



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط



The UfM Secretariat
is co-funded by the
EUROPEAN UNION

ANNUAL REPORT

BEYOND
30 BARCELONA
YEARS PROCESS

*Together for a Stronger
Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*

2025



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Message from the Secretary General Nasser Kamel



Nasser Kamel
Secretary General
Union for the
Mediterranean

Looking back at 2025, it is clear that this was a year of deep significance for the Union for the Mediterranean, and indeed for the wider Euro-Mediterranean region. It was a year in which we were confronted, with renewed force, by the fragility of the geopolitical environment we inhabit, and yet it was also a year in which our 43 Member States chose, deliberately and collectively, to invest in the future of regional cooperation.

The backdrop could not have been more testing. The war in Gaza, with its catastrophic human toll and far-reaching consequences for regional politics, alongside the profound uncertainties reshaping the wider Middle East and the ongoing war in Ukraine, weighed heavily on the entire region, deepening suffering, undermining the international rules-based order, and casting a long shadow over the trust upon which multilateral cooperation depends. Taken together, these

Thirty years since the Barcelona Declaration was signed in this city, it is worth pausing to reflect on what that founding moment represented, and on what it still means today.

overlapping crises served as sobering reminders that the Mediterranean is not a space of abstraction, but a shared reality whose instability carries direct consequences for the lives of hundreds of millions of people on all its shores.

It is in precisely such circumstances that the case for regional cooperation becomes not weaker, but more urgent. That conviction guided our work throughout 2025.

On 28 November 2025, in the city of Barcelona where it all began thirty years ago, the Union for the Mediterranean held its 10th Regional Forum. Foreign Ministers from across the 43 Member States convened under the theme “Together for a Stronger Euro-Mediterranean Partnership” and took decisions of genuine strategic consequence. They endorsed a new Vision Statement for the UfM, shaped through broad regional consultations, to guide the organisation’s work in the years ahead. At the same Forum, the Pact for the Mediterranean secured political support from EU Member States and their Southern Mediterranean partners, reinforcing the complemen-

tarity between European instruments and the UfM’s framework of co-owned regional cooperation. Together, these outcomes reaffirmed that multilateralism is not optional, and that the Mediterranean must remain a shared space of peace, prosperity and mutual understanding.

The Vision Statement is built around three interconnected pillars. It positions the UfM as a platform focused on connecting people through education, youth mobility, skills development, gender equality and social inclusion; connecting countries through strengthened dialogue, climate resilience, water and energy security, and crisis preparedness; and connecting economies by advancing trade, digital cooperation and sustainable infrastructure. This is not a bureaucratic framework. It is a political commitment by 43 governments to a shared direction at a moment when shared direction is precisely what the region needs most.

The anniversary itself matters as well. Thirty years since the Barcelona Declaration was signed in this city, it is worth pausing to reflect on what that founding moment represented, and on what it still means today. The Barcelona Process was born out of a conviction that the stability and prosperity of Europe’s southern neighbourhood were inseparable from Europe’s own. That conviction has not diminished. If anything, the crises of recent years have underscored its validity with uncomfortable clarity.

Yet an anniversary is only meaningful if it serves as a spur to action rather than a cause for self-congratulation. In 2025, we treated it as the former. The new Strategic Vision is the most tangible expression of that spirit, and the wider programme of work documented in these pages reflects the same determination to turn political commitment into practical results.

This Annual Report highlights the work of the UfM Secretariat and its partners throughout the year: the ministerial meetings, the regional platforms, the projects under implementation, the partnerships forged and the results delivered. It is a record of cooperation in practice, pursued with persistence and professionalism in circumstances that were far from straightforward.

I am grateful to all Member States, to our institutional partners, and to the dedicated staff of the UfM Secretariat for their commitment throughout 2025. The task ahead is demanding. But the direction is now clear, and the foundation on which we build is strong.

The UfM at a glance

What is the Union for the Mediterranean?

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an intergovernmental organisation that brings together 43 countries to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue through the implementation of concrete projects and initiatives addressing inclusive and sustainable development, stability and integration in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

As a direct continuation of the Barcelona Process, the launch of the UfM in July 2008, and the establishment of its Secretariat in 2010, reflected its Member States' shared political commitment to enhance the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

43 Members

Albania / Algeria / Austria / Belgium / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Bulgaria / Croatia / Cyprus / Czech Republic / Denmark / Egypt / Estonia / Finland / France / Germany / Greece / Hungary / Ireland / Israel / Italy / Jordan / Latvia / Lebanon / Lithuania / Luxembourg / Malta / Mauritania / Monaco / Montenegro / Morocco / Netherlands / North Macedonia / Palestine / Poland / Portugal / Romania / Slovakia / Slovenia / Spain / Sweden / Syria / Tunisia / Türkiye

Libya has an observer status

What is the Barcelona Process?

