains. For example, in terms of trade, the EU is responsible for 94% of the region's merchandise exports. While 70% of all cargo traffic in the Mediterranean is between European ports, only 15% happens between Europe and North

Trade accounts for **35% of GDP** in the Mediterranean region & the intra-regional trade market is one of the **most important in the world**, with **+20%** of the world's trade in goods in 2018



Source: UfM & OECD

Africa, and only 5% is between MENA countries.

Particularly, the report highlights two important challenges that still stand: inadequate infrastructure for transport and energy connectivity, and a lack of a common vision on human mobility as a driver of innovation and growth in the region. The MENA region will require investments of over 7% of its annual regional GDP for maintenance and the formation of infrastructure. There are

tionalisation of the report's policy recommendations through concrete action.

Boosting investments for sustainable and inclusive growth

In 2020, the 42 UfM Member States convened for the 11th Trade Ministerial Conference and welcomed progress made in implementing the eight Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements, and called for their modernisation: to extend their scope and deepen



This report focuses on one of the main challenges of both history and geography, which is how to make the most out of the diversity and the complementarities that exist among neighbouring regions and countries. We firmly believe that higher levels of integration will result in more opportunities and greater welfare for people if done correctly, and this report puts forward a set of policy recommendations to help countries strengthen the timing, sequencing, and impact of their reform agendas to promote a more inclusive integration and greater opportunities.

—Angel Gurría,

OECD Secretary General (2006-2021)

several sub-regional initiatives to interconnect electricity networks and allow for electricity trade.

In addition to presenting the key findings of this first edition of the UfM Progress Report and the recommendations that it offers, the launch event brought together representatives of different regional integration processes and frameworks, free trade areas, as well as think tanks to share their respective experiences in promoting regional integration. The speakers also showcased best practices and success stories to inspire the UfM region to adapt and replicate similar initiatives in the Euro-Mediterranean context.

The Progress Report was further discussed during a high-level policy conference, held in the margins of the 6th UfM Regional Forum, focused on the opera-

commitments on key rules of trade policy. In addition, the Ministers called for more collaboration in the area of WTO reform, including updating rules to ensure a level playing field, and reaffirming their commitment to promoting a mutually supportive relationship between trade and investment and sustainable development, and to raise the importance of relevant multilateral initiatives towards sustainable development.

In association with the German Development Cooperation, and with their technical and financial support, the UfM organised the 3rd edition of the UfM Trade and Investment Forum online on 11 November 2021 and conducted other technical trainings on trade.

Over 300 experts, policymakers and representatives from the private sector, the civil society and international orga-

Read more on the results of the study here:



nisations gathered during the forum to discuss the pillars of the recently adopted UfM Ministerial mandate, with a focus on: the importance of trade facilitation for the growth and integration of Mediterranean economies; boosting the opportunities of e-commerce in the Southern Mediterranean region; and sustainable investments and investment facilitation in the Mediterranean region to contribute to the creation of decent jobs.

Further to this Forum, the UfM has also convened two meetings of the UfM Regional Platform on Trade and Investment in 2021 to advance dialogue in these fields, as well as held sector-specific workshops for government and private sector stakeholders in Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine (respectively in July, October and November 2021), consisting of an introductory course on Rules of Origin (RoO), as well as information on product-specific Rules of Origin for the respective industries under the most pertinent agreements, including through training exercises. Handbooks have been issued on the New Transitional Rules of Origin applicable to the three countries, and specific coaching sessions were provided on the practical use of the handbooks.

In addition to this technical assistance, similar workshops and handbooks on

RoO have been provided to the public and private sectors in Jordan.

Bridging the gaps in infrastructure

The UfM Progress Report on Regional Integration underlines that regional infrastructure projects are important for enhancing integration in the UfM region, especially by increasing the connectivity of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean economies. However, it also indicates that despite progress, infrastructure in the region remains insufficient or incomplete in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

Current levels of investment are not enough to meet the growing connectivity needs between countries. Some challenges of a lack of connectivity include not only the lack of proper infrastructure but also a lack of a harmonised regulatory framework at the national and sub-regional levels. Countries in the Southern Mediterranean region are well endowed with renewable energy sources, but power supplies remain undiversified, and energy relations with Europe are still based on oil and gas. These factors are inhibiting the ability to develop connectivity in the region.

To improve infrastructure integration, it is vital to increase investments in the development of high-quality transport and energy infrastructure, and to cooperate on the usage of international tools and instruments to ensure quality, compatibility and interoperability of networks across the region. The report recommends that the capacity and efficiency of ports be improved to boost their role as national or regional gateways, linking them with inland areas, special economic zones, and research centres and universities.

This is why cooperation on transport and logistics continues to be at the heart of the UfM mandate since its inception. In 2021, the UfM Regional Platform on

More on partners

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

In 2017, the UfM Secretariat signed a joint declaration with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to push forward regional integration, support the creation of a wide range of employment opportunities, in particular for young women and men, and boost trade within the Mediterranean region and beyond. To achieve these goals, the BMZ supported the UfM Secretariat, through the GIZ, with an advisory project for the years 2017-2021.

More on partners

The Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean (GTMO 5+5)

The UfM Secretariat participated, with observer status, in the 10th GTMO 5+5 Ministerial Conference, hosted by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure of Malta, after having participated in the preparatory meeting of the GTMO 5+5 Experts Group.

The Conference acknowledged the close and effective collaboration between the UfM and the Western Mediterranean Forum (5+5 Dialogue), also based on the running MoU between the organisation and the GTMO 5+5, signed in 2013.

In their Statement of Conclusions, Ministers of GTMO the 5+5 invited the UfM to continue working on the creation and promotion of standards for transport functioning and to support

harmonisation of the countries' regulation; as well as to pursue the work of improving transport and logistics at regional level, in particular through the final definition, approval and implementation of the 2021-2027 Regional Transport Action Plan (RTAP) and by holding a new ministerial conference to boost transport cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

The UfM Secretariat also contributed to the closing remarks of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) Seminar titled "The Western Mediterranean Transport and Logistics Sector in the post-COVID-19 Era: Seizing New Opportunities, Accelerating Transitions", which was held also online prior the Conference.

Transport Connectivity resumed the process of laying the groundwork at technical level for an upcoming UfM Ministerial Conference in this sector, in particular by initiating the consultative process on the new Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean region (RTAP) for the period 2021-2027. The UfM Regional Platform also prepared and endorsed the Evaluation Report of the RTAP for the period 2014-2020, with a view to endorsing the Evaluation Report and the RTAP 2021-2027 at a Transport Ministerial Conference in 2022.

