

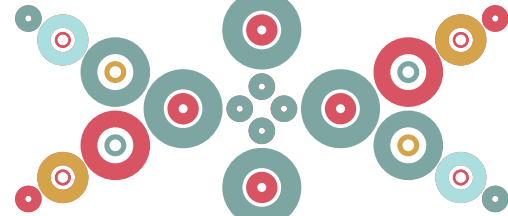


Union for the Mediterranean  
Union pour la Méditerranée  
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# Union for the Mediterranean **ACTION PLAN ON EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR 2026-2028**

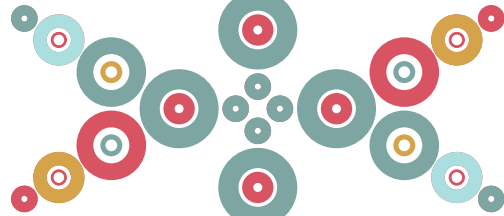
14 October 2025, Malta



# INTRODUCTION

1. The representatives of the Ministries in charge of Employment and Labour of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) gathered at their **19th UfM Regional Platform on Employment and Labour in Malta on 14 October 2025** to discuss the **Action Plan on Employment and Labour for the years 2025-2028** (hereafter “Action Plan”). The Platform was preceded on 13 October 2025 by a UfM High-Level Policy Conference on “Exploring the Future of Jobs and Skills in the Mediterranean region”.
2. The Action Plan focuses on the **future of jobs and skills in the Mediterranean region**, putting **people first** and investing into creating decent jobs with a particular focus on youth, women, elderly and other vulnerable groups. These priorities are reflected in the Joint Communication (adopted on 16 October 2025 - tbc) on the “Pact for the Mediterranean – One Sea, One Pact, One Future”, notably in its first pillar dedicated to “People”.
3. The Action Plan builds on the 5th UfM Ministerial Declaration of 2022 and integrates **new developments** as the region has experienced a complex mix of trends in employment and labour, in a context of post-pandemic recovery, persisting challenges, rising inflation and overall economic instability. While some UfM Member States have seen declining unemployment, others — particularly those facing structural challenges — continue to experience high unemployment rates, especially among women and young people. Skills and labour shortages, skills mismatches and the migration of skilled workers, weight of informal employments and low women’s labour market participation emerge as increasing and multifaceted challenges which require collaborative and mutually beneficial responses.
4. The Action Plan will be implemented by a **Work Programme**, acknowledged as live document regularly updated.





# *In the years to come, the UfM Regional Platform and its members will focus on:*

5. Promoting and implementing **international standards and policy frameworks in the fields of employment, decent work and sustainable development** as laid down within the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals, with the aim of ratifying core ILO conventions and ensuring their effective implementation.
6. Prioritising investing in education, including vocational education and training, and **development of relevant skills** that meet the evolving needs of a greener, more inclusive and digital economy, as well as an ageing

and youth engagement and participation in the labour market, while paying due attention to the most vulnerable people, including people with disabilities and people with a migrant background. Ensuring favourable conditions for private sector development and investment facilitation to create decent jobs and finance re- and upskilling is a precondition for inclusive labour markets according to a holistic human-centric approach. Strengthening microfinance to enhance micro and SMEs to scale up specially in ICT and tech sectors.

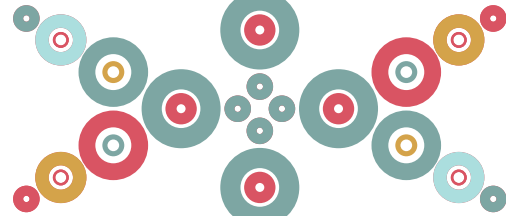
8. Promoting **freedom of association and collective bargaining** - including the involvement of social partners in the design, implementation and monitoring of economic and social policies. Promote a timely and meaningful social dialogue, both bipartite and tripartite, and ensure democratic and fair working environments in the region.
9. Integrating **digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence**, into workplaces to boost innovation and productivity while protecting workers' rights and promoting a human-centric approach and transparency.
10. Promoting **job creation, employment, decent work and fair working conditions for all, especially for youth, women and elderly**, to ensure fair recruitment practices, to attract and retain more youth and women in the labour market, to reduce the gender pay gap and career advancement gap, to create a favorable environment for youth and women's entrepreneurship and for an equal distribution of care responsibilities and unpaid work between men and women.



society. **In this regard, encouraging the complexification and diversification of local economic structures to bridge the gap between acquired skills and labour market needs, ensuring that education and training align with real economic demands.**

