

CONFERENCE MAIN TAKEAWAYS

Opening a new stage of Euro-Mediterranean civil society engagement

Organised by IEMed, the UfM and the Government of Catalonia, and co-funded by DG MENA, the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Society Conference 2025 **is not a standalone event**. Building on months of consultations around the EC Pact for the Mediterranean and the UfM strategic Vision, the Conference develops on **the long-term EuroMed Civil Society dialogue** and its results will feed into the design of a reinforced Euro-Mediterranean agenda.

More than one hundred Euro-Mediterranean CSOs (including think tanks, academic organisations and networks) as well as economic actors and regional initiatives from 30 countries gathered in Barcelona to reinforce **the role of civil society as a key actor** in Euro-Mediterranean decision making.

In a moment of polarisation, mistrust and populism, the engagement of the conference participants and the dynamism of the debates prove that Euro-Mediterranean cooperation is alive, valuable, and worth pursuing. This space of dialogue has offered civil society participants a channel to identify concerns and turn them into constructive proposals, providing institutional stakeholders with key social concerns while building a shared sense of responsibility within the challenging geopolitical context the Euro-Mediterranean region faces today.

Euro-Mediterranean institutions, civil society and territorial actors called for an enhanced cooperation between the EU, the UfM and regional networks, connecting existing platforms instead of creating new silos, thus enhancing the **coherence of a Euro-Mediterranean, multi-actor, ecosystem**. This requires a **collaborative governance model capable of activating alliances that transcend North South asymmetries**, thus fostering a trust-based environment and sustained engagement.

Participants to the EuroMed Civil Society Conference jointly claim for a new phase of partnership, moving from **the visionary spirit of 1995 into the transformative will of 2025** around the following guiding principles:

1. **From consultation to co-creation:** civil society engagement must shift from consultation to systematic involvement *across the entire Euro-Mediterranean program and policy cycle*, starting from concrete initiatives that could then be showcased and replicated across the region.
2. **Civic space as a precondition:** Effective civil society participation requires safeguards, trust and an enabling environment for civil society, especially considering the increasingly global restrictive trends being faced today.
3. **Towards a coherent Mediterranean ecosystem:** stakeholders called for a more aligned and complementary cooperation between EU, UfM, regional networks and territories — connecting existing platforms instead of creating new institutional setups.
4. **Structured Dialogue** — reinforcing the existing forms of dialogue aiming at creating more permanent, predictable, retroactive and regular co-creation mechanisms.

Participatory mechanisms to support inclusive civil society engagement

The following mechanisms were **highlighted by participants to the Conference** as potential avenues for an enhanced civil society role into real decision making and oversight:

- The European Commission (mainly through its DG MENA) and the UfM should develop concrete, tangible and measurable **instruments for a more coordinated engagement** with civil-society from both shores of the Mediterranean.
- **Joint spaces of dialogue**, inclusive of public institutions and civil society actors around issues of common interest should be developed.
- **Think tanks, academic institutions and networks should feed the dialogue** through civil society mappings and research.
- **A wide notion of civil society should be mainstreamed** through the inclusion in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue of formal and informal, regional, national and local, public and private sector-related, civil society actors.
- **Participation should be monitored and progress should be reported on.** In this, regular follow up mechanisms of the actual impact of civil society contributions on Euro-Mediterranean programs and policies should be designed and rolled out.

Thematic recommendations

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As stated by participants, the role of civil society in thematic areas of common interest among Euro-Mediterranean partners is critical to bridge political goals with community needs and innovative solutions. During the Forum, three pilot sectors were showcased as an example of the added value that civil society can bring into policy discussion. In this, participants focused on three thematic areas aligned with both the UfM's priorities and the Pact's ambitions (**Inclusive Economic Development, Climate Action, People-to-People**).

Among the recommendations stemming from the discussions of the working sessions the **creation of a EuroMed Observatory on inclusive economy** to agree on a shared understanding of social and solidarity economy was suggested; the **need for further integration of the climate–peace nexus into EuroMed strategies**, recognising how climate pressures interact with conflict dynamics and systematically include CSOs, especially women-led and community actors, in climate security analysis, peacebuilding efforts and adaptation planning; in addition, the **set up structured participatory mechanisms** such as civic hubs and regular dialogue tables ensuring youth influence agendas, making universities open to communities and allowing CSOs to reduce mistrust and polarisation was also suggested.

Disclaimer:

A complete edition of the recommendations—especially at the thematic level—together with the debates generated, will be prepared and edited afterwards.