The meetings brought together national transport coordinators and focal points for land, air and maritime transport and logistics from technical line ministries of UfM Member States, as well as participants from important regional and international partner organisations.

The exchange provided comprehensive comments on all the proposed actions presented under each component of this future roadmap that will ensure gradual but solid progress towards developing an integrated, multimodal, efficient, interoperable, sustainable and resilient, as well as cleaner and more inclusive,

transport system in the Euro-Mediterranean region, with the ultimate goal of achieving deeper regional integration.

Backing game-changing ideas from inception to implementation

The UfM Regional Integration Progress Report showed that integration in higher education and research has increased unevenly in line with the growing but unequal capacity in education and research in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. Integration of research needs to be linked with industry, including manufacturing and services, within national economic systems, in order to ensure that regional collaboration among scientists and universities effectively contributes to economic development.

The UfM has consistently supported the need to advance efforts in the area of research and innovation (R&I) and celebrated its potential to unlock solutions capable of making previously unattainable gains in under-researched areas. The COVID-19 crisis has shown what can be achieved through R&I with multiple vaccines developed in record time

thanks to unprecedented levels of cooperation between governments, academia and the private sector. R&I cooperation has already seen great successes in the region, for example with PRIMA, which has so far funded 129 projects based around sustainable agriculture and water management, or the BLUEMED initiative, which has created a research and innovation agenda specifically for the sustainable blue economy sector in the Mediterranean.

In an effort to further increase regional cooperation and pave the way for a stronger Euro-Mediterranean strategy on Research and Innovation, the UfM Secretariat, through its Regional Platform on R&I, launched an online consultation directed towards education and research institutions, civil society, private

for R&I and capacity-building collaboration across priority areas. Building upon this progress, the Platform decided co-jointly with the EU to start the process for a UfM Ministerial meeting on Research and Innovation, to be held on 27 June 2022.

The innovation-employability nexus offers new paths for job seekers

In the Mediterranean, unemployment is higher among those with tertiary education than those without it, reaching an average of 30% across the region. This problem is socially complex, with many interdependencies and multiple causes, and has no single solution. While connectivity between academia, industry and government is critical to

power innovation and employability, higher education institutions and research centres are the main drivers of change. In this context, the UfM

has engaged in an initiative called 'Reinforcing the innovation-employability nexus in the Mediterranean', which promotes collaboration between all the stakeholders involved in addressing unemployment of highly qualified graduates. As a result, the UfM Secretariat published a new handbook for academia, industry, and policymakers, with the support of the German Development Cooperation. This new and useful tool is aimed at enhancing career development among students and researchers, at fostering entrepreneurship and start-ups, and at supporting universities in carrying out their 'third mission' towards society.

The themes of the handbook are compiled with the data analysis of qualitative and quantitative input from 35 organisations around the Mediterranean (universities, research institutions, innovation centres, ministries of education, the European Commission and the OECD), as well as the mapping of 146 programmes,

In the Mediterranean, unemployment is higher among those with tertiary education than those without it, reaching an average of 30% across the region.

sector entities and governmental organisations at national, regional and local levels. The survey helped UfM Member States to identify the right topics to focus on in each priority area, how to achieve the SDGs, and what barriers to effective cooperation might be encountered. Building upon the survey's results, UfM national focal points gathered under the framework of the UfM Regional Platform on R&I to approve three new roadmaps corresponding to three priorities as the basis for future cooperation: **climate change, renewable energies, and health.**

The meeting included a joint presentation on the state of play and results of PRIMA, evaluating its contribution to the joint EU-Mediterranean R&I policy agenda, and a discussion of initiatives and programmes to deliver the new UfM roadmaps, including a proposal to develop an implementation framework to increase tailored investments

Read the full handbook on Reinforcing the Innovation-Employability Nexus in the Mediterranean:



initiatives and best practices, and a literature review of 1350 publications.

Aiming at reinforcing the nexus between innovation and employability, the UfM Secretariat co-organised several online courses with the support of the German Development Cooperation courses targeting universities, research centres, policymakers, industry and intermediary institutions to collaborate in addressing the unemployment of highly qualified graduates.

The first digital training looked at strategic partnerships through the lens of the triple helix framework, examining the roles of academia, industry and governments, while two additional courses were provided in Jordan and Tunisia. Participants were invited to rethink the connection between higher education institutions and research centres to address the needs of the industry through research topics required by their national contexts. Potential approaches were presented, including collaborative doctorates, industrial placements in the framework of masters' programmes, and other hybrid degrees that connect theory to practice. Examples of best practice initiatives were given as triple helix can strengthen collaboration and move towards a community of practice in the region.

In November 2021, the lessons learned during these training sessions resulted in the organisation of a high-level Forum on innovation and employability. The gathering allowed the sharing of best practices and involved the participation of high-level government representatives in brainstorming the academia-business sector interconnections while reinforcing the importance of the topic at the regional level.

From education to employment: reinforcing the transition towards an inclusive development

Internationalisation and a new agenda for higher education

Regional cooperation efforts in the fields of higher education, research and innovation play an essential role in achieving a positive agenda for the youth in the Mediterranean because of their potential for increasing employability and promoting intercultural dialogue. With this in mind, the UfM launched a regional dialogue process on the internationalisation of higher education in the Mediterranean region, in which internationalisation is not understood as a goal by itself, but a process aimed at enhancing the quality and standards of education and research.

Mediterranean human story

ASMA KHERRATI Women's dreams should not be out of reach

The project is very helpful to women as it is an excellent opportunity to acquire skills related to product marketing, e-commerce and communication in order to best adapt to a changing market and overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis.

Read the full interview of agricultural entrepreneur Asmaa Kherrati here:



Read the full report to learn more on the state of play of the internationalisation of higher education in the Mediterranean:



This dialogue intends to facilitate continuous peer-learning amongst the UfM countries on policies and practices addressing common challenges and priorities, and to foster joint projects and initiatives. In 2021, it resulted in the publication of a study launched by the UfM and conducted by the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED), which aimed at being an effective tool for policymakers and other stakeholders. The study investigates the internationalisation of higher education in 10 countries – Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia – focusing especially on resources and opportunities available at the national and regional levels. Using quantitative data as well as surveys, interviews, focus groups and desk research, the study offers for each target country a SWOT analysis, along with specific recommendations and a theme-based roadmap.

beneficial for institutions and staff and may increase attractiveness and participation.

