In light of the climate emergency faced throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region, and the need to further build resilience and sustainable development to protect both the environment and the people, the UfM has built up its activities to promote existing and potential solutions to tackle current challenges and prepare for a better future.

Solutions for a better future: enhancing the power of research and innovation

The current generation is facing some of the most pressing challenges that the modern world has seen. From the threat of climate change to the need for renewable energies and improvements in healthcare, we must act quickly and effectively to tackle these issues. That’s where research and innovation policies come in.

Through cutting-edge research and innovative solutions, we can create a brighter future for ourselves and future generations. By investing in these policies, we can develop new technologies and practices that reduce our carbon footprint, transition to cleaner and more sustainable energy sources and improve our understanding and treatment of diseases.

It is against this background that a Ministerial conference on research and innovation was held for the first time under the Union for the Mediterranean framework in June 2022. Hosted by Sylvie Retailleau, Minister for Higher Education and Research of France, and under the co-presidency of the European Union, represented by Commissioner Mariya Gabriel and Jordan with the participation of Minister Haifaa Najjar, the gathering aimed at promoting international cooperation on science and knowledge in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

In the face of ongoing and future challenges for the region, Ministers have adopted a declaration that paves the way to further strengthening scientific cooperation, fostering linkages on research, innovation and skills, as well as supporting capacity building, coordination and joint actions, including on sustainable development and employability.

Furthermore, the Member States’ representatives acknowledged eight new research and innovation (R&I) roadmaps on climate change, renewable energies, and health that will act as a catalyst for future cooperation. Swift action is needed, and an implementation plan is being prepared by the UfM Regional Platform on Research and Innovation, which will transform the jointly agreed priorities into specific actions and review its progress while fostering synergies with existing instruments. Ensuring that the agreed roadmaps are implemented is crucial for the desired outcomes in the region, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. The roadmaps aim to engage actors in the region (NGOs, scientific institutions, researchers, networks of universities and citizens, the private sector and decision-makers), as well as international organisations, financial institutions and donors.

This very first Research and Innovation Ministers meeting under the umbrella of the UfM comes at a very timely moment. Today, we take political important steps forward in levelling up R&I cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region on climate change, renewable energy and health.

Sylvie Retailleau, Minister for Higher Education and Research of France