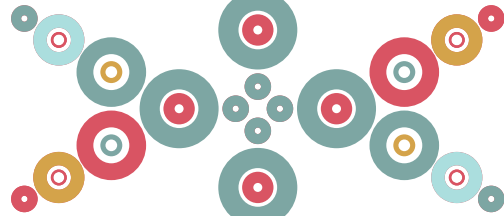
7. Promoting a competitive and sustainable **economy that works for all people, with youth- and gender-responsive employment and social policies** to support women

11. Promoting **comprehensive Active Labour Market Policies and activation measures**—such as job search assistance, tailored vocational training, and employment incentives—particularly targeting NEETs,



long-term unemployed, social protection beneficiaries and vulnerable groups, including informal workers, people with a migrant background and workers with disabilities.

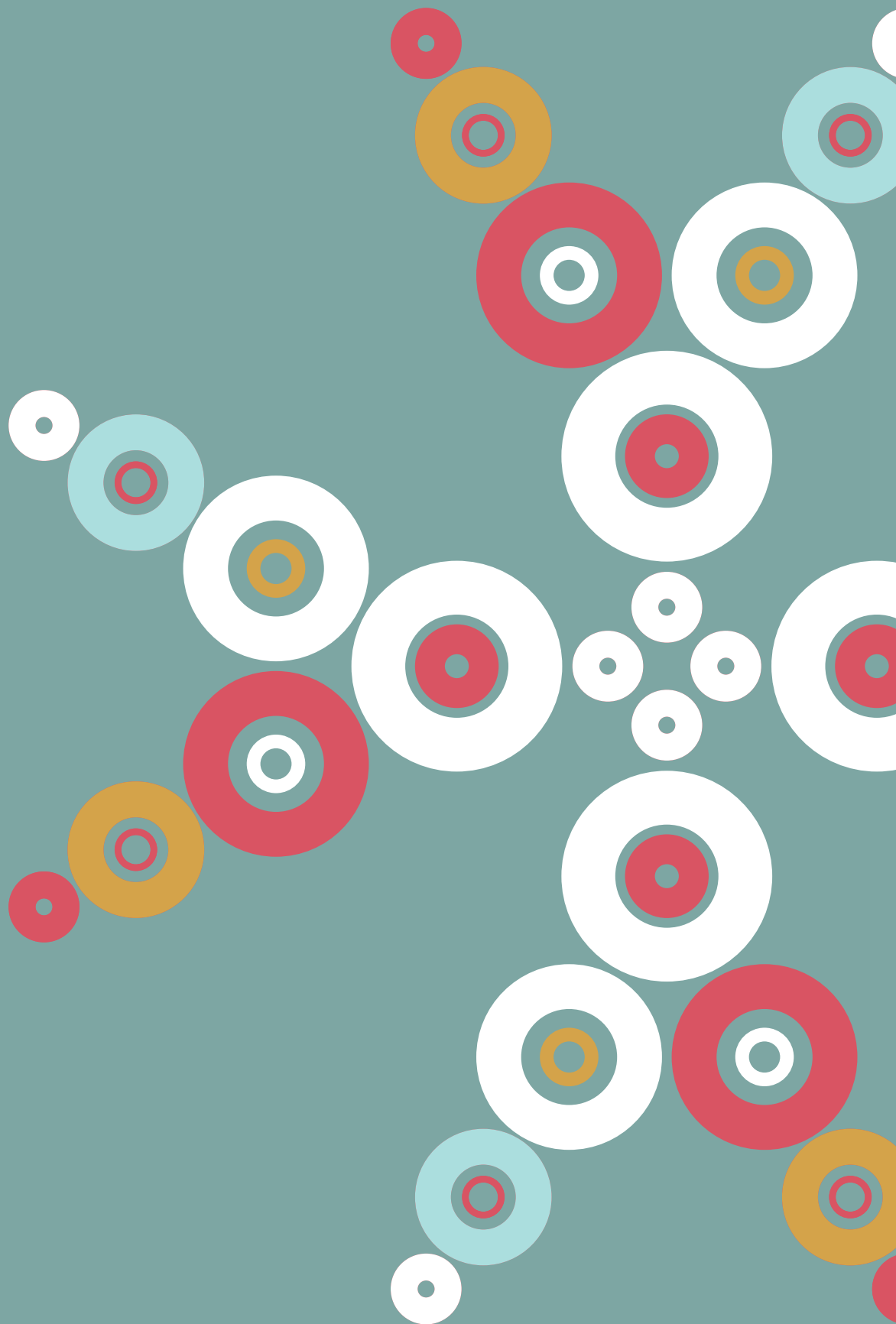
12. Strengthening the focus on young people **“Not in Employment, Education or Training” (NEETs)**, including by intensifying the efforts of Public Employment Services and the private sector to offer tailored solutions for NEETs and to make full use of the EU-funded regional programme providing support to young NEETs in the Southern Mediterranean.
13. Taking advantage of the internationalization of the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships** and its opening to UfM Member States. Also encourage more partners to join and stakeholders to make pledges to join the Alliance.
14. Exploring innovative options to make **vocational education and training systems** more modern, inclusive and attractive. This includes ensuring that these systems are gender balanced in participation, flexible, labour market relevant, and better connected to innovation, skills intelligence and skill ecosystems. Vocational education and training should be fit for the digital and green transitions, as well as more apt to prepare young people for the labour market and to support the up- and reskilling of adults.
15. Equipping young people with knowledge, **skills** and competencies, including tailored guidance, which allows them to find employment opportunities. Exploring more effective systems for validating non-formal and informal learning, strengthen qualification frameworks and introduce innovative approaches such as micro-credentials, whenever appropriate. Fostering broad stakeholders’ engagement, involving the private sector and social partners. Exploring opportunities to build on initiatives stemming from the **Union of Skills**, including the forthcoming European Strategy for vocational education and training. Support teachers and trainers as key actors in education, including vocational and training systems, through enhanced working conditions, continuous professional development, and capacity-building initiatives, ensuring they are supported and equipped to deliver high-quality, inclusive, and innovative training that meets the needs of learners, labour markets and society as a whole.
16. Exploring opportunities through the **EU Talent Pool**, the **Talent Partnerships**, as well as measures for promoting legal migration schemes and ordered migration, and easier and faster **recognition of qualifications**, investing in skills development, aligning migration with labour market needs. This in order to enhance social and labour integration as a driver for social cohesion, economic growth, and security, mutually beneficial for the EU and its partners.
17. Supporting **informal economic actors in transitioning to formalisation where relevant. Promoting pathways to business formalisation and formal employment, especially for women and vulnerable groups**, by simplifying administrative procedures – such as easing registration requirements, reducing paperwork, and providing clear, accessible guidance—and implementing progressive, low-barrier tax regimes specifically designed for micro-enterprises and self-employed workers.
18. Taking measures to promote a culture of prevention of risks in the workplace, with a view of ensuring the **occupational safety and health protection** of all workers across all sectors, taking into account the development of new technologies and climate risks.
19. Promoting the **social economy**, including support the development of legal and financial enabling frameworks for the social economy as a resilient model for locally grounded and inclusive growth, and **foster social entrepreneurship, social innovation and social finance** as vectors for sustainable competitiveness, creation of decent jobs and expansion of economic opportunities, especially for youth, women, and elderly leading to a more resilient economy in the Mediterranean region.