Closely linked to the employability prospects of future generations, improving the quality and relevance of higher education programmes will be vital in addressing youth unemployment at the regional level. In the MENA region, the World Bank estimates that 300 million young people will join the labour market by 2050, requiring both the creation of millions of jobs and an adequately prepared and skilled younger generation. Meanwhile, youth unemployment and under-employment in the region has been amongst the highest in the world for more than two decades. In 2007, Euro-Mediterranean Ministers met in Cairo and declared an aspiration to create a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research area. Almost 15 years later, there is a clear need to rethink the needs and aims of higher education against current challenges and opportunities, paving the way for a new agenda for higher education in the Mediterranean region, especially in the aftermath of the disruption caused by COVID-19 on Mediterranean universities.

Facing the COVID-19 employment crisis head on

The economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to unprecedented economic shockwaves that are directly felt by households worldwide.

In the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic threaten to undo years of economic development. At risk of losing their employment and livelihood, Mediterranean citizens were forced to adapt to a new world of work and economic activity. People that are already more vulnerable to economic shocks and restricted mobility, such as informal workers, youth and women, are especially affected.

In the MENA region, the World Bank estimates that 300 million young people will join the labour market by 2050.

The main findings, which are common to more than one country, indicated the high fragmentation in the procedures and systems of credit recognition and assessment of qualifications, as well as the need for university leadership to consider the administrative staff as a key element to support internationalisation. International mobility was also found to be hampered by the difficulties encountered by prospective students in obtaining visas. International cooperation should increase its focus on human and social sciences, since these areas often remain neglected compared to hard sciences. Above all, the study highlighted how, in most cases, internationalisation is simply identified as mobility, whilst a more comprehensive internationalisation strategy would be highly

Learn more about the projects here:



Four projects have been awarded the UfM Grant, benefitting 18,000 individuals in seven UfM Member States.

On those grounds, the UfM Secretariat, with the financial support of the German Development Cooperation, launched the 1st UfM Grant Scheme for Employment Promotion in order to support non-profit organisations with projects aimed at promoting employment during the COVID-19-induced economic crisis in the UfM region.

Four projects have been awarded the UfM Grant, benefitting **18,000 individuals** in seven UfM Member States, namely, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco and Tunisia. These projects are tackling the labour challenges in the fields of entrepreneurship, women’s empowerment, sustainable tourism, as well as education and research **with an overall budget of 1.13 million euros.**

► **RISE - Resilience and Innovation through Strengthened Entrepreneurship**
Location: Morocco and Tunisia

► **FLOWER - Fostering Local Market Opportunities for Women’s Empowerment and Resilience**
Location: Morocco and Tunisia

► **SEARCHED - Strengthening Employment and entrepreneurial Activities to Recover COVID-19 Epidemic Damages**
Location: Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon

► **MAST - Mediterranean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism post COVID-19**
Location: Greece, Italy, Malta, Tunisia, Morocco

Vision and Actions to promote employment in the Southern Mediterranean: role and contribution of the Union for the Mediterranean

With the support of the German Development Cooperation in 2021 the UfM published a brochure showcasing its activities on the topic of employment in the Southern Mediterranean; namely in Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, as well as in Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Turkey.

Its main topics, in accordance with the priorities of the two UfM Ministerial Declarations on Employment and Labour of 2016 and 2019, are: women’s employment, entrepreneurship, skills and employability and social dialogue. Each of the four focus chapters provide information about the state of play in the Southern Mediterranean as well as the related UfM activities and best practices of stakeholders from the region. The chapters also identify possible next steps to enhance the regional employment situation in line with the UfM’s mandate.

With the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacting the employment situation in the Mediterranean, its effects are discussed in each chapter and forward-looking recommendations have been included.

Furthermore, aiming at advancing further the regional priorities on employment, two meetings were held in 2021 in the framework of the UfM Regional Platform on Employment and Labour. These gatherings allowed to advance the monitoring exercise of the last Ministerial mandates, as well as to prepare the 5th UfM Ministerial on Employment and Labour, to be held in May 2022.

Go through it here:



Harnessing the potential of the blue economy

In the aftermath of the pandemic, societies must now address several serious challenges. The blue economy has great potential for offering a resilient source of growth and jobs across the Mediterranean region. Opportunities for sustainable growth, innovation and digitalisation are here to be seized for green shipping, sustainable aquaculture, and fisheries as well as maritime and coastal tourism in the region. Historically, activities that have provided a strong source of growth, especially jobs in the past, can still play a pivotal role in the future of the region, if able to fully embrace new technologies, innovative business models and manage the shift from global to local. Emerging niches in areas such as renewable marine energy and blue biotechnologies, over time, have the capacity to develop into rich and diversified economic business ecosystems.

Nevertheless, for the sector to be able to address the current challenges and fulfil its potential, several cross-cutting areas should be tackled through the

active and coordinated support of policymakers in the region. In February 2021, ministers from the 42 UfM countries gathered after six years to firmly commit to cooperating closely and addressing joint challenges in strategically important blue economy sectors amongst the priorities agreed on, a special emphasis was given to transformative policies and tools such as maritime clusters or maritime spatial planning, as well as the overall shift towards low-emission technologies and a circular blue economy. New joint activities and projects will be set up on a wide range of issues, including “blue skills”, marine litter, marine renewable energies and nature-based tourism.

The Ministerial declaration, resulting from the meeting and from the broad consultation of stakeholders, showed the growing interest in creating sustainable growth in and around the Mediterranean, and the shared understanding that more action is urgently needed.

Fostering blue opportunities for a new generation of professionals

In line with the priorities set by the Ministerial meeting on the blue economy held in February 2021, the UfM Secretariat strived to reduce the mismatch between the skills of the labour force and the evolving needs of the industry, prioritising education, vocational training and technology transfer to anticipate transformative technological trends and promote just transitions. To that effect, a first workshop was organised specifically for graduates and young professionals from Mediterranean countries in an effort to enhance cross-cutting skills needed for blue jobs. Later that year, an additional training workshop was, this time, specifically directed towards women. One of the first of its kind, this workshop co-organised with the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) and supported by

the German Development Cooperation focused on women’s inclusion and skills development in the blue economy sector. Gathering representatives of international organisations, national agencies, professional networks and academia, the meeting explored the role of women in the Mediterranean economy, discussing opportunities and barriers women are facing, as well as sharing good practices through region-wide case studies. In parallel, an additional webinar was also organised for women in the blue economy in Lebanon.

