Message from the Secretary General
Nasser Kamel

2022 has been a cumbersome year for the Euro-Mediterranean region: against a backdrop of post-pandemic socio-economic crisis and an increasingly overriding climate emergency, the region’s geopolitical crises have further enhanced its existing fragility and vulnerability, and brought new challenges to the forefront of regional concerns. Amidst this context, the UfM has been able to deliver both at the policy and the operational level, making strides to ensure that we leave no one behind.

We have guided work towards two ambitious renewed regional strategies, on employment and labour on the one hand and on women empowerment on the other both focused on policies for the most vulnerable. In this framework, we launched the new UfM Hub for Jobs, Trade and Investment, with a budget of €11 million, to notably help set up more editions of the region-wide UfM Grant Scheme on Employment Promotion. Aimed at young people and women, this Grant Scheme saw its first results in 2022, benefitting more than 18,000 individuals in 7 UfM Member States through four projects.

Moreover, the UfM has integrated in the last year the protection and inclusion of people with disabilities within its mandate, to truly reach all populations at risk and fully achieve our objectives of social inclusiveness and equality.

In 2022, the Union for the Mediterranean has also built up its activities to promote existing and potential solutions to prepare for a better future, 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.

In this framework, the first UfM Ministerial Conference on Research and Innovation (R&I) was held to promote cooperation on science and knowledge in the region, notably on climate change, renewable energies, and health. Through these new regional roadmaps, we will seek to increase our shared resilience against the environmental or food security challenges we pressingly experiencing.

All in all, the progress achieved on the ground in 2022 has crystallised in a key milestone: the creation of a Mediterranean Pavilion for the first time in the history of climate negotiations, in the framework of the COP27. The initiative, conceived by the UfM Secretariat, aimed to raise awareness on the Mediterranean, often overlooked in climate negotiations, and provided an exceptional opportunity for the region to talk and act as one, bridging the voices of public and private, scientific and academic, technical, policymaking, civil society, finance, and business actors.

This initiative and others have demonstrated how the UfM, 15 years after its creation, has established itself as the multilateral institutional framework for dialogue and cooperation in the Mediterranean, tangibly impacting lives on the ground for the citizens today and working to build a better future.

I invite you to go through this publication to discover our action and activities for 2022, in our efforts to make the Mediterranean adapt to adversity and bounce back always stronger.
The UfM at a glance

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an inter-governmental organisation that brings together 43 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 of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Ever since its creation, the organisation has continuously worked dedicated to the implementation of this mandate. The Secretariat is the first permanent structure of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Ever since its creation, the organisation has continuously worked towards regions to promote political dialogue through the adoption of a roadmap for action by the UfM Member States in January 2017. This roadmap, entitled The Union for the Mediterranean: An Action-driven Organisation with a Common Ambition, outlines 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 2022, 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 that the organisation plays a crucial role in the post-pandemic recovery, leaving no one behind and paving the way for the creation of more resilient societies and economies in the region.

On 24 November 2022, the UfM welcomed for the first time a new member state, North Macedonia, on the occasion of the 7th UfM Regional Forum.

Read the joint declaration of the UfM Member States on the accession of North Macedonia.

How does the UfM operationalise its mandate?

A leap in operational activities with a true commitment on the ground

In 2022, the UfM has enhanced its action on the ground through milestone initiatives, bringing the organisation closer to its highest mandate: tangibly improving lives for the citizens, especially those in vulnerable populations such as women and youth.

The UfM has launched its first grant scheme to actively support non-profit organisations in the Mediterranean that work to give people opportunities in view of the COVID-19-induced crisis (see its full results in p. 10-11).

Moreover, in the face of another yet pressing challenge such as climate change, the UfM Secretariat led a Mediterranean coalition to voice the region’s challenges at the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP). For the first time in the history of climate negotiations, a Mediterranean Pavilion was conceived to highlight not only the urgent impacts of climate change in the Mediterranean, but also the innovative solutions already being implemented through a GIZ project based at the UfM Secretariat, under the “UfM Hub for Jobs, Trade and Investment.” The project’s activities will include measures dedicated to gender, digital solutions and the support to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This second phase has an increased budget of €10.5 million, compared to €5.5 million for the 2018-2022 period.

The support from Germany to the UfM also entered a second phase (2022-2025) and will continue being extended to the UfM also entered a second phase (2022-2025) and will continue being extended to the UfM also entered a second phase (2022-2025) and will continue being extended to the UfM also entered a second phase (2022-2025) and will continue being extended to the UfM also entered a second phase (2022-2025) and will continue being extended to the UfM also entered a second phase (2022-2025) and will continue being extended to

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This has been recognised by several partners throughout the region: on the one hand, the European Union has continued to substantially strengthen its unwavering commitment to the UfM, notably through the co-funding of the Secretariat. On the other hand, partnerships with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the German Development Cooperation have also been renewed in 2022 and expanded.

The cooperation agreement with Sida was renewed for the period 2022-2025 and is moving from an operating grant to a programmatic approach, geared towards presenting how the action of the UfM brings changes in the region. With a total budget equivalent to €4.9 million over a four-year period, cooperation with Sida will aim at enhancing regional activities in MENA countries, under three priority areas, namely Women Empowerment; Water, Environment and Blue Economy and Energy and Climate Action.

The Secretariat 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.
Day of the Mediterranean 2022: Feeling Mediterranean

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

Feeling the Mediterranean through our senses

Following a successful first celebration in 2021, the Day of the Mediterranean rallied 2022 UfM partners, stakeholders and civil society around one simple question: how does one feel the Mediterranean through the five senses?

From aromatic spices to a cool sea breeze on your skin or the lively streets of colourful neighbourhoods, the Mediterranean is a true journey through the senses. Together we celebrated this year’s Day of the Mediterranean using all our senses, in a spirit of inclusion, diversity and cooperation.

A brand-new visual identity tailored to the 2022 campaign “The Mediterranean, a journey through the senses”!

A website in 8 languages and a collaborative agenda, with over 20k page views.

Targeted outreach actions to

400+ key Euro-Mediterranean stakeholders

The Day of the Mediterranean 2022 campaign kicked-off with targeted outreach actions to 400+ key Euro-Mediterranean stakeholders to invite them to live the Mediterranean through their senses and join the movement!

900K+ views throughout the year

Check out the complete playlist here

Ranging from institutional conferences, expert workshops or cultural celebrations, the 2022 Mediterranean Day saw more than 65 activities registered under its framework, including more than 35 musical performances across the region following a Call for participation by the Anna Lindh Foundation.

• The European Union mobilised its networks this year again to reaffirm its commitment to the Mediterranean region and share how its citizens feel the Mediterranean.

• The UfM Member States have also shown their commitment to the Mediterranean and each celebrated the 2nd edition of the Day of the Mediterranean in their own way.