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, known as the Barcelona Process, is a dialogue framework born out of a commitment to strengthen relations between Europe and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, with the overall objective of establishing a Mediterranean area of peace, stability and shared

prosperity. The Barcelona Process is focused around three main baskets: Political & Security; Economic & Financial; and Social, Cultural & Human.

Since 2010, the UfM has reinforced the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, introducing a more structured and pragmatic framework of cooperation that addresses the root causes of the crises we face today.

In 2025, the UfM Secretariat and its partners commemorated the 30th anniversary of the Barcelona Process. Taken as an opportunity for renewed reflection on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, this milestone ultimately helped shape the UfM's direction for years to come.

More about the Barcelona Process:



2 Co-Presidents

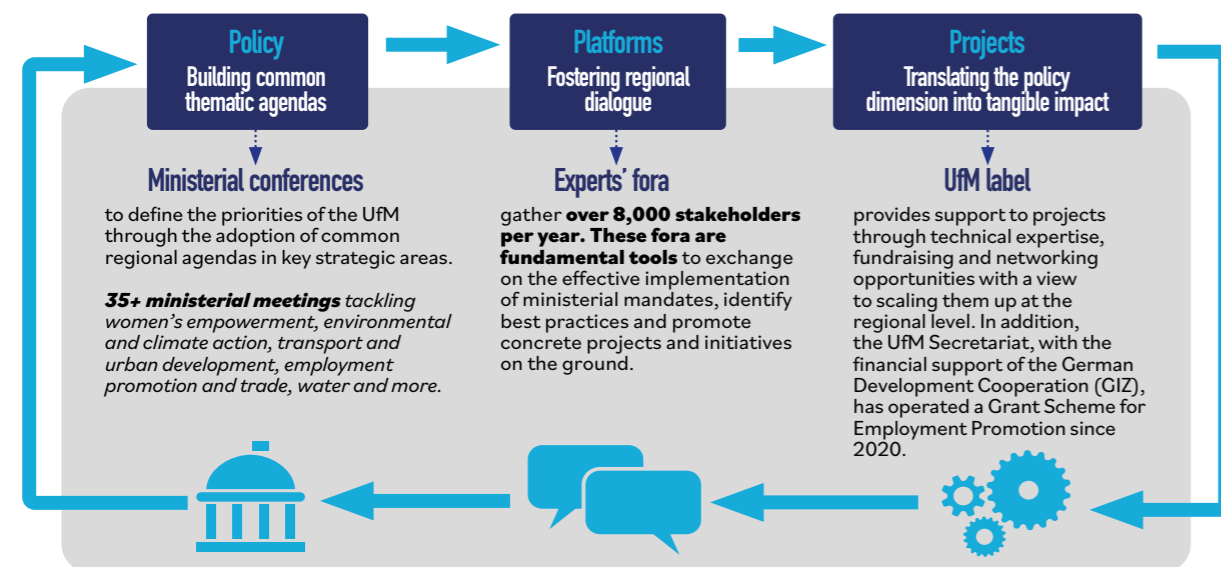
The UfM aims to build a true partnership, based on the principles of co-ownership and an equal footing between North and South. With this in mind, it is co-chaired at each level of its governance: The EU and Jordan have respectively assumed the Northern and Southern co-presidency since 2012.

Secretariat

Established in 2010 in Barcelona, the UfM Secretariat is the first permanent structure dedicated to the implementation of this partnership.

It ensures operational follow-up on regional priorities and supports the implementation of region-wide cooperation projects and initiatives.

How does the UfM operationalise its mandate? The 3P's Methodology



A renewed strategic vision for the Mediterranean

Endorsed by all 43 Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean at the 10th UfM Regional Forum, the renewed Vision Statement reasserts the UfM's role as a central platform for confidence building, dialogue, regional coordination and stability.

To that end, it sets out a comprehensive reform structured in three phases:



1 RENEWED MANDATE

Member States endorsed a new mandate focused on resilience, regional stability, economic connectivity and environmental sustainability.



2 STRATEGY FOR IMPACT

A detailed implementation work programme translates these priorities into measurable results that directly benefit the people of the Mediterranean.