# *The parties are tasked to draft a roadmap with activities for 2025-2028 that touch upon the above mentioned priorities as well as include notably:*

20. Strong support to the **Team Europe Initiative (TEI)** approach ensuring complementarity with national and bilateral programmes/initiatives. In that respect, **recognize the crucial role of the regional TEI “Jobs through Trade and Investment in the Southern Neighbourhood”**, which contributes to boosting and sustaining decent job creation by focusing more on trade and investment policies, promotion instruments, entrepreneurship and skills policies, in articulation with the sectoral policy dialogues of the UfM Regional Platforms.
21. Based on its successful implementation, support to the next phase of the **UfM Hub for Jobs, Trade and Investment starting 2026** and its objective to strengthen regional cooperation in the areas of employment, trade and investment through the UfM framework.
22. Continuation and further development of the **UfM Community of Practice**:
  - **on Monitoring** in the field of employment and labour policies;
  - **on Youth Employment**.
23. Continuation of **UfM Grant Schemes** to improve the employment situation in the Mediterranean region, notably of those already more vulnerable to economic shocks and restricted mobility, such as informal workers, youth and women.
24. Organisation with the regional Social Partners organisations the sixth **UfM Forum on Social Dialogue** to be held in 2026.
25. Organisation of relevant workshops/trainings by the UfM Secretariat, in close cooperation with the European Commission (including field visits).
26. Based on the successful organisation of the Forum on Mediterranean Youth Building Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Helsinki (Sept 2024) and of the Forum on Green Entrepreneurship in Amman (April 2025), establishing an annual **UfM Forum on Employment and Labour**. This Forum will be organised by the UfM Secretariat in close cooperation with the UfM Co-Presidency.





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