• The Day of the Mediterranean also brought several high-level personalities to reflect on how they feel the Mediterranean and why our region should be protected.

Together with the UfM Regional Forum, the Day of the Mediterranean was featured in more than 1,600 media articles, radio and TV shows reaching a potential audience of more than 2.5 billion.

Media impacts in more than 23 countries

Over 1.5K posts/tweets/stories across social media, including visuals, videos and quizzes using the official hashtag #MediterraneanDay (over 230 on UfM Platforms)

77K engagement actions

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Leaving no one behind...

Tackling the employment and employability challenges of the most vulnerable
The economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are enormous and have led to unprecedented economic shocks that are directly felt by households worldwide. According to the ILO, ca. 94% of the worldwide labour force lives and works in countries that are affected by company closures. The economic crisis will ultimately account for a loss of working hours equivalent to 305 million full-time employees.

Job creation, especially in the aftermath of the negative repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market, represents a major challenge for all Mediterranean countries. This calls for multiplying efforts of coordination and cooperation between both shores in order to reduce unemployment rates, with an emphasis on developing vocational and technical training to include new sectors that would benefit the youth.

Nayef Stetieh
Minister of Labour, Jordan (2021-2022)

In the Euro-Mediterranean region, the economic consequences of the pandemic threaten to undo years of economic development. With the citizens at risk of losing their employment and livelihood, they are forced to adapt to a new world of work and economic activity. People already more vulnerable to economic shocks and restricted mobility, such as informal workers, blue-collar workers, youth and women, are especially affected.

In light of this reality, Union for Mediterranean Ministers in charge of employment and labour met for the 5th UfM Ministerial dedicated to this thematic on 17 and 18 May 2022 in Marrakech (Morocco), to discuss the most pressing labour market challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region, in particular how to ensure an inclusive, green, digital and sustainable recovery for all, and particularly for the most vulnerable. Ministers reiterated their commitment to promote an economy that works for people through employment and social policies that respond to youth and gender-specific issues. Governments will focus on a stronger participation of young people and women in their societies and economies. They also stressed the need to continue measuring the impact of labour market policies, and agreed to launch a “Community of Practices on Youth Employment” to exchange best practices.

Protection and empowerment of populations in their entirety and diversity has been a priority for the UfM amidst the current regional and global context; with the aim of tackling unemployment rates, gender equality, and social inclusion, but also preparing for the jobs of the future and creating opportunities for all in a more fair and equitable Euro-Mediterranean region.

Focus on young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs);
Explore innovative options to make vocational education and training systems more modern, inclusive, attractive, flexible, labour market-relevant and fit for the digital and green transitions;
Promote the transition to formal employment for so-called “informal workers”, especially women, that often do not have employment contracts, lack important rights and adequate social protection;
Foster diversified and sustainable financing mechanisms to support education, training and employment policies;
Recognise the social economy, social entrepreneurship and social innovation as a resilient model for more decent job creation that will also serve the most vulnerable;
Pay particular attention to well-functioning monitoring processes of employment and social policies for a better understanding of the impact of the policy actions notably on youth and women;
Encourage and further develop the use of so-called “Communities of Practice”, notably on youth employment, where national authorities can discuss and exchange on best practice.

Shifting regional efforts on trade, investment and entrepreneurship policies towards the creation of decent jobs
On occasion of the 5th UfM Ministerial on Employment and Labour in Marrakech, the UfM Secretariat signed a joint Declaration of Intent with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) and the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Cooperation that will significantly increase the support of Germany and Spain to the UfM and its Secretariat. This support entails the creation of a “UfM Hub for Jobs, Trade and Investment”, run by the German and Spanish Development Cooperation.

Within this framework, the UfM will be able to set up more editions of its region-wide Grant Scheme on Employment Promotion, with a stronger focus on young people and women. Launched in August 2020, the first edition of the UfM Grant Scheme, aiming to improve the employment situation of the most vulnerable populations impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, financed four region-wide projects benefitting 18,000 individuals in 7 UfM Member States, namely, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco and Tunisia. These projects tackled the labour challenges in the fields of entrepreneurship, women empowerment, sustainable tourism, as well as education and research with an overall budget of €1.13 million (see pp.10-11).

This Hub will also support and complement the objectives of the regional Team Europe Initiative on “Job creation through trade and investment”, also kicked-off at the Ministerial Meeting in Marrakech, by the European Commission with France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the EIB and the EBRD, and aiming at aligning efforts and better focus trade, investment and entrepreneurship policies towards creating decent jobs.

A UfM Roadmap for Action 2022-2025 on Employment & Labour to:

- Pay particular attention to well-functioning monitoring processes of employment and social policies for a better understanding of the impact of the policy actions notably on youth and women;
- Encourage and further develop the use of so-called “Communities of Practice”, notably on youth employment, where national authorities can discuss and exchange on best practice.

Rearranging regional efforts on trade, investment and entrepreneurship policies towards the creation of decent jobs

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The UfM Grant Scheme for Employment Promotion: creating opportunities, protecting the vulnerable

Launched in August 2020 to respond to the employment crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, with the financial support of the German Development Cooperation.

4 region-wide projects funded:
- **RISE**: Resilience and Innovation through Strengthened Entrepreneurship
- **FLOWER**: Fostering Local Market Opportunities for Women’s Empowerment and Resilience
- **SEARCHED**: Strengthening Employment and entrepreneurial Activities to Recover COVID-19 Epidemic Damages
- **MAST**: Mediterranean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism post COVID-19

Benefitting 18,000 individuals in 7 UfM Member States: Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco and Tunisia

Across the fields of Entrepreneurship, women empowerment, sustainable tourism, education and research.

An overall budget of €1.13 million

3 priorities:
- Improving the economic resilience of citizens, especially vulnerable demographic groups, through employment-related capacity development.
- Promoting new channels of training and skills attainment in order to foster employability and economic activity.
- Supporting entrepreneurial activity and building the capacities of MSMEs to enable income generation and job creation.
Stimulating growth through entrepreneurship in the digital age

Launched in 2013, the Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (Med4Jobs) is a UfM flagship project-based cross-sectoral initiative, that has eventually become a pipeline of projects addressing a broad spectrum of employment-related challenges. Med4Jobs currently has 13 labelled projects under its umbrella, with over 100,000 beneficiaries.

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Although MSMEs account for 90–95% of all registered companies and employ a great majority of the labour force in the Mediterranean region, they are particularly excluded from financial markets.

The EMGN project aims at facilitating access to finance, in particular for MSMEs, by gathering guarantee schemes active in the Euro-Mediterranean region, which is one of the priorities of the UfM regional dialogue on Industrial Cooperation, as well as in the new EU agenda for the Mediterranean. The project was granted the UfM label for its regional added value in June 2022.