3 INSTITUTIONAL RESTRUCTURING

A full internal reorganisation strengthens operational capacity, ensuring that the UfM is better equipped to meet its strategic objectives.

Through this process, the UfM is setting out a new vision for reconnecting the Mediterranean, building on the core principles of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation

while moving forward with renewed ambition. At the heart of this vision is the concept of connectivity:



through education, youth mobility, skills development, gender equality and social inclusion.

by strengthening dialogue, climate resilience, water and energy security, and crisis preparedness.

through trade, digital cooperation and green investment.

Consult the complete Vision Statement:



2025: A shared direction for the Mediterranean



10th UfM Regional Forum, Press Conference.

10th UfM Regional Forum. Joint statement of the UfM Co-Presidency:



The 30th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration, marked in November 2025, could have been an occasion for reflection alone. Instead, it became the setting for decisions that will shape the UfM's direction for years to come.

Launched on 28 November 1995, the Barcelona Process represented a shared wager on the power of structured cooperation to turn a fragmented region into a space of shared opportunity. Twenty-seven countries committed to a Euro-Mediterranean partnership built on political dialogue, economic integration, and human and cultural exchange, grounded in the conviction that the stability of Europe's southern

neighbourhood and the prosperity of its northern shore were fundamentally inseparable.

Thirty years on, that founding insight has lost none of its relevance. The war in Gaza, the fragmentation of multilateral norms, and the accelerating pace of climate change, with its attendant consequences for natural disasters and displacement, have all demonstrated what the absence of functioning regional architecture costs. The **10th UfM Regional Forum**, held in Barcelona on 28 November 2025, was therefore far more than a commemorative event. It was a moment of strategic renewal.

Consult the outcome reports of the 10th UfM Regional Forum's side events:



Co-chaired by the EU's High Representative / Vice President of the European Commission Kaja Kallas and the Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Safadi, and hosted by the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs José Manuel Albares, the meeting endorsed a **new Vision Statement for the UfM** and secured political support for the Pact for the Mediterranean. Secretary General Nasser Kamel and Minister Albares also signed a new Headquarters Agreement, strengthening the UfM's legal status and operational capacity.

In a year marked by fragmentation and instability, the 10th UfM Regional Forum showed that the Mediterranean's 43 governments have not abandoned the idea of a shared future. That, in itself, is a foundation worth building on.

The Vision Statement connects people through education, youth mobility, skills development, gender equality and social inclusion; **connects countries** by strengthening dialogue, climate resilience, water and energy security, and crisis preparedness; and **connects economies** through trade, digital cooperation and green investment. The Forum also endorsed Córdoba and Saida as the 2027 Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue.

A week of engagement beyond the ministerial table

The ministerial meeting capped a landmark week of side events drawing together regional authorities, mayors, multilateral institutions, civil society, academia, scientists and emergency responders.

On 22 November, the Euro-Mediterranean Summit of Regions, organised with the Government of Catalonia, convened sub-national authorities to align on the new Pact for the Mediterranean

and adopt a Joint Declaration. On 25 and 26 November, the 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Workshop on Wildfires brought together scientists, civil protection authorities and policy actors to strengthen cross-border preparedness and integrate satellite and AI-driven tools in emergency response.

Also on 26 November, the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Society Conference gathered over 100 representatives to reinforce civil society's role in building an inclusive Mediterranean. The Conference of Mediterranean Cities on 26 and 27 November brought together mayors and local leaders to deepen cities' engagement in regional agendas. On 27 November, the UfM's event on Regional Resilience and Recovery examined coordinated responses to the region's interconnected crises, including through partnerships with the Gulf region. It was the first time that the UfM hosts the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, who affirmed his organisation's interest in partnering with the UfM.

The week closed with a cultural commemoration at the Palau de la Música Catalana, blending flamenco, Arab and Romani traditions in a tribute to Mediterranean dialogue.

Taken together, these events demonstrated the breadth of the constituency the UfM convenes and the degree to which its new Vision Statement reflects shared realities across the region. In a year marked by fragmentation and instability, the 10th UfM Regional Forum showed that the Mediterranean's 43 governments have not abandoned the idea of a shared future. That, in itself, is a foundation worth building on.

Building bridges that go beyond institutions

As 2025 was marked by renewed institutional dialogue and regional cooperation, symbolised by the milestone 30th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the 2025 Day of the Mediterranean campaign sought to bring dialogue back to the people, beyond institutions and into the everyday spaces where conversations truly happen.

