

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

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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.

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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:



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.