Last but not least, a final webinar closed the year focusing on marine renewable energies to study the sectoral characteristics, challenges and opportunities of the deployment of these renewable energies in the Mediterranean, highlighting the particular potential of the sector towards contributing to employment opportunities in the region.

2nd UfM Ministerial declaration on the sustainable blue economy - 10 priority areas

1. Governance and the future of sea basin strategies in the Mediterranean region
2. Marine research and innovation, skills, careers and employment
3. Sustainable food from the sea: fisheries and aquaculture
4. Sustainable, climate-neutral and zero-pollution maritime transport and ports
5. Interactions between marine litter and the blue economy
6. Coastal and maritime tourism
7. Maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management
8. Marine renewable energies
9. Maritime safety and security of blue economy activities
10. Sustainable investment in the blue economy

Read the full Ministerial declaration on sustainable blue economy here:



Zoom on UfM projects

BLUESKILLS PROJECT

Since 2017, the UfM Secretariat has supported the **BlueSkills project**. Promoted by the National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics (OGS) and operating under the patronage of the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), the project aims at providing opportunities for marine and maritime careers by developing skills, exchanging knowledge and gathering research for a more sustainable Mediterranean Sea.

How?

- Promoting capacity building and knowledge transfer to stakeholders in blue economy sectors
- Boosting transferable skills and promoting employability for young professionals and researchers in the Mediterranean
- Raising awareness on ocean governance, climate change and ecosystem-based management
- Strengthening regional cooperation and networks on blue growth

Location
Algeria, Italy, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Libya, Portugal, Spain, France, Tunisia

Expected beneficiaries:
Up to 700 young scientists, researchers and Ph.D. students, as well as economists, engineers and policy-makers.



III. SOCIAL INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUALITY

Learn more about the 2017 Ministerial declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society here:



No compromise on gender equality

Since 2017, the UfM Secretariat has worked on the implementation of the regional mandate set by the 4th UfM Ministerial conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (Cairo, 27 November 2017), which identified four priority areas in the Mediterranean:

1. **To raise women’s participation in economic life.**
2. **To improve women’s access to leadership and decision-making positions.**
3. **To change stereotypes through education and culture.**
4. **To combat violence against women and gender-based violence.**

Improving data, promoting accountability

Mandated by the Cairo Ministerial Declaration in 2021, the UfM Secretariat launched the first-ever Intergovernmental Monitoring Mechanism on Gender Equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region. After extensive consultations, a set of 20 indicators across four priority areas were agreed for the mechanism, and a regular monitoring exercise was set up to publish reports every two years in order to measure the progress made in women’s rights. This ongoing reporting exercise allows the opportunity to provide policy recommendations

to close the gender gap at country and regional levels.

The initial assessment launched six indicators, based as much as possible, on the data and statistics available through existing global databases. Furthermore, experts coordinating the exercise agreed to take on board the impact of COVID-19, showing the strong regional commitment to gathering gender-disaggregated data to inform a resilient pandemic recovery and future action for the Mediterranean. This reporting exercise also supports the implementation of gender-related Sustainable Development Goals throughout the region.

In the framework of supporting to the reporting exercise, the UfM Secretariat held four capacity-building workshops online on November 2022. The workshops focused on different thematic areas, namely gender-based Violence, women in leadership, women’s economic empowerment, as well as qualitative and quantitative methods for data gathering on gender. They targeted government representatives as well as national statistics institutions and regional organisations such UN Women, the OECD, and the FAO among others.

Empowering women in sustainable industry

In partnership with Monaco’s Department of External Relations and Cooperation and the United Nations Industrial

See the data highlights here:



Development Organisation (UNIDO), the UfM Secretariat signed a joint declaration to promote the empowerment of women for inclusive and sustainable industrial development in Tunisia in 2020.

The initiative aims to contribute to the overall effort of facilitating women’s micro, small and medium-sized enterprises’ access to finance, markets, technology, and business networks. A first step of in-depth mapping of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises headed by women and operational in this sector was carried out to identify potential direct beneficiaries of the project.

As spin-off of this partnership, in view of stimulating the creation of networks for female entrepreneurs and women-led businesses in the region, the UfM and UNIDO have joined forces with Business Club Africa, a network with a reach of 6000+ executives across the African continent and around the world, to create and launch the MENA Women Business Club.

As a regional chapter of Business Club Africa, new members will have access to an extensive ecosystem of entrepreneurs, lawyers, consultants, executives and investors in sectors as varied as energy, agriculture, mining, tech, construction, finance, retail and distribution that will enable them to network and grow their businesses. The MENA Women Business Club is therefore an important opportunity

The MENA Women Business Club is an important opportunity to intensify Euro-Mediterranean and south-south business linkages and foster investment opportunities including with the diaspora.

Serving as a pilot project in the region, this first action in Tunisia supports female entrepreneurs who invest in cosmetics and parapharmaceuticals based on natural products. Within this framework, technical assistance, training and study trips were set up for ten women-led companies.

to intensify Euro-Mediterranean and south-south business linkages and foster investment opportunities including with the diaspora. Almost 300 applications were received by December 2021 and out of which 136 have been selected as new members of the MENA Business Club.

Mediterranean human story

NOORA ABDEEN-KHALIFEH

Women in business: Building on the past to create a resilient future

“Women are partners to one another and with such partnership, collaboration and exchange of culture and experiences, we can aim so high and shine in the fashion industry and the business world.”

Discover the entrepreneurial adventure of the Palestinian designer here:

Zoom on UfM projects
PROMOTING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (PWE)

How?

Building a more conducive environment for female entrepreneurship development

Alleviating the financial barriers to women's entrepreneurship development

Improving market access for female entrepreneurs

Increasing business opportunities for women-led businesses in selected value chains

A UNIDO, UN Women and FAO joint programme: Promoting Women's Empowerment (PWE) for Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development in the MENA Region. The pilot intervention launched in Tunisia (p.30) is part of a larger programme, supported by the UfM since November 2015, that enhances women's economic inclusion by harnessing the great potential of female entrepreneurs, and ultimately creating the conditions for sustainable and inclusive growth.

The second phase of the programme was launched in 2021. Discover the results of the first phase of the programme [here](#):



Results and beneficiaries:

- Strengthened capacities for 400 representatives of the National Businesswomen's Association
- 2000 female entrepreneurs trained in entrepreneurship and how to formulate business plans.
- Facilitated access to investment and finance for at least 500 promising businesses.
- 800 new jobs created during the period of the project.