Under the theme “We need to talk, Mediterranean”, the UfM Secretariat collaborated with engaged young people from both shores of the Mediterranean to produce a series of short videos. From intergenerational reflections to calls for unity and social change, the

campaign highlighted the voices that make the Mediterranean what it is: diverse, connected and full of potential.

The messages shared were powerful:

“The sea is not a wall, but a bridge.”

“We have spoken about each other, but not to one another.”

“I wish for a generation that is not afraid of the other.”

Explore the Reels, which gathered more than 24 million views, on Instagram:



Anna Pernice
(Italy)



Bahaeddine Esannaghi
(Morocco)



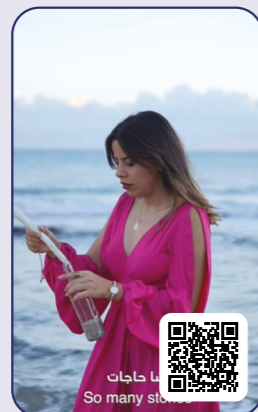
Baraka Merzaia
(Algeria)



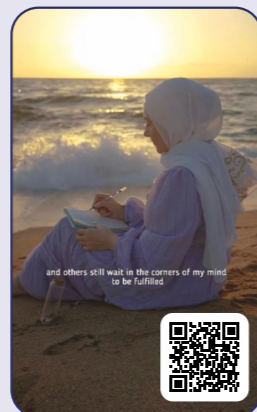
Brian Federico Rocca
(Italy)



David Cuka
(Albania)



Ghada Maatouk
(Tunisia)



Mariam Bachat
(Lebanon)



Waad Saber
(Egypt)

The 2025 Day of the Mediterranean at a glance

Revisit the 2025 campaign:



A brand-new visual identity tailored to the 2025 campaign “We need to talk, Mediterranean”!



A tailored website with **10k visits** from all over the region!

65 registered activities held under the framework of the Day of the Mediterranean in 24 countries from the region



The video teaser announcing the campaign gathered

+2M views and reached +1M people

Social media gathered

+11M engagement actions by UfM audiences.

The video campaign reached

+17M people and its videos were viewed **+24M times**



Discover the **participatory music playlist** made by contributions from citizens all over the region, created by the Interreg Next Med Programme!



Bringing the Mediterranean's shores closer together

On the **Day of the Mediterranean - 28 November - Córdoba (Spain) and Saida (Lebanon)** were officially announced as the **2027 Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue**, a title endorsed by all UfM Member States during the **10th UfM Regional Forum**.

More about the 2027 capitals:



This year-long distinction celebrates cultural diversity, strengthens Mediterranean ties, and fosters intercultural dialogue across the region.

Throughout 2027, the two cities will host a vibrant programme of cultural and civic events designed to foster exchange and understanding across the region. This initiative, jointly led with the Anna Lindh Foundation, with the support of ARLEM, spotlights sustainability, gender equality, digital inclusion and the safeguarding of both tangible and intangible heritage - fully aligned with the UfM's priorities for a more inclusive and resilient Mediterranean.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND SOCIETAL RESILIENCE

How does cooperation make societies more inclusive and resilient?

When climate change meets conflict, women pay the price — and lead the response

Across the Mediterranean, climate change and conflict do not arrive separately. They compound one another, and women and girls bear a disproportionate share of the consequences: heightened exposure to gender-based violence, deepened poverty, and systematic exclusion from the decisions that shape their futures. Recognising this interconnection is no longer enough. In 2025, the UfM moved from diagnosis to action.

The year opened with a clear signal. In March, to mark International Women's Day, the UfM Secretariat convened a webinar that brought together more than 200 participants — experts, practitioners and activists — to examine

the nexus between gender, climate change, and security across the Euro-Mediterranean region. The event marked the launch of the second **UfM-IEMed MedWE Policy Paper on the climate crisis and gender equality** and laid the analytical foundations for what followed. Panellists challenged the tendency to treat women solely as victims of these overlapping crises, stressing instead their proven role as decision-makers, negotiators and leaders of change.

