

From Research to Business: Turning Knowledge into Jobs, Innovation, and Growth

October 13–15, 2025 in Malta

The Mediterranean region is rich in scientific talent and academic output, but the valorization of research into tangible economic and societal value remains limited. While research institutions across UfM member states continue to generate world-class knowledge, structural barriers persist in scaling inventions, attracting investment, and enabling cross-sectoral collaboration. This gap between knowledge creation and innovation uptake constrains the region’s potential for job creation, sustainable development, and regional competitiveness.

Despite being the most educated generational group in Southern Mediterranean history, youth unemployment remains alarmingly high, often exceeding 30% in some countries. In fact, the region hosts the highest unemployment rate among higher education graduates globally, reaching 25% in North Africa according to UNDP figures. This reflects a disconnect between the region’s advanced academic output and its underperforming innovation ecosystems. In several Southern Mediterranean countries, over 32% of enterprises cite labor skill mismatches as a major constraint to hiring.

At the same time, the region holds significant opportunities to reposition itself as a hub for sustainable innovation by strengthening research commercialisation, enhancing public-private collaboration, and building innovation-ready ecosystems. Universities and research institutes are increasingly recognized not just as educational actors, but as engines of regional development.

Promising groundwork already exists on this topic. Research programmes such as PRIMA (Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area) and Horizon Europe’s Mediterranean Initiative have already yielded mature, high-potential research projects across critical sectors, from water and agriculture to health and renewable energy. These initiatives offer fertile ground for scaling solutions into real-world impact and should be actively harnessed to drive inclusive economic development and green innovation.

Against this backdrop, and building on the UfM Ministerial on Research and Innovation (2022) in Paris, the UfM Youth Forum (2024) in Helsinki, and prior Innovation–Employability Nexus conferences, the High-Level Segment of the “From Research to Business” conference seeks to elevate the role of research valorisation in regional cooperation. **The conference, supported by the German Development Cooperation, brings together policymakers, leading institutions, and regional actors to share strategic initiatives, reflect on stakeholder needs, and contribute to shaping the innovation pillar of a future UfM Ministerial on Research and Innovation.**

MONDAY, October 13 Conference Day	
9:00 – 11:30	<p>High-Level Session on “Research to Business”</p> <p>This high-level session focuses on unlocking the potential of research commercialization as a driver of innovation and regional development. Through strategic dialogue and real-world inspiration, it aims to elevate research valorisation as a shared priority across institutions, sectors, and borders.</p> <p>09:00 High-Level Opening Remarks 09:30 Fireside Chat (TBD) 09:50 Panel I – The Unsung Heroes: Scaling Research-to-Business Across the Region 10:30 Panel II – The Unprecedented Opportunity: Research Valorization as a Key Enabler of Regional Prosperity 11:10 Closing Keynote: The Road Ahead</p>
11:30 – 12:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
12:00 – 13:00	<i>Side Event: High-Level Event on “Labour Migration” Organised by Malta (Optional)</i>
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Buffet Lunch</i>
14:30 – 19:00	<p>Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Policy Conference <i>“Exploring the Future of Jobs and Skills in the Mediterranean region”</i></p> <p>This high-level ministerial conference brings together leaders from across the Mediterranean to explore the future of jobs and skills in the region. For more information and the full program kindly refer to <i>this document</i>.</p>
20:00	<i>Dinner Offered by Malta at Phoenicia Hotel</i>

TUESDAY, October 14 Research to Business Workshop Day 1	
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome Short introduction to the purpose and format of the two-day workshops coupled with introducing practicalities and workshop guidelines.
9:15 – 11:15	World Climate Simulation A workshop with a systems simulation exploring the complexities of climate change, highlighting the need for scalable, global collaboration and solutions. This sets the scene for the environmental aspect of the quintuple helix model, while creating urgency for research commercialisation. This workshop will also act as the icebreaker to make sure trainees feel comfortable with each other. <i>For an overview of the workshop, kindly refer to the MIT Teaching Resource Library.</i>
11:15 – 11:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:45 – 13:15	Understanding Research Commercialization A session contextualizing commercialisation pathways, key considerations throughout the process, different models from around the world, and how we have ended up in the models we have today. Case examples will be used to highlight the variety of skills and networks needed in the innovation process. This session will also introduce the different stakeholders in the context of the quintuple helix model. <i>Exercise: Participants will map their local ecosystem as well as the key premises and values they're built on through working with the Ecosystem Assessment Canvas.</i>
13:30 – 14:30	<i>Networking Lunch</i>
14:30 – 16:30	Ecosystems as a Key Enabler for Research Commercialisation This segment will feature discussions on the current state of research commercialisation in the Mediterranean, and highlight successful initiatives that have advanced innovation. Key projects supported by PRIMA and institutes like CIHEAM and UNIMED will be presented to highlight the regional excellence in the field.
17:00 – 19:00	<i>Dinner (Location TBD)</i>

WEDNESDAY, October 15 Research to Business Workshop Day 2	
9:00 – 10:30	Funding & Legal An information-heavy session focused on an overview of how venture capital works, public funding instruments and grants, and typical legal considerations with emphasis on IPR.
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:00 – 12:30	Go-to-Market & Spinout Support This session will double down on the everyday work in supporting research commercialisation. The session will be centered around the Innovation Readiness Level™ framework developed for innovation advisors in universities but later adapted to cover a wide range of fields. Through the lens of the framework we will go through key considerations for supporting spinout creation. <i>For a full overview of the tool kindly refer to the KTH IRL Tool.</i>
12:30 – 13:30	<i>Networking Lunch</i>
13:30 – 14:30	Academia & Business A session focused on the mechanics and systems of how academia and industry can collaborate to enable and enhance research commercialisation. The session will include co-innovation and licensing, as well as an overview into the trends related to the topic over the last decades. <i>Discussion: Each participant will be asked to reflect on the extent of academia and industry collaborating at their home universities/regions.</i>
14:30 – 15:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
15:00 – 16:30	Overcoming Obstacles A closing discussion where participants reflect on structural barriers and share ideas for unlocking the potential of research commercialisation in the region against the <u>Ecosystem Assessment Canvas</u> .
16:30 – 17:00	Closing Remarks Charting the next steps in the context of the Union for the Mediterranean.