How?

Through 4 related actions:

- **Trainings Academies**
  - Ex: Digitalisation, Enterprise Risk Management, Future Thinking and Strategy Transformation for CGIs; Green guarantee products
- **Advocacy**
  - Euro-Mediterranean Code of Conduct for Credit Guarantees; Webinars and Annual Conferences
- **Research and Development**
  - Working Groups: data collection and analysis; setting up a regional counter guarantee scheme; digitalisation
- **Communication and Knowledge Sharing**
  - website, publications, newsletters, etc.

**Location**

Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Greece, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, France, Croatia

**Expected Results**

- **BRIDGE** the knowledge gap as regards MSMEs access to finance in the region.
- **EXPAND** guarantee schemes in the Northern and Southern Mediterranean and the advancement of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the area of credit guarantees.
- **INCREASE** COOPERATION between the EU, the Northern and Southern Mediterranean institutions active in the development of MSMEs and their access to finance, through i.e. the recently established European External Investment Plan.
- **SUPPORT** the development of Northern and Southern Mediterranean guarantee schemes’ product range and particularly in the MSME segment.
- **ENHANCE** the operating environment of Northern and Southern Mediterranean guarantee schemes.

**Promoters**

IEMed (Lead promoter), EMEA, and supported by GIZ, with 12 associated partners throughout the region

**Beneficiaries**

The EMGN first beneficiaries are the Credit Guarantee Schemes, constituted as full members of the network. However, the project’s goal is to create the conditions for MSMEs to have easier access to credit markets. In particular, the project intends to more than double the number of participating national member institutions from the original 10 member organisations to 16 member organisations, covering new beneficiary countries. The project also intends to develop 5 credit guarantee products for MSMEs and start-ups, one of them specifically targeting women-led enterprises.
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 gender-based-violence.

In the past five years, the UfM Secretariat has worked on the implementation of a 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:

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

Despite initial progress, the COVID-19 crisis has had a retroceding effect on the economic situation of women and has clearly demonstrated a need for stronger commitment from the countries to protect women’s rights.

Against this background, Member States convened the 5th UfM Ministerial Meeting on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society on 26 October 2022, in Madrid (Spain). Some of the commitments made by the countries promote the transition to formal employment for female workers; support and encourage women’s entrepreneurship; promote gender equality and inclusive models of leadership from early-age education in all fields, including in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); expand gender-responsive finance for climate and environmental action reaching women’s organisations, enterprises and cooperatives; and adopt comprehensive laws that define and criminalise all forms of violence against women and girls, including cyber-violence.

We must turn crises into opportunities for change and regeneration, and remain true to our commitment to gender equality. Through the commitments agreed together, we can deliver tangible results for the future of women and girls, in all their diversity, across the Euro-Mediterranean. We must see an end to violence against women and girls, and work towards the fostering of societies where we can all be in employment, partake in decision-making, and be represented in public life.

Helena Dalli
European Commissioner for Equality

The MENA region has the world’s largest entrepreneurial disparity between men and women – 5% of women-led businesses compared to a global average of 23%-26% – and one of the weakest female labour participation rates.

Under the title “Gender-smart financing to unlock Women’s entrepreneu-
Gender-smart financing is defined as an investment strategy that seeks to intentionally and measurably use capital to address gender disparities and better inform investment decisions. Gender as a factor of analysis can highlight opportunities and reveal risks that can strengthen investment decision-making to achieve greater financial and social outcomes.

A white paper, presented in the framework of the Forum by UNIDO, highlighted relevant knowledge accumulated by the organisation over the years, identifying the lessons learned, and good practices carried out, including on access to finance.

Businesses a unique opportunity to grow their business to the next level, by learning from successful and innovative business models, and building connections with diverse and high-level international business leaders, policy-makers and experts from the world’s leading companies.

As the venture capital industry is 92% male, gender bias seems to play a role in men funding other men, overlooking the female entrepreneurs who are also seeking business funding. The 2022 edition, supported by the Governments of Italy and Sweden, sought to identify financial inequalities that remain gender-based and promote successful gender-smart financing models. In fact, studies show that investing in women entrepreneurs also makes sense from a business perspective: Once women-led start-ups and enterprises dispose of reasonable financial means, their return on investment exceeds average. A white paper, presented in the framework of the Forum by UNIDO, highlighted relevant knowledge accumulated by the organisation over the years, identifying the lessons learned, and good practices carried out, including on access to finance.

To further stimulate the creation of business networks for women entrepreneurs and women-led businesses in the region, UNIDO and the UfM 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.

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 to network and grow their business. It will ultimately further intensify Euro-Mediterranean and South-South business linkages, fostering investment opportunities including with the diaspora.

Voicing youth concerns and vision for the Mediterranean to policy-makers

Throughout 2021 and 2022, more than 200 young people from across 20 Euro-Mediterranean countries met to join their voices and draft a common advocacy statement gathering their aspirations, expectations, and recommendations towards building a more sustainable, prosperous and integrated Mediterranean horizon 2030. This white paper was entitled “Plaidoyer pour la Méditerranée 2030”.

This Plaidoyer was presented in the framework of the “Forum des Mondes Méditerranéens”, in February 2022 in Marseille (France), to the UfM and the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF), as the two institutions bound to the Barcelona Process and to enhancing Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and cooperation. In line with the mandates of both organisations, which strive to empower Euro-Mediterranean youth, the UfM Secretary General and the ALF President committed to walk the talk with the young civil society representatives and guide them towards the operationalisation of their ideas for a better future.

In this sense, UfM experts have conducted meetings with the young participants throughout fall 2022 to discuss the ideas put forward and draw a roadmap for those that could be put into action in collaboration with the UfM, the ALF and other potential regional actors.

In the framework of this series of meetings, the UfM Secretariat invited more than 50 participants to Barcelona on 23 November, to offer an opportunity for the young representatives to continue discussing their ideas and proposals with the regional experts, as well as to come upon innovative projects and programmes of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation that could be relevant for their work.

In parallel to the different sessions that took place, two representatives of the Plaidoyer group had the unique opportunity to deliver a statement in front of the UfM Ministers of Foreign Affairs at the 7th Regional Forum the day after, on 24 November 2022, in view of underlining youth’s aspirations and recommendations for enhanced sustainability, prosperity and integration across the Mediterranean region. It was the first time external participation was welcomed at the UfM annual meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers.

Reinforcing the innovation-employability nexus in the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean is a young region, with 45% of its population being under the age of 25. The region is also experiencing economic, environmental, and social challenges which negatively
Students, graduates, and researchers must play a key role in reinforcing national economies through the potential of innovation-based sustainable economies.