By November, that framing had translated into a concrete regional mechanism. In Amman, around 80 representatives from governments, civil society, international organisations, youth networks and research institutions gathered for a two-day stakeholder dialogue, held in partnership with the Jordanian National Commission for Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), under the patronage of Jordan's Minister of Social Development. The meeting culminated in the **official launch of the UfM Women, Peace and Security (WPS)-Climate Network**. The Network is built around three thematic pillars — data and evidence, capacity building, and policy advocacy — and operates as part of an interconnected system alongside a dedicated Knowledge Hub and a UNDP-developed guidance toolkit. The Hub will deliver its first Regional Policy Report in 2026, mapping the climate-WPS landscape, identifying gaps, and offering actionable recommendations. Governance draws on a Steering Committee and thematic working groups, with membership open to governments, UN agencies, civil society, youth organisa-

UfM-IEMed MedWE Policy Paper on the climate crisis and gender equality

This policy study focuses on a critical and timely intersection – gender equality and climate change – and highlights the disproportionate impact of climate change on women, especially those living in climate-vulnerable rural areas.



Experts' Corner

Climate change and conflict compound one another.

tions, academia and regional bodies. A dedicated session during the Amman dialogue brought together national gender machineries and climate focal points from Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia — exchanges that illustrated both the diversity of national contexts and the shared imperative for regional coordination.

The distance travelled between March and November reflects a deliberate trajectory: from mapping the problem to building the tools to address it.

The women feeding the Mediterranean deserve a seat at the table

Women are at the heart of Mediterranean agro-food systems. They farm, fish, process, sell and innovate across the region — yet they consistently face barriers that limit their access to land,

finance, technology and decision-making. In addition, the nexus climate, gender and security becomes all the more relevant when it touches on food security. Closing that gap is not only a matter of equality; it is a condition for building food systems that are resilient, inclusive and capable of responding to the pressures of climate change and economic disruption. In 2025, the UfM Secretariat brought that agenda into focus through two complementary events that together moved it from analysis to commitment.

In June, the **International Symposium on Women's Empowerment through Innovation in Mediterranean Agro-Food Systems**, held in Zaragoza in partnership with the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM Zaragoza) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), gathered delegates from international organisations, academic and research



Zoom on an initiative

Euro-Mediterranean Network of Women Journalists

Women journalists across the Mediterranean share a set of common challenges: persistent gender stereotypes in media coverage, under-representation of women as experts and sources, professional isolation, and limited opportunities for cross-border collaboration. **The Euro-Mediterranean Network of Women Journalists (EMNWJ)** was established in 2025 to address these gaps directly.

Rooted in exchanges that took place at the 2024 UfM High-Level Conference on Women for the Mediterranean in Nicosia, the Network brings together women

journalists from Northern, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries in a professional, non-partisan community. It provides members with practical resources — including style guides and directories of women experts — training sessions, and collaboration opportunities designed to support career development and foster more inclusive, gender-sensitive journalism.

The Network is supported by the UfM Secretariat in collaboration with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Read the CIHEAM-UfM draft declaration on Innovation for Women Entrepreneurs in the Agro-Food Value Chain in the Euro-Mediterranean Region



institutions, civil society and the private sector from across the Mediterranean basin. The symposium assessed the current status of women as entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders in the sector, identified barriers to their full participation, and showcased practical, scalable models. Participants presented innovations ranging from circular economy projects to digital tools and cooperative models, illustrating how women are already driving transformation in agro-food systems — and what structural support is needed to take those efforts to scale.

In October, that conversation moved to Cairo, where around 80 regional stakeholders gathered for a two-day dialogue and training session organised with AECID, CIHEAM, the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Near East and North Africa Regional Office, the American University in Cairo, and the **Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) Platform**. At its core was a **capacity-building training for 50 women entrepreneurs and cooperative leaders** from seven countries — Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia — alongside a wider policy dialogue with donors, UN agencies and regional partners. Discussions were structured around four pillars: inclusive innovation ecosystems, access to finance and infrastructure, enabling policies and institutions, and leadership and collective action. The event also saw the presentation of a joint **CIHEAM-UfM draft declaration** committing both institutions to a regional agenda on innovation for women entrepreneurs in agro-food value chains.

Building infrastructure for everyone: why procurement is a gender equality issue
Public procurement rarely makes head-

lines. Yet the decisions made before a single road is laid or a bridge is built — about who is contracted, on what terms, and against what criteria — determine not only the quality and resilience of the infrastructure itself, but also who participates in the economy it creates. **In a region facing mounting climate pressures and a widening investment gap, getting procurement right is not a technical footnote. It is a strategic choice.**

In May 2025, the UfM Secretariat brought that argument to the International Transport Forum (ITF) Summit in Leipzig, Germany, co-organising a side event with the International Road Federation (IRF) and the International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC), with the financial support of Sweden through Sida, its development agency. The session examined **how qualification-based and gender-responsive procurement can be used to build more resilient transport systems in low- and middle-income countries** — a pressing concern given that natural hazards cause an estimated USD 15 billion in direct damage to global transport infrastructure annually, with low- and middle-income countries bearing approximately USD 8 billion of that cost relative to their GDP.

