



## Outcome Document

### UfM Conference on Youth Entrepreneurship and the Future of Work *Maritim Hotel Plaza Tirana, Albania – 13 June 2023*

#### Context

Acting upon pertinent Ministerial Declarations and anchoring to the “UfM Youth Strategy 2030: Euro-Mediterranean Youth towards a Common Goal”, the UfM Secretariat partnered with the German Development Cooperation to hold the **UfM Conference on Youth Employment and the Future of Work** in the Albanian capital Tirana on **13 June 2023** under the auspices of the Ministry of Finances and Economy of the Republic of Albania, with a focus on **youth-led organisations and networks, national and regional youth support programs, as well as entrepreneurial skills for the future**. The event was co-sponsored by the European Commission and benefitted from the active engagement of the Delegation of the European Union to Albania and the Young Professionals Network (YPN).

The Conference, which brought together 60 participants, forms part of the **UfM Roadmap on Employment and Labour 2022-2025**, implementing the 2022 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour (Marrakech). The Conference provided a perfect space for showcasing success stories, best practices and inspiring efforts from around the region.

The Conference was opened by *(in order of interventions) Dr. Abdelkader El Khissassi, Deputy Secretary General for Economic Development and Employment of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM); H.E. Delina Ibrahimaj, Minister of Finances and Economy of the Republic of Albania and Mr. Andrea Vera, Head of Section of Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Delegation of the European Union to Albania.*

#### Key takeaways:

- There is a dire need to invest in an enabling ecosystem conducive to the emergence of innovative startups. This ecosystem should take into consideration the needs and the experiences of different segments of stakeholders as well as existing frameworks as leverages.
- Actions should be coordinated in order to tackle the triple challenge cited by most of the startups in the region, namely the need for funding, know-how and network. Mentoring, consultancy, and training are of paramount importance in this respect.
- There are reasons to believe that the young generation(s) now think differently, and that, in addition to being more flexible, mobile and tech-savvy, they are already mentalized to embrace a career of transitory stations, as opposed to the one-employer-career model that is becoming obsolete.



- Green, blue and digital skills are cited as the most pertinent skills for the future labour landscape, with sectors like Platform, Creative and Creator's Economy oft-cited as drivers of future economic growth.
- There is a call for introducing more efficient measures to facilitate mobility within the UfM Region and for better coordination to make the movement of young people more fluid. Mobility is key for a closer economic integration.
- Digitalisation can help create jobs and employ people in a region where youth unemployment and informality are among the highest in the world and are among the major root causes of illegal migration. The future of work is "remote", and this makes "mobility" key to this future. Ways to value the potential of the digital nomads should be explored.
- There is a need to bridge the gender gap when it comes to both skill development, access to labour markets and entrepreneurship opportunities, including digitally. Diversity should be promoted and assessed as an added value.
- Passion, purpose and patience are basic to the entrepreneurial mindset. Curiosity, adaptability, authenticity and collaboration further consolidate the conversion of entrepreneurial ideas into concrete actions on the ground.
- Social entrepreneurship is a very powerful tool to fight against social prejudices and social injustice.
- A mechanism should be structured for the regulation and cross-validation of non-formal and informal learning, micro-credentials, and combining career guidance with entrepreneurial skills.
- Stability and peace in the region require strong communities and empowered youth. NGOs can play a crucial role not only in supporting young people, but also in making sure that the youth assume the necessary responsibilities.
- Brain-drain is one of the most serious challenges to economic development in the region, and particularly in the Western Balkans and the MENA region.
- Importance of proposing relevant activities for each stage of the awareness-raising process:
  - *Information/consciousness-raising: providing good information (info session, testimonies, learning by doing at school, teacher's training)*
  - *Persuasion/desirability (events) to increase the desirability of those who want to develop a project and who may not dare.*
  - *Knowledge acquisition/decision (workshop – program) learn – accumulate knowledge, develop skills to develop the project.*
  - *Moving on to action/Experimentation/Implementation (incubator).*
- The importance of generating and coordinating an ecosystem to encourage synergies between the different actors directly involved in this awareness-raising process and indirectly involved in youth entrepreneurship (education, youth sector, employment, training ,...).



### Prominent Projects, Programs and Initiatives:

- Through the **Youth Guarantee Programme**, youth and civil society organisations can support better employment, continued education, apprenticeship, and traineeship for young people under the age of 30 in the Western Balkans region. The European Union fosters more impactful youth employment policies in the South Neighbourhood through the upcoming regional programme focused on NEET, and the UfM Community of Practices for Youth Employment.
- The **Mediterranean Youth Foundation** which started in Egypt has grown exponentially through a regional approach that yielded the flagship initiative: Mediterranean Youth Academy, which will celebrate its third edition this year. The Foundation has already implemented several proposals put forward by young people from the Euro-Mediterranean region.
- **ERASMUS+** places a strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life.
- **The European Union's Skills Agenda**, including the European Year of Skills initiative, can inspire further reforms enabling flexible and quality assured learning pathways, including micro credentials, individual learning accounts, skills validation and career guidance.
- **Young Professionals Network** in Albania has been empowering and developing the skills of young professionals, by strengthening their rights and by increasing the capacity and the ability to participate in the workforce, policy making and decision-making processes. The **Government of Albania** has consolidated under the Youth Guarantee umbrella various policy priorities and investments (skills, employment, education, innovation, entrepreneurship, infrastructure development and competitiveness).
- **SAFIR** is an ambitious EU-funded project supporting young entrepreneurs from 9 Mediterranean countries and Universities to develop entrepreneurial skills through projects having social, cultural and environmental impact. Regional networking is encouraged as well as dialogue between youth and governmental authorities. Young entrepreneurs receive the support from business incubators and receive sub-grants' from the EU.
- Initiated by the Euro-Mediterranean-Arab Association (EMA e.V.) and supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the mentoring program **Ouissal** is dedicated to supporting the socioeconomic participation of women in their home countries. The program selects more than 100 female founders and women striving into leadership positions matching them in intercultural tandems between Algeria, Egypt, Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. Together they work in remote tandems throughout a year and will receive master classes, peer group support and a final business forum to network within all participating countries.
- The **Urban Transition Mission** is a global Mission Innovation to 2035, catalysing investments in research, development, and demonstration to make clean energy affordable, attractive and accessible for all. It was started in Albania (focus areas: Lezha, other Cities to be involved by August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023) by the advice and support of AL-Green, that is now coordinating and



managing it. Given the long-term perspective of this Program and the broad spectrum of sectors covered (spatial planning, mobility, energy, water, nature-based solutions, waste...), with dedicated financial support it could offer an interesting frame and ground for youth activism and entrepreneurship opportunities.

- **yet.brussels – “Young Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow”**. The regional strategy coordinated by hub.brussels –the Brussels Business Support Agency. The agency plays a facilitating role within the youth entrepreneurship ecosystem. It also coordinates a call for projects to support awareness-raising and support initiatives. The Yet website brings together awareness-raising and support programmes (about 70 projects from 30 organisations). It gives also visibility to all the latest news from this ecosystem.
- **StartLab.BRUSSELS**: Based in the heart of Brussels, StartLAB.Brussels is the “go-to place” for young entrepreneurs. The team empowers and supports young entrepreneurs from idea to impact, offering its tools and knowledge, leveraging its unique position within universities and Belgian entrepreneurial ecosystems. StartLAB.Brussels is a diverse, dynamic, ambitious and innovative community. StartLAB Brussels is a program designed by entrepreneurs, for entrepreneurs from all backgrounds. StartLAB.Brussels is partly subsidized by the “yet.brussels” call for projects.