



Concept Note  
UfM Community of Practice  
Supporting Transition from Education to Employment Readiness (STEER)

**I. Background:**

This concept note presents guidelines for the second edition of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Community of Practice on Youth Employment. The first cohort 2022-2024 was set up by the [UfM Ministerial Declaration of Marrakech](#), May 2022 and has finished its work in December 2024 with the adoption of a Charter<sup>1</sup>.

despite significant investment in education, including vocational education and training, the Euro-Mediterranean region has one of the highest unemployment rates globally, particularly among graduates, youth and women. This makes job creation a priority for UfM countries.

This second edition starts from the consideration that the gap between education and business remains a persistent challenge, limiting for instance the real-world impact of academic research and hindering the employability of graduates. While academic institutions produce knowledge and train future professionals, the labour market requires skilled workforce with practical experience and industry-specific competencies. Yet, a gap between educational curricula and labour market needs often results in graduates struggling to transition from education to meaningful employment.

This challenge is particularly manifest in the Mediterranean region, where diverse economies, varying levels of industrial development, and regional socio-economic disparities affect workforce integration and the creation of career paths. Many countries in the region experience high youth unemployment rates, while businesses report skill shortages in employment-intensive and future-proof sectors such as technology, renewable energy, sustainable tourism, and the circular economy. Strengthening academia and vocational education and training providers -business collaboration is crucial for addressing these challenges and fostering regional economic resilience.

The UfM Community of Practice (CoP) on Supporting Transition from Education to Employment Readiness (STEER) presents an effective solution to bridge this divide. By fostering continuous dialogue, mutual understanding, and knowledge exchange between academia, vocational education and training providers and industry, the CoP will contribute to align educational pathways with market demands. This initiative will provide a structured platform where academic and training institutions, businesses, and apprentices/students across the Mediterranean engage in discussions, share best practices, and co-design solutions that enhance employability and drive sustainable economic growth.

UfM CoP on STEER is supported by the German Development Cooperation and the European Commission (DG EMPL).

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<sup>1</sup> The Charter will be published at a later stage.



## II. Objectives

- 1) **Enable continued practitioner and expert exchange:** Create a space that encourages peer-learning and ideation across sectors and countries;
- 2) **Foster common regional projects and formats** initiated through the CoP;
- 3) **Application on the ground:** Members are in positions to directly implement ideas and best practices developed in the CoP in their home countries. Members will have to report 6 months after the meetings how they were able to make use of the CoP-experience in their home countries.

## III. Topics

- 1) **Enhance Employability:** Develop initiatives that enhance the employability of graduates by aligning academic curricula with the specific needs of the labour market across the Mediterranean region.
- 2) **Regional Knowledge Exchange:** Facilitate the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and innovative ideas between educators and industry professionals in the Mediterranean region.
- 3) **Skill Development:** Promote the development of essential skills, including technical proficiency, problem-solving, communication, and leadership, tailored to the mediterranean job market.
- 4) **Collaborative Research:** Encourage collaborative research projects that address regional challenges, while developing partnership opportunities between academic and business actors.
- 5) **Networking Opportunities:** Create networking opportunities for students, educators, and professionals to foster partnerships and collaborations within the Mediterranean region.
- 6) **Continuous Learning:** Provide continuous learning and professional development opportunities for both educators and industry professionals.
- 7) **Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** Foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship by supporting regional startups, incubators, and entrepreneurial initiatives.

## III. Modalities

- UfM CoP on STEER will start its work as soon as possible this year 2025 and will function until the end of the year.
- UfM CoP on STEER will be convened for online meetings (dates to be confirmed), as well as two in-person meetings:
  - The first in-person meeting: (Athens, 1-3 July 2025), back-to-back with the UfM Conference on “Tourism and Job creation in the Mediterranean”.
  - The second in-person meeting: (Valetta, 13-14 October 2025), in the margins of the 6<sup>th</sup> UfM Ministerial on Employment and Labour.
- Mr. Sebastian Stölting, will be facilitating the work of UfM CoP on STEER through the online and in-person meetings. He will ensure active engagement, foster dynamic discussions, and guide UfM CoP on STEER towards a productive exchange.



#### IV. Members of UfM CoP on STEER

- UfM CoP on STEER will bring together a cohort of up to 10 stakeholders and practitioners from the UfM Region<sup>2</sup>, it should ideally include a gender balance and an equal representation from the EU and non-EU UfM Member States working in relevant institutions, including but not limited to:
  - Private sector representatives (start-ups, lead companies with a solid history in social corporate responsibility, young entrepreneurs, apprentices, business support organisations, etc.).
  - Private Training Institutions and Private Employment Services.
  - Universities, VET providers, Think Tanks and Research Institutions.

The Members of UfM CoP on STEER should commit to active participation in the meetings.

#### V. The Steering Committee

##### A Steering Committee will be composed of the following:

- The UfM Secretariat: The Economic Development and Employment Division (EDE) and the Higher Education and Research Division (HER).
- The German Development Cooperation.
- The European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission (DG EMPL).
- The Facilitator.

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<sup>2</sup> A list of more names (15/20) will be consolidated in case of need for a replacement.