Speakers from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, FIDIC and IRF explored how procurement policies — which account for around **29% of government expenditure** in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries — can serve as a lever for broader social and environmental goals. The discussion highlighted qualification-based approaches that prioritise experienced contractors, sustainable practices and risk management, and examined how gender considerations can be integrated into infrastructure delivery even when projects do not explicitly carry a gender mandate.

Women are at the heart of Mediterranean agro-food systems.

Consult the report here:



The event reinforced a straightforward but underutilised insight: the procurement process is not merely administrative. Applied strategically, it can drive demand for a more diverse workforce, promote climate-adaptive design, and produce infrastructure that serves entire communities — not only those already connected.

disparities between the northern and southern shores of the region mean that the scale of the challenge varies enormously — making a coordinated, region-wide response not just desirable, but necessary.

Halfway through 2025, a capacity-building workshop on inclusive employment for persons with disabilities in the MENA region, co-organised with the ONCE Social Group and supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), brought together 20 representatives from civil society and the private sector in Madrid. Participants examined regional labour market barriers, shared good practices, and discussed advocacy tools to improve employment opportunities — laying the technical groundwork

Unemployment rates among people with disabilities frequently exceed 70%.

In the Mediterranean, disability is a barrier that policy has yet to dismantle

Across the Mediterranean, people with disabilities face some of the most entrenched forms of exclusion in

the region. Unemployment rates among this group frequently exceed 70%. Funding for disability programmes remains scarce. And the stark socio-economic

Theory of Change to support the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Agenda on the rights of persons with disabilities

FOUR PRIORITY AREAS



01 Access to employment

Removing labour market barriers and creating pathways to inclusive, sustainable work across the region



02 Social protection & costs of disability

Addressing the additional financial burden borne by persons with disabilities and strengthening support systems



03 Gender equality

Recognising the compounded disadvantages faced by women with disabilities and embedding gender-sensitive approaches



04 Emerging challenges

Addressing the rights of migrants and refugees with disabilities, humanitarian action, disaster risk reduction, and the green transition

TWO CROSS-CUTTING PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING ALL PRIORITY AREAS

Principle 1

Strengthening disability data systems to support evidence-based policymaking

Principle 2

Ensuring the systematic participation of organisations of persons with disabilities in decision-making

for the higher-level dialogue to follow. In September of that year, the UfM Secretariat convened a **Euro-Mediterranean High-Level Dialogue on Disability** at its Barcelona headquarters, gathering national authorities, international organisations, and regional disability organisations. At the centre of discussions was a **preliminary Regional Disability Agenda** structured around four priority areas: access to employment, social protection and the additional costs of disability, gender equality, and emerging challenges including the rights of migrants and refugees with disabilities, humanitarian action, disaster risk reduction, and the green transition. Two cross-cutting principles underpinned all four areas: strengthening disability data systems to support policymaking, and ensuring the systematic participation of organisations of persons with disabilities in decision-making.

Participants also reviewed a joint commitment statement proposed for endorsement by UfM Member States, which included support for the establishment of a **Euro-Mediterranean**

Disability Network to strengthen regional coordination, knowledge exchange, and stakeholder participation. The preliminary Agenda aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals, building on outcomes from previous UfM conferences in Barcelona and Amman.

The Regional Disability Agenda, when finalised, will offer the region something it has long lacked: a shared roadmap that treats disability inclusion not as a welfare concern, but as a condition for societies that are genuinely resilient.

From Tirana to Malaga: young people taking the Mediterranean agenda into their own hands

Across the Mediterranean, young people are navigating a set of intersecting pressures: a climate crisis that will define their futures, education and labour markets that too often fail to connect, and fragile political landscapes where their voices are rarely sought. The UfM Med Youth Lab was designed on the premise that the region's most durable responses to these challenges, and the

Discover some of the youth-led project pitches of the UfM Med Youth Lab:



Abdeljalil Alobaide - Libya
The Meridian Initiative



Raneem Kerish - Palestine
Aispire Academy



Sylvie Aoun - Lebanon
Seeds of the Future



most effective tool to build resilient societies, will not come from institutions alone — they will come from young people equipped to lead.