Location

Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia

Read the full report of the event [here](#):



Empowering women as leaders and decision-makers

On International Women's Day (IWD) in 2021, the UfM Secretariat held a webinar together with CIHEAM, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the OECD on the importance of bridging the leadership gap and empowering women to attain gender equal decision-making across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The webinar analysed more particularly the challenges that women and girls face in accessing leadership positions in the business, entrepreneurship and digital economy sectors, with a notable focus on women in agriculture and in healthcare.

The event welcomed as well a presentation by the European Commission on the recently published EU Action Plan on

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III).

Since 2020, the UfM has a Memorandum of Understanding with the World Health Organization (WHO) in the area of women's access to health. The agreement aims at promoting the engagement of UfM Member States in women's empowerment, improving women's access to health and addressing violence against women.

Following IWD, on 28 April 2021, a first high-level coordination meeting brought together more than 30 representatives from the UfM Secretariat and WHO to identify fields and sectors for future potential collaboration to develop a joint action plan under the MoU.

The IWD2021 UfM event in figures:

+860 Participants
60 Countries

56% North Med
40% South & East Med
4% Other

+700 Views on Facebook
LIVE
42 Social Media posts

+15 experts
+10 interviews

24 news articles reaching a potential 29M audience

57% Southern Med Media coverage
43% Northern Med

Go through the UfM Youth Strategy 2030 [here](#):



Young and vulnerable groups

Engage to empower: young people of the Euro-Mediterranean

During the last meeting of the UfM, Senior Officials for 2021, and just ahead of the 2022 European Year of Youth, the 42 Member States unanimously adopted the UfM Youth Strategy 2030 – Euro-Mediterranean Youth towards a common goal.

Young people are among the most vulnerable demographics in the Mediterranean region as a result of the urgent challenges they have faced in recent decades, including unemployment and gender inequality, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as migration, radicalisation and violent extremism. Climate change and sustainable development also represent major challenges for new generations, as the future of the region is at stake.

Youth should therefore be given prominence in policy-making across Euro-Mediterranean countries; not only as objects of these policies but as partners in the discussions and full actors in the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development in the region.

The Euro-Mediterranean region has one of the youngest populations in the world:

with 1 in every 3 people younger than 25 years old

and with this number reaching almost 50% of the population for the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries.

Source: The World Bank



Due to this, the UfM has placed young people at the heart of its action, focusing on empowering and engaging them as agents for positive change. The UfM Youth Strategy 2030 is a milestone that comes as a targeted response to the call of the 42 UfM Ministers of Foreign Affairs, at the 2nd UfM Regional Forum in 2017, to launch a "Positive Agenda for Youth in the Mediterranean".

In line with that mandate, the UfM Secretariat has been mobilising youth-led organisations and regional stakeholders working on youth empowerment, to work to support and mobilise youth, in a more structured way, across its main areas of

action. It has identified the needs and main lines of action to reinforce regional cooperation on youth and speed up the implementation of related Sustainable Development Goals in the region.

Breaking down barriers to higher education for the vulnerable

In October 2021, the representatives of UfM Member States met to endorse a new regional initiative aimed at sup-

The project provides non-academic support such as mentoring, soft skills training and career development. Furthermore, it aims at setting-up a fully operational mechanism allowing the international community to develop a fast-track entry points that addresses higher education needs in times of crisis. The scholarship programme will focus on empowerment opportunities for young women and studies matching the needs of the new digital era.



The scholarship saved my life, physically and emotionally, and gave me the opportunity to live, study and succeed in Portugal. It has changed my life significantly. It allowed me to feel and hope again, and it helped me to break all social chains around me and breathe like a proud woman for the first time in my life. It made me brave to express my feelings and to be myself, and, above all, it made me dare to dream.

—Rasha, current beneficiary of the EUROMED-RRM programme

porting access to higher education for refugees and displaced populations. Operating under the name “Implementing a Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) for Higher Education in Emergencies in the Euro-Med region” (Euromed-RRM), this initiative helps refugee and displaced people access higher education institutions by capitalising on their capacities to receive foreign students. The project, with a duration of 36 months, aims at running an emergency two-year scholarship programme for 300 beneficiaries to be implemented in 10 countries, involving mainly but not exclusively Syrian refugees.

Boosting opportunities: social dialogue and the social economy

On 8 July 2021, the UfM held a conference on “Social Dialogue with Social Partners” together with BUSINESSMED, the European Training Foundation (ETF), and the German Development Cooperation, with the support of the European Commission.

The conference focused on enhancing skills for better employability of the most vulnerable, notably by promoting social dialogue between representatives of

More on partners - United Nations Development Programme

In November 2021, the UfM Secretariat signed a new partnership agreement with the Regional Bureau for Arab States of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The three-year agreement will include actions to empower young people by supporting leadership programmes and developing sound policies that address their needs. Additionally, mutual opportunities to promote employment and economic growth in the Mediterranean and Arab States region will be explored, with a focus on increasing the employability of vulnerable groups, like youth and women, and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and private sector development.

Other actions such as supporting countries to adapt to and mitigate the growing risks of climate change feature prominently under the agreement as well. **Learn more here:**



Zoom on UfM projects EUROMED-RRM

UNHCR data shows that Syria has more than displaced 11.2 million people within and outside the country. The Euromed-RRM project, promoted by the Global Platform for Higher Education in Emergencies, aims at running an emergency scholarship programme to test the feasibility of a systemic, full-scale academic response for young people caught in humanitarian crises or in forced mobility due to conflicts and natural disasters. The project also counts on the support of a core group of institutional partners, namely the Council of Europe, the League of Arab States, and the International Organization of Migrations.

How?

Removing barriers faced by refugees and displaced population in accessing education

Such as difficulties obtaining visas, the recognition of previous qualifications or the lack of financial means

Setting-up a coordination facility in combination with online solutions and a helpdesk service to ensure an effective emergency academic response

Creating a financing facility

Through:

- An endowment bringing together donors
- Raising a youth solidarity fund
- Launching a venture capital fund

Location
Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey

Expected beneficiaries:

- 200 refugee students and 100 students from the host communities, including 50% of women
- 1500 members of the students' families

Read on the outcomes of both events here:



employers, workers and governments as a prerequisite to a meaningful post-pandemic recovery in the region.

Indeed, with the economic difficulties facing the private sector worldwide, and the slowing down of employment and labour progress caused by the pandemic, there is a risk of neglecting such social dialogues in the short term. Enhancing the skills of the workforce must continue to be a critical part of effective dialogue between all parties involved.