This was commonly agreed upon among the participants of the "UM Forum on Green Innovation and Careers for Empowering the Mediterranean Youth: Triple Helix in Action", a joint endeavour between the UfM and the Jordanian Higher Council for Science and Technology. The event was hosted in the framework of the "Arab SMEs Summit: Opportunities Beyond Borders" from 30 October to 1 November in Amman (Jordan), supported by the German Development Cooperation. The two-day event saw the participation of representatives from UfM Ministries of Research and Labour, Higher Education and Research institutes and initiatives, business and university networks, development funds as well as experts in innovation and employability.

During the Forum, three sessions were held, delving into the triple helix, green innovation through research, and employability. Dialogue between academia, government, and industry has deepened; nevertheless, more discussion is needed to understand how to increase positive impact in the region. Students, graduates, and researchers must play a key role in reinforcing national economies through the potential of innovation-based sustainable economies, especially in food, renewable energy, water, and digital transition, as well as green and blue economies.

This requires a higher degree of cooperation among sectors on skills, curricula, study paths, and a crucial dialogue with the private sector to support academia’s role in contributing to local development, far from a silos-approach.

Breathing new life into higher education cooperation in the Mediterranean

The 3rd UNESCO World Higher Education Conference took place in Barcelona (Spain) in May 2022 and provided the opportunity for the UfM Secretariat to gather stakeholders from the region for a multiparty dialogue that was organised in its framework. By bringing together representatives from Ministries of Higher Education of the UfM Member States, the European Commission, key regional partner organisations and relevant academic stakeholders, the meeting allowed to start devising a renewed strategic regional agenda. The focus was on cooperation on higher education in the Euro-Mediterranean area, and especially youth employability and intercultural dialogue. This renewed agenda will be designed by building upon lessons learnt from experience, updating priorities, and ensuring proper follow-up mechanisms for future implementation.

Participants congratulated the efforts made by the Union for the Mediterranean to raise awareness among Member States and academic stakeholders of the crucial importance of higher education as a tool to achieve an inclusive and sustainable development. In addition to underlining the need to address skill mismatches, youth unemployment, fostering partnerships, academic mobility and the recognition of qualifications, while improving shared knowledge on internationalisation trends and policies. The importance of facilitating continuous peer learning on policies and practices addressing common challenges and priorities, as well as fostering the implementation of joint projects and initiatives was also highlighted.

Given the necessary revitalisation of Higher Education in the region, the UfM Secretariat launched a study to investigate the potential role of Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems to tackle the issues of youth unemployment, and skill mismatching prevailing in Southern Mediterranean countries. Divided in two main chapters, the report first outlines the existing interventions in the region, including highlights of best practices and an analysis of empirical data collected through focus group discussions with stakeholders, as well as an online survey disseminated among the UfM network. The second part of the report details recommendations and policy actions aiming to fuel the discussion during a proposed regional dialogue where regional stakeholders can further explore ways towards a robust strategy for developing Higher Education and VET collaboration. It also includes a conceptual framework that outlines the key pillars needed to design a workforce development initiative to tackle youth and women’s employment and skills development.
In Europe, almost half (48%) of employers have difficulties filling job vacancies due to skills mismatch while similar rates can be found in the MENA region, where 42% reported skills shortages.

UfM and the European Investment Bank partner for trainings in Mediterranean universities

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, it is essential for university students involved in business or political science to receive hands-on training on topics such as multilateral policy frameworks and project financing mechanisms. These skills are critical for success in today’s global economy and are highly sought after by employers. In Europe, almost half (48%) of these same employers have difficulties filling job vacancies due to skills mismatch, while similar rates can be found in the MENA region where 42% of employers report skills shortages. These statistics highlight the urgent need for policies and initiatives to address skills mismatch and help bridge the gap between the expertise that employers need and workers’ abilities.

To contribute to reducing this gap, the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Investment Bank (EIB) joined forces to bring pilot trainings on the Euro-Mediterranean multilateral policy frameworks and the EU project financing mechanisms to Mediterranean Universities.

Following the signing of a dedicated agreement, the two institutions have opened discussions with three initial universities in Morocco, Egypt and Jordan. For the first time students will receive dedicated training from the UfM Secretariat and the EIB Institute on fields such as the EU financial architecture for development, the mandate of the UfM and its role in the formulation of policies, and a focus on the EIB role and business cycle within EU architecture.

Providing students with this type of training will give them a better understanding of the complex policy frameworks underpinning the Euro-Mediterranean region and the financing mechanisms that drive its development. This knowledge will equip them with the tools they need to make informed decisions on how to contribute meaningfully to the region’s economic and political development.

In November 2022, a first two-day training session was held at the Euro-Med University of Fez (Morocco), a flagship UfM-labelled project, involving selected students from the EuroMed Business School and the EuroMed Institute of Political and Juridical Science. The year 2023 will see more training opportunities in Egypt and Jordan.

Inclusion with a big I. the UfM extends its mandate to work with people with disabilities

The UfM Secretariat has launched in 2022 work in a new area of action, to fully implement its mandate on inclusion.

Indeed, over 1 in 7 persons are experiencing some form of disability globally, and face many barriers in some key aspects of society, even more so in the context of the current crises. In light of these facts, the UfM held the 1st Conference on Disability and Social Inclusion in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, in collaboration with ONCE, to explore the limitations that people with disabilities face to access employment, the importance of a gender perspective in inclusion-related agendas and recovery programmes, and the role of accessible tourism.

The event brought together representatives of regional, national and international organisations of persons with disabilities (OPD), along with the League of Arab States and the Spanish Agency for International cooperation on behalf to explore ways of reinforcing the dialogue between civil society and governments in developing an agenda on disability in the region.

The different panels provided the audience with insights and data, which highlighted both challenges as well as possible solutions when it comes to the social and economic inclusion of persons with disability. Among others, panelists discussed how, compared to men without disabilities, women with disabilities are three times more likely to be illiterate, two times less likely to be employed and three times more likely to have unmet needs for health care.

Patricia and Jahda live on opposite sides of the Mediterranean but share the same fight: ensuring that people living with disabilities can enjoy a dignified and financially independent life. From Spain to Lebanon, both are firm believers in the need for enhanced regional cooperation to ensure social inclusion and economic empowerment for all.

Cooperation in the region cannot overlook the specificities of the challenges faced in each country. […] We will achieve greater results through the strength found in our differences.
Building resilience and sustainability

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.

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When science, policy and diplomacy meet

At the national level, science-policy platforms can help governments make evidence-based policy decisions by providing expert advice on scientific matters. They can also identify emerging trends and issues, assess the impact of policies and regulations, and facilitate communication between scientists, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Additionally, these platforms can encourage public engagement with science, therefore raising awareness of scientific issues and building trust between science and society.