In 2025, the **2nd edition of the UfM Med Youth Lab** brought that premise to life in Tirana, Albania. Selected from more than 500 applications, 65 young people aged 18 to 30 from 16 UfM Member States took part in a programme that combined online training over the summer with four days of intensive workshops in the Albanian capital, organised with the support of German Development Cooperation (GIZ) and in partnership with the Albanian National Youth Agency, the Anna Lindh Foundation, the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), and the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez (UEMF). Working in diverse teams around three themes — **youth and climate adaptation, transitions from education to work, and youth in peacebuilding** — participants designed 12 project proposals, drawing on local inspiration from community organisations and practitioners in Tirana.

The programme culminated in a final pitch event where a multidisciplinary jury provided structured feedback and **selected three teams for tailored mentorship through the UEMF Innovation Centre**. For the first time, the Lab also hosted an Opportunities Fair, where 20 regional institutions and civil society organisations and initiatives connected directly with participants to explore collaboration and funding pathways.

The Lab's reach extended further still: 12 young people from nine Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries were supported to attend the **Euro-Mediterranean Youth Summit** in Malaga, organised by the European Youth Parliament (EYP) in late October, where 200

participants from 43 countries drafted policy resolutions across 14 thematic committees. Within that framework, the UfM organised a youth mainstreaming workshop and a panel on women, climate and security.

When over 1,200 young people apply to solve the Mediterranean's water crisis, the region is paying attention

The Water, Energy, Food and Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus is one of the Mediterranean's most complex and interconnected challenges. Managing it will require not only policy coordination and investment, but a new generation of innovators willing to work across disciplines and borders. In February 2025, the **Mediterranean Youth Water Hackathon**, held in Fez, Morocco, offered a glimpse of what that generation looks like.

Organised by the UfM Secretariat with the support of GIZ, Sida, HLD Mediterranean, and Young Water Solutions, and implemented by Cewas, MedYWat and the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez (UEMF), the hackathon drew more than 1,200 young applicants from across the region. Fifteen teams — 28 participants in total — were selected to take part in three days of workshops, expert mentorship, and collaborative problem-solving in Fez. On the final day, a panel of jurors evaluated each proposal on innovation, feasibility and impact. Three teams emerged as winners.

Typhinity (Mauritania) took first place with a solution producing organic compost and biochar from the invasive plant Typha — addressing environmental degradation while supporting sustainable agriculture and economic development. Joint second place went to **Trovador** (Portugal), whose robotic reforestation technology automates afforestation in areas where human labour and heavy machinery are impractical, and to **Laheq Halak**, a cross-national team from Palestine, Tunisia and Spain, whose mobile app

Young people should be equipped to lead the responses to our region's most pressing challenges.

Innovations in the WEFE Nexus

At the **Mediterranean Youth Water Hackathon**, the UfM rewarded young innovators whose business ideas address urgent water, energy, food, and ecosystem challenges.



Three teams. Three continents. Three problems the Mediterranean cannot afford to leave unsolved.

combats food waste by connecting local vendors with consumers to redistribute surplus produce at reduced prices.

Each winning team received a cash prize — €3,000 for first place and €1,000 for each runner-up — alongside tailored mentorship through an exclusive bootcamp with Cewas and Young Water Solutions trainers to refine their business models and prepare for scaling.

Disasters do not stop at borders. Neither should the response

Wildfires that burn for weeks. Floods that overwhelm unprepared cities. Earthquakes that expose the fragility of infrastructure on both shores. The Mediterranean is one of the world's most disaster-prone regions, and the pressures are intensifying. Climate change is extending wildfire seasons, altering rainfall patterns, and increasing the frequency of extreme events — while fragmented national responses and gaps in early-warning systems

leave the region consistently underprepared. **No single country can absorb these shocks alone, and the cost of uncoordinated responses falls hardest on the communities least equipped to recover.** In 2025, the UfM moved to address that fragmentation with a clearer strategic framework, strengthened political commitment, and a series of concrete events that brought the region's civil protection agenda into sharper focus.

Setting the political foundation

In January, UfM Member States reaffirmed their commitment to regional civil protection cooperation at the 3rd Steering Committee of the **PPRD Med Programme** — a high-level political project that aligned priorities across the four pillars of disaster management: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The meeting reinforced the UfM Secretariat's role as a regional convener and facilitator, and set the tone for a year of structured progress.