Furthermore, in line with its mandate and the new EU Agenda for the Mediterranean, the UfM has been supporting the development of a social economy,

as an important factor in stimulating a strong and fair recovery based on inclusive growth that leaves no one behind. Social economy organisations are particularly successful in reaching out to vulnerable groups and re-integrating them into society, thus filling some of the voids left by the state and the market.

That is why, on 4 November, in collaboration with the Spanish Business Confederation of Social Economy (CEPES) and the German Development Cooperation, the UfM held its 2021 Social Economy Workshop to set up a roadmap to define a Euro-Mediterranean work agenda for Social Economy.

IV. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In a digital, global and hyper-connected world, integrating new technologies into businesses and education systems is no longer a matter of choice, in order to keep up and adapt to innovation and competition. This tendency has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has shown the divide existing in the Euro-Mediterranean region in terms of digital access and digital use.

Government backing key for the digital transition

In the digital age, integrating new technologies into every system is no longer a matter of choice for any country seeking smart and sustainable growth. COVID-19 has underlined the pre-existing need to catalyse the transition and prepare each sector of society for widespread digital integration.

In 2019, the UfM Conference on Digital Transformation and Digital Skills for the Future, held in Tallinn, marked an important step towards the UfM's engagement with the rapidly shifting technological landscape across the labour market. The conference drew on Estonia's experience as one of the most advanced digital societies worldwide.

As a follow-up to the Conference, in 2021 the UfM launched a series of three workshops on e-governance implemented in Algeria, Palestine and Mauritania, in partnership with the German Development Cooperation and the Estonian ICT Cluster.

Bringing together participants from public institutions, the private sector, civil society and academia involved in the digital transformation in those three countries, the initial workshops' aim was to share best practices and encourage exchanges on topics related to e-governance, such as digital transformation

enablers, digital identity, the interoperability of state registers and secure data exchange, digital skills, and digital solutions for favourable business environments.

Some sessions went beyond the initial inception and explored in more depth the conducive legal framework to build secure digital societies, with some concrete examples of digital public services (e-taxation, e-health, e-justice...) including those aimed at ensuring an attractive business environment (business registry, digital trade, cross-border services).

Good business sense: focusing on digitisation

In 2021, BUSINESSMED, the main representative of business confederations in the Mediterranean region, joined hands with the UfM to organise a webinar on the sanitary crisis as an accelerator of the digitalisation path of the Mediterranean Business Ecosystem.

The event reviewed several aspects related to the digital transformation of the region including the changes planned by business support organisations in their economic and structural models, the emergence of cross-border e-commerce, as well as an assessment of the use of technology by female entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean region.

The webinar focused on providing concrete solutions to meeting the challenges of the post-COVID19 economic recovery for SMEs to access new markets. The debate emphasised the way internationalisation benefited SMEs in industrialised countries focusing on the innovative platforms and opportunities offered for cross-border e-commerce.

In 2017,
only 8% of SMEs in the wider MENA region had an online presence
(compared to 80% in the United States) and
only 1.5% of the region's retailers were online

Source: UfM & OECD

A digital transformation with women at its heart

Celebrating its 6th edition, supported by 5 years of knowledge and experience, the UfM Women Business Forum (WBF) is an ideal regional platform that offers women-owned and women-led businesses a unique opportunity to take their business to the next level.

In 2021, the WBF focused on digital transformation and how technology

can be harnessed to empower women as entrepreneurs, traders, workers and professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed taken an especially heavy toll on jobs traditionally held by women such as retail, tourism and hospitality, and the forum offered an excellent opportunity to identify where digital inequalities remain gender biased and to ensure that women are not left behind as our societies start to rebuild.

The Forum brought together over 500 female entrepreneurs, business organisations, international organisations and business support schemes from the Euro-Mediterranean region, and was also followed live on social media by more than 1000 viewers.

Experts shared their insights, knowledge and good practices regarding education and training initiatives to enhance digital literacy and women's participation in digital environments, and explored the opportunities digital transformation and technologies offer, their impact on value chains and how they can be used to enhance the competitiveness of women-owned SMEs and women's bargaining power.

In partnership with CIHEAM and UNIDO, the 2021 WBF also offered participants training sessions on Digital Transforma-

More on partners

Mobile World Capital

Mobile World Capital is a foundation driving the digital advancement of society, while helping improve people's lives globally. With the support of the public and private sector, MWC Capital focuses on four areas: the acceleration of innovation through digital entrepreneurship, the transformation of industries through digital technology, the rise of digital talent among new generations and professionals, and reflecting on the impact of technology in our society.

Within the framework of the MWC Capital Barcelona 2021, an MoU was signed with the UfM to achieve common objectives in the fields of digital transformation, bridging the digital gap and promoting digital skills and entrepreneurship across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Learn more here:



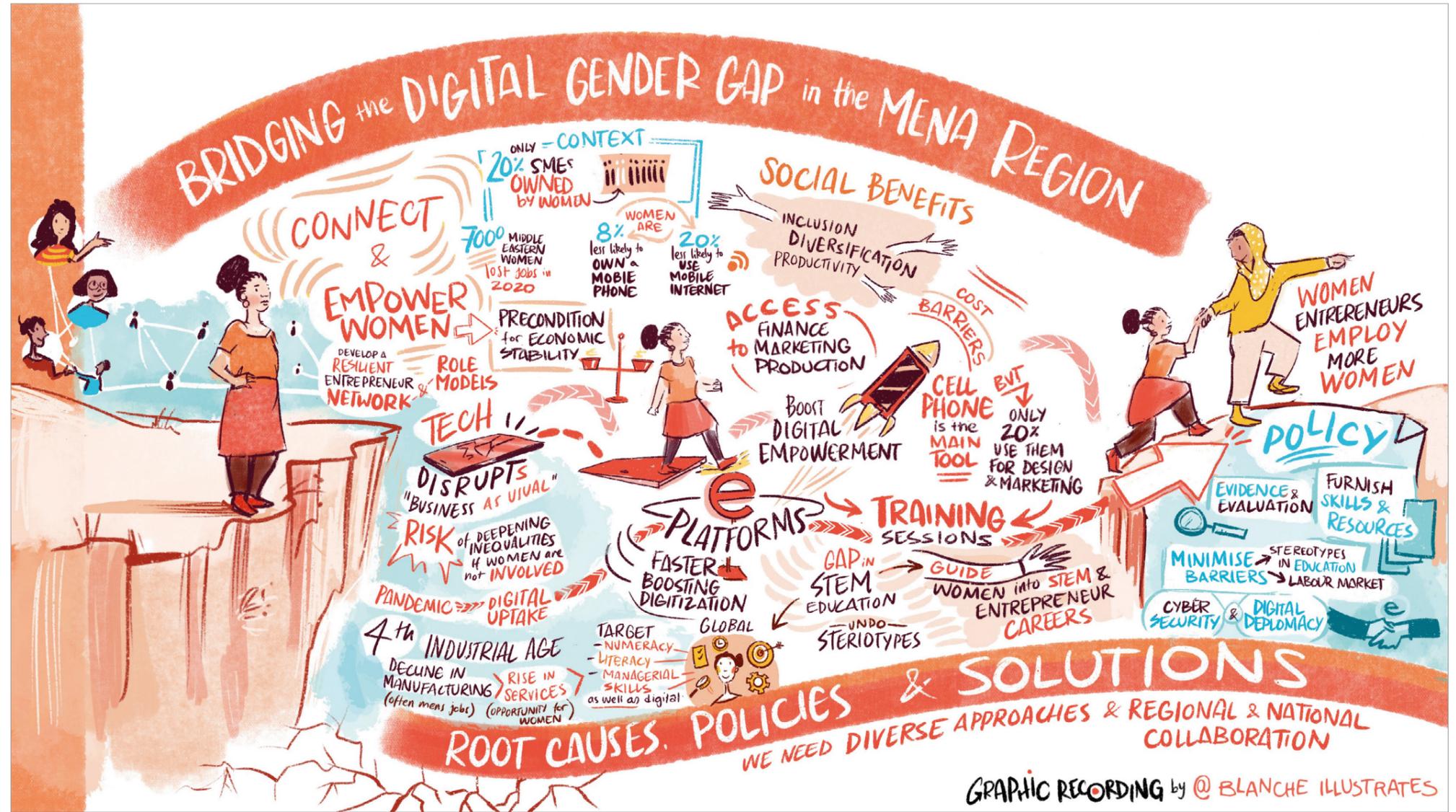
Graphic recording of the 6th UfM Women Business Forum

tion for Women-Led SMEs, e-commerce for women entrepreneurs and innovation and digital opportunities for businesses in rural areas.

Furthermore, the WBF participants were taken on a virtual site visit to three inspiring women-owned businesses in Tunisia. Viewers and participants observed the first-hand experience on how digitalisation is giving businesses the edge in the natural cosmetics sector. This session was brought to life thanks to the pilot initiative funded by the Principality of Monaco in Tunisia under the UNIDO, UN Women and FAO joint program labelled by the UfM “Promoting Women’s Empowerment for Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development in the MENA Region” project (see p. 32).

A blue economy fit for the future

In the blue economy sector, digital transformation requires new skills and competencies, updated education programmes, as well as comprehensive training programmes. Aware of this pressing need, the mandate set by the



Women face a persistent **gender gap in terms of access to and use of digital technologies** – a gap which increased **from 19% to 24% between 2013 and 2019** in Arab countries



Source: CIHEAM

2nd UfM Ministerial declaration on sustainable blue economy (February 2021) prioritised the promotion of blue skills, careers, and employment through education and vocational training. In this framework, the UfM Secretariat joined forces in 2021 with WESTMED to organise a webinar on digitalisation skills in the aquaculture and tourism sectors. Gathering more than 150 representatives from government agencies, regional organisations, SMEs and academia, the webinar provided an overview of the specific needs identified in the sector and offered practical sessions on how to apply digitalisation skills to the specificities of aquaculture and tourism.

More on UfM initiatives: the Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform

Managed since 2017 by the UfM Secretariat and funded by the EU, the **Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform (MedBESP)** is a web-based portal aimed at sharing knowledge and supporting the development of the blue economy in the Mediterranean region. Working as a true “one-stop-shop”, the platform allows sharing and consolidation of general and technical information on marine and maritime affairs and promotes a blue economy community by facilitating contacts between existing education networks, while serving as an interface for mobility programmes.

The platform’s ultimate goal is to provide a systemic and coherent framework on maritime governance, through a more integrated and coordinated approach to policies.

Learn more about the platform on its website:

V. CIVIL PROTECTION

Read the final recommendations of the meeting here:



Regional cooperation on civil protection is one aim of the Barcelona Process to promote peace, stability and security in the Mediterranean. Moreover, with an increasing number of forest fires, floods, earthquakes, marine pollution, pandemics, and other catastrophes across the Euro-Mediterranean area in the last few years, cooperation among UfM Member States in civil protection enjoys high levels of political support.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need to build stronger regional civil protection services and networks, which will benefit not only countries on a national level but also as a region through resource and knowledge sharing.

2008: the turning point for civil protection in our region

In the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, which launched the UfM in 2008, Civil Protection appeared already among the major regional projects that were to shape the mandate of the organisation:

Until 2008, civil protection cooperation on a regional level in the Mediterranean had mainly been funded by the EU and realised through two subsequent programmes under the auspices of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). Generally speaking, the two Euromed programmes are seen as a success in terms of the high number of realised activities and participating states. The first Euromed programme aimed at promoting cooperation in the field of civil protection was launched in 1998 following a joint proposal by Egypt and Italy.

2009: Clearing the path for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation

In October 2009, the Directors-General of National Civil Protection Authorities of the 27 EU Member States and the 14 Mediterranean and Balkan Partner Countries of the UfM (Albania, Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey) met in Brussels for a Steering Committee meeting to discuss and approve the action plan for the third Euromed civil protection programme was launched. It is called the “Euromed Programme of Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters” (PPRD South).



The global landscape is littered with examples of the devastation caused by man-made and natural disasters. The effects of climate change are evident for all. The Mediterranean region is particularly vulnerable and exposed to such disasters. A joint Civil Protection programme on prevention, preparation and response to disasters, linking the region more closely to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, is, therefore, one of the main priorities for the region.

— Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean
Paris, 13 July 2008



2019: Steps towards a new era of Civil Protection across the region

On the impetus generated hand in hand by the UfM Secretariat and the European Commission, the Directors-General of Civil Protection of the UfM Member States gathered on 11 February 2019 at the UfM headquar-

ters, in Barcelona, almost a decade after their last meeting. The Director-Generals launched a reflection to develop an action plan for strengthened Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on prevention campaigns, emergency response and crisis management.

Indeed, the meeting aimed to facilitate thematic discussions focusing on common humanitarian aid and crisis



Zoom on UfM projects
PPRD - SOUTH

Location
Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya*, Morocco, Palestine, Syria* and Tunisia

How?