At the regional level, science-policy platforms can support regional policy coordination, especially in areas where cross-border cooperation is necessary. They also facilitate the exchange of scientific knowledge and best practices between regions, leading to more effective and efficient policymaking.

In response to this need, the UfM Secretariat organised in September 2022 a working and brainstorming session. The discussion aimed at mapping the Euro-Mediterranean science-policy interfaces and finding answers to the following questions: how can we engage universities in science-policy processes? And how can Euro-Mediterranean institutions better share knowledge amongst themselves?

Held in collaboration with the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) and the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez (UEMF), two long standing partners and labelled projects of the UfM, the discussions were articulated around three main panels: they tackled the opportunities and challenges faced by national science-for-policy ecosystems and platforms, the existing and potential regional science-for-policy structures, as well as how science-policy interfaces best serve 21st-century learning innovations.

The UfM Secretariat and EMUNI also joined forces again through two additional webinars on “Science cooperation for sustainable regional development”, which was open to all R&P stakeholders in the Mediterranean, and “Science diplomacy for sustainable development in the Mediterranean region” which promoted the recently endorsed UfM Agendas on Research and Innovation as a tool for scientific cooperation in the Mediterranean.

Although science diplomacy is not a new concept, it has received strong impetus in recent years and is closely connected with cultural and economic diplomacy. These areas must be approached holistically to realise cross-border and region-wide cooperation.
The project, which will be implemented in Egypt, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain and Tunisia over the course of two years and with a budget of over €1 million.

Led by the University of Siena (Italy), the overall Plastic Busters initiative, from which this new project stems, is mainstreaming its work through four lines of action:

- **Action 1**: addressing data gaps with regard to marine litter through harmonised monitoring approaches.
- **Action 2**: implementing demonstration projects showcasing actions to prevent, reduce and mitigate marine litter in the Mediterranean.
- **Action 3**: providing governance support by strengthening the science-policy interface on marine litter.
- **Action 4**: coordinating awareness-raising campaigns and capacity-building activities.

**Unlocking access to finance for the blue economy and water sectors**

Access to finance plays a vital role in the growth and development of the water and blue economy sectors. These sectors encompass a broad range of industries such as fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, tourism, and coastal infrastructure, all of which require significant investments to operate, expand, and innovate. Without access to finance, businesses within these sectors may struggle to secure the necessary funding for critical activities such as purchasing equipment, conducting research and development, and improving infrastructure.

Furthermore, the water and blue economy sectors are often subject to unique challenges such as climate change impacts, resource depletion, and environmental regulations. Access to finance can help businesses adapt to these challenges by supporting investments in new technologies, more sustainable practices, and mitigation measures. Additionally, access to finance can facilitate the growth of SMEs within the water and blue economy sectors, which are critical to local econo-

**Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)**

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is a planning and management approach that aims to balance the environmental, economic, and social objectives of coastal development. It is a process that enables the sustainable use and conservation of coastal resources while ensuring that the needs of current and future generations are met. It involves the integration of different disciplines, sectors, and stakeholders in the planning and management of coastal areas.

The new project “Plastic Busters CAP: Fostering knowledge transfer to tackle marine litter in the Mediterranean”, financed by Interreg NEXT Med, kicked off in January 2022 under the umbrella of the UfM-labelled Plastic Busters Initiative, to become an instrument to improve Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), resulting in better local development planning.

**What is it?**

**Regional key actions**

- Provide technical assistance aimed at integrating Forest and Landscape Restoration programmes into Nationally Determined Contributions’ investment frameworks
- Organise three capacity-building workshops while ensuring the equitable participation of women
- Raise awareness on FLR options within Nationally Determined Contributions’ plans through a high-level conference held in the Mediterranean region

**National key actions**

- Implementation of national FLR programmes through intersectoral coordination and relevant policy
- Restoration approaches implemented in each target country in selected sites
- Monitoring of socio-economic and environmental impacts through indicators adapted to national and regional contexts

Forests play a key role in providing and protecting ecosystem services and biodiversity. The maintenance of healthy forested landscapes is essential for reducing the impacts of climate change. Effective planning, implementation, and monitoring of large-scale programmes mainstreaming Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) and promoting joint mitigation and adaptation approaches are critical to achieving climate and restoration goals in the Mediterranean region. With a total budget of €1,850,000 over a four-year period, the project, promoted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and financed by the German Cooperation, is building regional and national capacities for the implementation of FLR programmes. As part of the UfM GreenerMed Agenda, in particular Axis 3 on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Restoration, it received the UfM label, as it directly contributes to the implementation of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on environmental and climate action of Cairo (4 October 2021).

**How?**

**Regional component:** Open to UfM Member States pertaining to the FAO

**National component:** Open to UfM Member States pertaining to the FAO Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions (Silva Mediterranea)

**Location**

**National component: Morocco, Lebanon**

**Regional component:**

- Zoom on Euro-Mediterranean projects
- Scaling up forests and landscape restoration in the Mediterranean
- How?
- Regional key actions
- National key actions

Check out the UfM website to learn more about the project:
Humans of the Mediterranean
Citizens in action: fighting plastic pollution at the grassroots level

Each year, the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), in collaboration with partners and the UfM Secretariat, grants an award to young entrepreneurs from the Mediterranean region. In a post-pandemic context, the collaboration of local and regional authorities is much needed to overcome its social and economic consequences. The ARLEM Award aims at showcasing successful examples of these collaborations, to inspire, motivate and replicate best practices.

In June 2022, the UfM Secretariat partnered with the European Commission’s Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) to organize the UfM Blue Finance Conference, which was financed by DG MARE and aimed at encouraging investments in sustainable blue economy projects and initiatives in the Mediterranean region, especially in the Southern countries. Bringing together multilateral and national financial institutions, private investors and industry representatives, the conference was structured around sessions addressing the opportunities and modalities for investments in blue economy sectors and relaying best practices as well as much-needed matchmaking sessions between country representatives and financial institutions, where participants could present concrete project proposals, receive in-situ feedback as well as plan together their viability.

In 2022, the ARLEM Award was awarded to Manar Ramadan and her start-up Banlastic, which aims at banning single-use plastic and creating a more sustainable future for her community.

Later that year, in October 2022, the EU and the UfM Secretariat joined forces again to hold the EU-UfM High Level Conference on Water Finance and Investment in Cairo (Egypt), organised in partnership with the Egyptian Ministry of Water Resources and with the financial support of Sweden. Held as a prelude to the COP27, this annual conference addressed the urgent question of water financing to ensure water security, in a region where freshwater availability is set to decrease by 15% due to climate change.