Strengthening prevention capacities of the Southern Mediterranean Partner Countries

Reinforcing operational assistance & response capacities of Southern Mediterranean Partner Countries

Supporting Civil Protection authorities to be better equipped with communication tools to reach out the population on emergency procedures and promoting volunteer programmes

PPRD-South - Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-Made disasters in Middle East and North Africa Partnership Countries is an EU Programme that has been running since 2009, and which is today in its third phase. The project's overall objective is to contribute to increasing resilience and reducing the social, economic and environmental costs of natural and man-made disasters in the Mediterranean Southern region. The project has two specific objectives:

- 1) National approaches to disaster management are further developed, based on prevention, mitigation, and preparedness rather than on response, with the involvement of all relevant governmental actors as well as of civil society stakeholders;
- 2) Intra-regional, and where appropriate regional, coordination and cooperation is enhanced, in order to have coordinated responses of countries of the Mediterranean Basin affected by the same disaster; and institutional cooperation between the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism and the EU South partner countries' civil protection agencies is strengthened.

PPRD III in figures: Cooperate regionally to better protect locally (2018-2021)

5M €
Total project amount funded by DG NEAR under the European Neighborhood Instrument

3rd phase
of the PPRD South project, launched on 1 February 2018

36 months
duration of the programme



The EU Civil Protection Mechanism offers a framework to work together to prevent, prepare for and respond to major disasters. Common joint regional exercises and training on floods, forest fires, earthquakes, medical, maritime, have been done and allowed us to put together our strengths and train together to reach a stronger response in case of disasters. This partnership and solidarity among all UfM Member States should be strengthened further.

—Christos Stylianides,
European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid
and Crisis Management (2014-2019)

States could play a key role in coordinating common responses to crises and cooperate on risk assessment, disaster prevention, preparedness and planning.

2020-2021: Developing the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Protection Action Plan

In 2020 and 2021, the UfM Member States progressed on the recommendations of the Directors-General 2019 meeting to continue working together to enhance their cooperation on disaster risk management, with the UfM providing a valuable platform for Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on civil protection, by facilitating links between the political and operational levels.

In collaboration with the European Commission, the proposed three Working Groups (i) Preparing for efficient mutual assistance in the Euro-Mediterranean area, (ii) Engaging citizens in disaster risk management, and (iii) the role of volunteers in civil protection, have been successfully convened by the UfM Secre-

tariat, with their respective final reports completed.

Proposed action plans for the Working Groups have been developed for discussions and follow-up. The meetings further assessed the needs and objectives of the future PPRD programme in the region.

In this sense, a new phase of the PPRD MED(iterranean), funded by the EU, will be presented in 2022 and will start in early 2023, with new partner countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Mauritania. With a budget of 3 millions euros for three years, the main objectives of this new phase will be to (i) build sustainable capacities of civil protection institutions; (ii) strengthen interlinkages between governmental actors, civil society stakeholders and the scientific community; (iii) enhance regional and sub-regional coordination, institutional and operational cooperation between the Southern Mediterranean Partner Countries with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

The next meeting of the UfM Civil Protection Directors-General, which should be held in the last quarter of 2022, will be the moment that sets the next steps in this new phase of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and partnership.

Sources:

- "Civil Protection: The New Dimension of Mediterranean Security" by Niklas Bremberg, IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2010
- <https://www.euneighbours.eu/>
- <http://pprd3.luciole.com/en/homepage/>

Read more about the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Protection Action Plan:



Engaging Citizens in Disaster Risk Management - Final Report



Volunteers in Civil Protection - Final Report

Mediterranean human story

LAURENT ALFONSO

Captain Professional Firefighter and Foreign affairs officer at the Directorate General for Civil Security and Crisis Management of the French Ministry of Interior

Captain Laurent Alfonso was seconded to the UfM Secretariat by France to support the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on civil protection and assist the organisation in the preparations of the next UfM Civil Protection Directors-General meeting. As an expert in the European Civil Protection Mechanism, he has worked in many countries as a trainer in operational management and command, forest fires, communication and prevention.



Captain Alfonso is a "glass half full" type of person and likes to see the opportunities lying beneath the challenges. For instance, he is intimately convinced that countries from the Southern rim of the Mediterranean, who started to feel the negative impact of climate change sooner than other regions, can bring a great deal of knowledge when it comes to resilience capacities.

Read more on Captain Alfonso's insights on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in Civil Protection **here:**



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADEME

Agence de la Transition Ecologique

AFD

Agence française de développement

C3S

Copernicus Climate Change Service

CAMS

Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service

CIHEAM

International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

CMI

Center for Mediterranean Integration

DSC

Deputy Secretary General

ECMWF

European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts

EIB

European Bank of Investment

EMP

Euro-Mediterranean partnership

EMUNI

The Euro-Mediterranean University

ETF

European Training Foundation

EU

European Union

FAO

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GDP

Gross Domestic Product

GIZ

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Development Cooperation)

CTMO

Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean

GWP-Med

Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean

IME

Institut Méditerranéen de l'Eau

IWD

International Women's Day

MedECC

Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change

MedYWat

The Mediterranean Youth for Water Network

MENA

Middle East and North Africa

MoU

Memorandum of Understanding

NDICI

[European] Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument

OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OCS

Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e di Geofisica Sperimentale

PAMEx

Plan d'Action pour une mer Méditerranée exemplaire à l'horizon 2030

PEEB

Programme for Energy Efficiency in Buildings

PPRD

Prevention, Preparedness and Response to natural and man-made disasters

PRIMA

Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area

R&I

Research & Innovation

R20

Regions of Climate Action

RRM

Rapid Response Mechanism

RTAP

Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean Region

SCF

Subnational Climate Fund

SDG

Sustainable Development Goal

Sida

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SME

Small and medium-sized enterprise

SPREF

Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Private Renewable Energy Framework

UM

Union for the Mediterranean

UNDP

United Nations Development Programme

UN

United Nations

UNECE

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNIDO

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

UNIMED

Mediterranean Universities Union

UPFI

Urban Projects Finance Initiative

WBF

Women Business Forum

WEFE

Water, energy, food and ecosystems

WHO

World Health Organization

WTO

World Trade Organization



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



The UfM Secretariat
is co-funded by the
EUROPEAN UNION

The **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)** is an intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation which brings together all countries of the European Union and 15 countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. The UfM's mission is to enhance regional cooperation, dialogue and the implementation of projects and initiatives with tangible impacts on our citizens, with an emphasis on young people and women, in order to address the three strategic objectives of the region: stability, human development and integration.



ufmsecretariat.org



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