While regional discussions about water and climate change often focus on technical solutions and investment projects, the new financial realities imposed by climate change, and how water sector policies need to evolve to face this situation, tend to be left aside. The event ended with the definition of a high-level action plan, the Cairo Action Agenda, which provided a set of recommendations and guiding principles that fed the subsequent COP27 discussions and provide the basis for future actions and collaborations in the water sector, in particular under the framework of the UfM Water Agenda 2030.

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Only together can we raise awareness of climate and environmental challenges in the Mediterranean and take action to find solutions.

Located in the COP27 Blue zone, the Mediterranean Pavilion hosted more than 60 events and working meetings, and provided an exceptional opportunity for the region to talk and act as one, bridging the voices of public and private, scientific and academic, technical, policymaking, civil society, finance, and business actors. Over the course of two weeks, more than 300 institutions were represented while 400 speakers intervened during events held under the Pavilion’s framework. Always striving to ensure gender-balanced interventions, the Mediterranean Pavilion saw the representation of almost 42% female speakers, compared to an average 37% female representation across all party delegations at COP27.

Acting as one in the face of climate change, the first Mediterranean Pavilion at the COP27
For the first time in the history of climate negotiations, the COP27 (6-18 November 2022) hosted a Mediterranean Pavilion, seeking to highlight both the urgent challenges the region faces, and the innovative solutions already being developed. At the initiative of the UfM Secretariat, the Mediterranean Pavilion was a coalition of like-minded partners: co-led together with the PRI-MA Foundation and UNEP-MAP, along with a group of relevant organisations and a scientific committee, headed by the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC) network, which gathers 600 scientists, and who produced the first scientific assessment on climate and environmental change in the region.

Representing one of the main climate change hotspots in the world, the coalition partners joined to bring a strong message to the international stage: only together can we raise awareness of climate challenges in the Mediterranean and take action to find solutions.

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The Mediterranean Pavilion at COP27: voicing concerns, finding solutions

mediterraneanpavilion.com

Over the course of two weeks, the Mediterranean Pavilion became an exchange arena for international and national stakeholders and saw the launch of several large-scale initiatives contributing to the fight against climate change:

- The presentation of the Blue Mediterranean Partnership by the EIB and the EBRD, which aims to foster a sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean region of the European Union’s Southern Neighbourhood countries, was one of the noteworthy features of the Mediterranean Pavilion.

- The launch of the 1 billion USD PAMEX 2030 Local Finance Investment Facility (PLIFF) which is aimed at supporting various initiatives, such as waste management and sanitation, electrification of ports, the use of bio-energy for maritime transportation, and the preservation and restoration of the biodiversity of coastal regions.

- The UfM Secretariat was also represented at the signature of the “Sustainable Electricity Trade Roadmap” by France, Germany, Morocco, Portugal and Spain. The initiative aims at promoting the exchange of renewable electricity in a mutually advantageous manner between Morocco and the four EU countries, acknowledging the advantages of integrating the regional electricity market.

- Another development that occurred during the Pavilion was the launch of the International Drought Resilience Alliance, in collaboration with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, Spain, the European Commission, and the UfM, which holds observer status. This alliance aims to create a cooperative platform that can generate political support and gather resources for specific measures that improve drought resilience in countries, cities, and communities.

More about the Blue Mediterranean Partnership:

More about the International Drought Resilience Alliance:

66 events 17,000 online viewers

Gender Mainstreaming 58.5% 41.5%

More than 45,000 participants at COP27

50 bilateral meetings were held

37 different media organisations interacted with the Mediterranean Pavilion

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MedEC Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change
Towards more liveable and healthy cities

Currently 60% of the Mediterranean’s population is living in urban areas. With one of the fastest urbanisation rates worldwide, the region’s urban population is expected to increase by an additional 22.5 million by 2030 due to persistent rural-urban migrations and endogenous urban growth. Moreover, Mediterranean cities are also experiencing high vulnerability to the effects of climate change such as water scarcity, droughts, forest fires and heat waves. Therefore sustainable urban development plays a central role in ensuring the well-being of citizens and the resilience of the region.

In 2022, the UfM Secretariat focused on several issues related to this topic, as part of the implementation of its Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040 and its Housing Action Plan. On 21 March, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), it held a webinar on “Urban Nature, Green Spaces and Health” to address the positive impacts of urban nature and green spaces on health and well-being in Mediterranean cities. Indeed, urban green spaces, such as parks, playgrounds, and residential greenery, can promote mental and physical health by reducing exposure to air pollutants, noise and excessive heat. The webinar sought therefore to highlight good practices and perspectives for action towards more liveable and healthy cities, against a backdrop of profound and negative impacts of urbanisation, competing land usages, global trade and industrialization on nature, biodiversity and ecosystems across the world.

On 24 March, the UfM Secretariat followed up with a meeting on how to improve the availability and quality of data to have better evidence-based urban policies. Held in the framework of the UfM Working Group on Evaluation, Monitoring & Reporting Systems on Sustainable Urban Development, the meeting aimed at analysing the main challenges and advancements in the implementation of the United Nations Statistical Classification methodology for delineation of cities, urban and rural areas, namely the “Degrees of Urbanization” method. The experience of Lebanon in applying this classification method was discussed, along with other issues such as urban health and how UfM Member States could address urban health-related indicators.

Sustainable urban models for European and Mediterranean countries

In the framework of the implementation of the UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040 and its Housing Action Plan, the UfM explored in 2022 various models of sustainable urbanisation.

On the one hand, it held a workshop on housing cooperatives in the margins of the International Social Housing Festival 2022, in collaboration with Housing Europe, on 16 June in Helsinki (Finland). The event gathered representatives of both housing cooperatives and the Ministries in charge of Housing from European and neighbouring countries, and presented different existing models of housing cooperatives, in view of discussing their success factors, how they can be replicated and, most importantly, how the institutional setting can facilitate the spread of cooperative housing.

The International Social Housing Festival explored housing as the foundation of good life and highlighted the role of social, public and co-operative housing in achieving socially and ecologically sustainable living in our cities now and in the future. It brought together the international housing community – housing practitioners, policymakers, architects, researchers and tenants and invited the different Finnish and international stakeholders to take part in this critical conversation and to come up with answers together. The seminars, site visits and workshops explored both policy and practice of putting people first.

On the other hand, the UfM also focused on the importance of port city transformation to address sustainable urban development in the Mediterranean region. On 28 and 29 September 2022, the UfM Secretariat held a conference, in partnership with the Barcelona City Council and the Port of Barcelona, to provide a unique opportunity for representatives of Mediterranean ports and adjacent cities, government representatives, and other key regional and international stakeholders to exchange on this crucial issue for the region.

The MEDports Forum 2022 focused on the challenge of digitalisation in Mediterranean ports and was held in Civitavecchia (Italy) on 7 and 8 July 2022. The Forum was co-organised by the MEDports Association and the Port System Authority of Central Northern Tyrrhenian Sea – Port of Civitavecchia, jointly with the UfM. It provided the opportunity to examine the state of the art of digitalisation in the Mediterranean, its challenges and key success factors, through the exchange of digital-related initiatives and projects around the world.

Urban green spaces, such as parks, playgrounds, and residential greenery, can promote mental and physical health.

Learn more on the central role of port cities in the Mediterranean here.

In contrast, digitalisation has emerged as one of the key drivers for the development of a more sustainable and resilient global shipping industry. Widespread awareness of climate change, the need for greater safety and security in port operations but also the race for greater logistical efficiency, have led to the emergence of many digital-related initiatives and projects around the world. As a maritime space connecting three continents and a true crossroads of international trade, the Mediterranean is at the heart of this digital revolution.

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knowledge and best practices among representatives of the international institutions, including the World Bank and the International Association of Ports and Harbours (IAPH), experts of maritime transport and port activities, and leading port members, in order to assist Mediterranean ports in building a resilient, progressive, and vibrant maritime sector through the use of digitalisation.

The MEDports Association, a long-time partner of the UfM in the field of transport, gathers 24 major Mediterranean ports representing about 70% of the total traffic in the Mediterranean. Its goals are to enhance co-operation between member ports to face new international logistics and commercial challenges and highlight the pivotal position and importance of the Mediterranean in new global cargo flows. The MEDports Association also aims to facilitate the creation of new maritime trade links between ports affiliated with MEDports by enhancing the exchange of data and by collaborating in the implementation of sustainable, secure and efficient transport corridors, promote and support interests of MEDports’ members before international organisations and institutions; and study problems relating to port activities and/or port and maritime sector in the context of international treaties or regulations with a focus on impacts on the Mediterranean.

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With over 20% of the world’s trade in goods in 2018, the intra-regional market of the UfM continues to be one of the most relevant global markets, and yet, the region is one of the least economically integrated worldwide. With over 20% of the world’s trade in goods in 2018, the intra-regional market of the UfM continues to be one of the most relevant global markets, and yet, the region is one of the least economically integrated worldwide. Indeed, integration has progressed unevenly, across and within sub-regions of the UfM, in all policy domains. Trade and inadequate infrastructure for transport and energy connectivity remain important challenges. The UfM is firmly working on this front to increase the resilience of the region in the future through the enhancement of its integration.

The key recommendations emanating from the Forum will feed into preparatory work for the coming UfM Ministerial on Trade, which will be convened during the last quarter of 2023. Among these recommendations, participants underlined the need to keep digital processes coherent and lean to enhance trade capacities and abilities of actors with weaker infrastructure and provide them space to grow towards (green) technology orientations and digital processes. Digitalisation in this sense would also enhance regional trade and investment relations, and support resilience.

In this light, the sectors that have been identified with the highest potential of north-south collaboration for green trade and investments and to enhance resilience in the region were: (Green) Energy, Green technology, E-commerce, Green tourism, Automotive, Agrifood industry, Fertilisers and pest control, Medical/ Sanitary, Logistics, Education and Textile.

Integration in times of crisis: towards a responsible economic integration

In view of reinforcing their efforts in enhancing trade and investment around the Mediterranean, UfM Member States met in July and December 2022, in the framework of the UfM Regional Platform on Trade and Investment. They followed up on the planned work encompassing the three main pillars of Sustainable Trade, Sustainable Investment and Regional Integration, along the lines of the Joint Declaration by UfM Trade Ministers of November 2020.

- Sustainable Trade: participants discussed the impact of the geopolitical crises on trade in the UfM Region, notably its effects on food and energy security, and reviewed actions taken and planned to address these challenges. Participants called to step up engagement on
the issue of food security in view of the critical situation faced by several countries of the region. They also reviewed tools to enhance the resilience of value chains, as well as the green and digital transition.

- **Sustainable Investment:** UfM Member States exchanged on strategies and tools to promote additional and more sustainable investments in the MENA region, notably the recent experience in applying the OECD FDI Qualities toolkit in policy dialogue with countries of the region as part of the EU-supported project on investment in the Mediterranean.

- **Regional Integration:** Finally, UfM Member States welcomed the soft launch of the upgraded Euromed Trade Helpdesk, implemented by the International Trade Centre with support from the EU, in partnership with the national focal points. The new Euromed Trade Helpdesk integrates a number of new features and new data, and is available for free to economic operators and decision makers from the region. The International Labour Organization (ILO) also presented their newest report “The nexus between trade, investment and employment. A regional overview”.

To include larger stakeholders in the conversation, the UfM Secretariat, together with Casa Mediterráneo and the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), organised a Seminar on “Integrating in Times of Crisis: Towards a Responsible Economic Integration”, in Alicante, Spain, on 13 June 2022. The seminar presented a follow-up to the UfM Progress Report on Regional Integration that was launched in May 2021. It focused on two thematic areas, namely Clean Energy Integration and Sustainable Value Chains, where panelists exchanged their views on economic integration modalities, investment attractiveness, trade facilitation and new energies in the UfM region.

Preparing the economy to face the challenges of climate change

In light of the pressing realities experienced across the Euro-Mediterranean region, the promotion of sustainable, green, low-carbon and circular resource-efficient sectors seems today to be not only a contribution to an inclusive and sustainable economic recovery in the region: indeed, it also presents an opportunity to build a new and long-term green economic model in the countries of the Mediterranean region, that promotes job creation, circular economy, sustainable supply chains, and green investments. It will also help achieve the European Green Deal, including the EU’s bilateral and regional cooperation and trade policies, as well as the EU’s demand for clean energy from producer countries in the South. In this context, in December 2022, the UfM organised a workshop on “Green Economy Promotion: how to make green economy work for sustainable development and regional integration?” in Algiers (Algeria), in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry of Algeria and with the support of the German Development Cooperation. This event, that brought together over 100 participants representing a wide range of relevant stakeholders, aimed at discussing three axes:

- The importance of green economy in terms of sustainable economic development, fight against climate change and environment protection, job creation and developmental gap reduction.
- The key role that a green economy can play in enhancing the much-needed regional integration given the huge demand for clean energy because of the green deal in the North, on the one hand, and the tremendous potential to produce this type of energy in the South, on the other hand.
- The requirements to unlock the full potential of green economy, including through setting favourable strategies, green skills development, innovation and research.

Notably, shows that MENA countries should reinforce their efforts to promote a structural reform agenda that improves economic resilience, inclusive societies, sustainability, welfare provision, and to promote deals responding to the urgency of climate change capitalising on green and digital transitions. It must, however, be kept in mind, that realistic strategies also depend on fiscal affordability.

The pandemic and the geopolitical crises in the region have strengthened the rationale for cooperative solutions to address challenges that while regional, generate global consequences. Policy reforms are for the national level, but international cooperation is key to develop sound policy tools to help the reform process. MENA countries are encouraged to further strengthen their collaboration with multilateral platforms, such as the UfM and the OECD, engaging with peers across the world, to benefit from the exchange of experiences and best policy practice.

The promotion of sustainable, green, low-carbon and circular resource-efficient sectors is key to unlocking an inclusive and sustainable economic recovery in the region.
On the road towards a new regional agenda on transport connectivity

In view of enhancing a more sustainable, smart, resilient, cleaner and inclusive mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean region, UfM Member States sought in 2022 to continue working towards a new regional agenda on Transport. Throughout several meetings, they discussed a common vision for trans-Mediterranean integration in the infrastructure sector, through notably a renewed Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean region (RTAP) for the period 2021-2027.

In this context, the new RTAP would assist UfM countries in mitigating risks and considering adaptation options to build resilience, future-proof national transport policies, as well as strengthen the region’s culture of preparedness and evidence-based anticipatory policy-making, with strategic foresight on a regional level. It would define the short- and mid-term priorities towards achieving the overall long-term goal of regional integration in the transport and mobility sector.

To make this vision a reality, the new RTAP would build on and complement previous and current regional, sub-regional and bilateral cooperation frameworks, initiatives, programmes, and action plans in the transport sector in the Mediterranean region, in particular the 2013 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Transport and the recommendations and suggestions in the Evaluation report of the previous Regional Transport Action Plan (RTAP 2014-2020).

The meetings brought together national transport coordinators and focal points for land, air and maritime transport and logistics from the Ministries of Transport of UfM Member States, the European Commission and the European Transport Support project (ETSP), as well as delegates from key regional and international partner organisations, such as Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) and the Center for Transport Studies for the Western Mediterranean (CETMO).

Enabling Energy Transition in the Mediterranean Region (meetMED) initiative was announced, in view of raising further awareness and increasing action in the region on those crucial issues.

The three partners notably launched the Programme for Energy Efficiency in Buildings’ investment facility in the Mediterranean region (PEEB Med). PEEB will expand its financing support to 7 Southern Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia) from 2022 onwards in partnership with the European Commission. With a total budget of €460 million, PEEB Med will directly benefit 14 million people in those Mediterranean countries, and help avoid 1 million tons of CO2 equivalent over a 50-year period.

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Building a regional dialogue to anticipate, prepare and respond to disasters

Civil protection is the protection of people, the environment and property against all kinds of natural and human-induced disasters. Along with the deployment of forces and equipment in response to an emergency, it also involves the planning and preparation for such events. This includes carrying out risk assessments and agreeing on protection and rescue plans and procedures.

In light of the growing number of disasters in the Euro-Mediterranean area, notably due to the climate emergency, civil protection is more than ever at the heart of regional cooperation.

In line with past meetings of the UfM civil protection Director-Generals and their recommendations, as well as with the leadership of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and other key partners, the UfM Secretariat launched its Regional Dialogue Platform on Civil Protection in 2022, which will create a space for regional dialogue and consultation.

The objectives of this platform will mainly entail developing a comprehensive regional strategy on civil protection; and paving the way to a fourth UfM Directors-General Meeting on Civil Protection.

To know more
Discover the timeline of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on Civil Protection here:

PROCULTHER: Protecting Cultural Heritage from the Consequences of Disasters

Italy, France, Spain and Turkey are risk-prone countries and, at the same time, extremely rich in cultural heritage assets, some of these designated by UNESCO as World Heritage sites. Moreover, these countries have gained significant experience in the growing sector of cultural heritage protection in emergencies and can contribute to this with their valuable background in this field.

Between 2019 and 2021, the International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and the Fondazione Hallgarten – Franchetti Centro Studi Villa Montesca (Italy) partnered with these four countries, along with the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, to pool together professional skills and competences to:

• Place cultural heritage protection at the top of national civil protection agendas and make cultural heritage protection a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder issue
• Improve collaboration and coordination arrangements among national disaster management players to promote better-organised and more effective national civil protection systems
• Create tools and concrete technical support with the purpose of initiating or further developing national discussions on the development of national capacities in this field
• Increase the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) capacities and better-protected cultural heritage worldwide through the availability of a UCPM led capacity in support of national response actions in case of emergency.

With an overall budget of €800,000 (co-financed by 75% from the European Commission), the PROCULTHER team supported the implementation of:

A European methodology for the protection of cultural heritage in emergency
Establishing a European civil protection capacity to provide guidance and support globally for Cultural Heritage first aid during emergencies

Based on its success, the project today has been extended for a new phase (2022-2023) and expanded to Germany and Portugal as well. It was presented during the pre-event of the 7th UfM Regional Forum on 23 November, in Barcelona.
Acronyms and abbreviations

AfCFTA
African Continental Free Trade Area

ALF
Anna Lindh Foundation

ARLEM
Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly

BMZ
German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation

CETMO
Center for Transport Studies for the Western Mediterranean

CIHEAM
International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

CMI
Center for Mediterranean Integration

COP
Conference of the Parties

DG MARE
European Commission’s Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

DSG
Deputy Secretary General

EIB
European Bank of Investment

EMGN
Euro-Mediterranean Guarantee Network

EMP
Euro-Mediterranean partnership

EMUNI
The Euro-Mediterranean University

ETSP
European Transport Support project

EU
European Union

FAO
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FLR
Forest and Landscape Restoration

GDP
Gross Domestic Product

GIZ
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Development Cooperation)

IAPH
International Association of Ports and Harbors

ICCRBM
International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

ICZM
Integrated Coastal Zone Management

ILO
International Labour Organization

MedECC
Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change

Med4Jobs
Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs

meetMED
Mitigation Enabling Energy Transition in the Mediterranean Region

MENA
Middle East and North Africa

MSMEs
Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises

NDCs
Nationally Determined Contributions

NEETs
Those not in employment, education or training

OECD
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OPD
Organizations of persons with disabilities

OTIF
Organisation for International Carriage by Rail

PEEB
Programme for Energy Efficiency in Buildings

PEEB Med
Programme for Energy Efficiency in Buildings’ investment facility in the Mediterranean region

PRIMA
Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area

RBMP
River Basin Management Plan

R&I
Research & Innovation

R20
Regions of Climate Action

RTAP
Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean Region

SDG
Sustainable Development Goal

Sida
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SME
Small and medium-sized enterprise

STEM
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

UCPM
European Union Civil Protection Mechanism

UEMF
Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez

UfM
Union for the Mediterranean

UN
United Nations

UNESCO
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNIDO
United Nations Industrial Development Organization

VET
Vocational Education and Training

WBF
Women Business Forum

WHO
World Health Organization
The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation which brings together all countries of the European Union and 16 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.