That political signal translated into a concrete deliverable. Following an extensive internal consultation process with Member States and partners throughout 2025, the UfM developed the **2030 UfM Action Plan on Civil Protection and Disaster Risk Management** — a common strategic framework for addressing the region's growing exposure to climate-related and natural hazards, including wildfires, floods, earthquakes and sea-level rise. The Plan is designed to promote interoperability with European and international mechanisms, ensuring that regional efforts complement rather than duplicate existing systems such as the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

Tackling the wildfire crisis

As wildfire seasons across the Mediterranean grow longer and more unpredictable, the need for cross-border

Discover the key takeaways of the **Regional Resilience and Recovery Conference**:



operational cooperation has become urgent. The **2nd Euro-Mediterranean Workshop on Wildfires**, co-organised with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO) and PPRD Med and held at the EU Representative Office in Barcelona in November, brought together operational services, scientists, civil protection authorities, and policy actors to share lessons learned, align early-warning systems and explore the full spectrum of tools available for risk analysis and emergency response.

workshop built explicitly on the UfM Civil Protection Action Plan 2030 and PPRD Med roadmaps, treating technological innovation not as an end in itself but as a means of improving situational awareness and reducing response times across borders.

Building a resilience agenda for the whole region

Days later, the **Regional Resilience and Recovery Conference** — held in Barcelona in the framework of the 10th UfM Regional Forum — broadened the conversation beyond wildfires to examine the full spectrum of overlapping crises the Mediterranean faces: climate shocks, conflict spillovers, water and energy insecurity, and the socio-economic and governance challenges that intersect with all of them.

Participants converged on a shared understanding of resilience as a continuous cycle: being prepared before crises strike, responding collectively when they do, and rebuilding in ways that strengthen communities, institutions and economies for the future. Preparedness and risk-based planning were identified as essential, with a

The Mediterranean is one of the world's most disaster-prone regions.

Mediterranean Youth Water Hackathon. Fes, Morocco.

Discussions ranged from ground-level sensor networks and geographic information systems to drone surveillance and satellite imagery for early detection and monitoring. Participants examined how AI-driven modelling can improve predictive analytics before ignition, how joint training and interoperable coordination mechanisms can strengthen preparedness, and how real-time data platforms can accelerate operational response when fires do break out. The





Regional Resilience and Recovery - 10th UfM Regional Forum. Barcelona, Spain.

strong call to strengthen early-warning systems, data sharing and interoperability across national and institutional boundaries. Local authorities, civil society and the private sector were highlighted as central actors in crisis response and post-crisis recovery, not only in rebuilding infrastructure, but in rebuilding societies. Finally, a special session was organised to explore and optimise the key contribution of higher education and research to regional resilience and recovery efforts.

The conference, also opened a forward-looking conversation about Mediterranean-Gulf cooperation, with participants noting significant potential for collaboration on energy, security,

climate resilience, and crisis response. Trust-building, inclusive approaches and education were underlined as foundations for social cohesion and lasting recovery.

Across all three moments in the year, a consistent message emerged: the UfM's distinctive value lies not in replacing national systems, but in connecting them — serving as a neutral convener that keeps regional cooperation functioning even when direct bilateral dialogue is difficult. Adopting a resilience-centred approach as a new way of working positions the UfM to move beyond purely technical coordination and deliver more meaningful, cross-sectoral impact on the ground.

TURNING COOPERATION INTO OPPORTUNITIES

How does regional cooperation help create prospects for people and economies?

Decent work, shared growth: the Mediterranean sets its employment agenda for the years ahead

Youth unemployment, skills mismatches, informal economies, and labour markets that have yet to absorb the disruptions of recent years: the Mediterranean's employment challenges are well documented. What has been harder to achieve is a shared regional response that moves beyond diagnosis to coordinated action. In October 2025,

two back-to-back events in Malta, brought the region's governments, social partners, private sector and young entrepreneurs together to do exactly that — and to set the direction for the years ahead.

The **UfM High-Level Policy Conference on Employment and Labour** brought together over 200 participants, including ministers of labour from Lebanon, Malta and Mauritania, and Roxana Mînzatu, the European Commission's Executive Vice-President in charge of Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness, representatives of the private sector, academia, social partners, and young entrepreneurs. Inaugurated by Byron Camilleri, Malta's Minister of Home Affairs, Security and Employment, the conference examined two interrelated questions: what skills the region's workforce will need in the future, and what kinds of jobs will be available to absorb it. A dedicated session gave the floor to young entrepreneurs from across the region, whose experiences underscored a shared message — that a conducive environment for start-ups and social enterprises is not a luxury but a structural necessity for inclusive growth.

UfM Action Plan on Employment and Labour 2026–2028

THREE OVERARCHING PRIORITIES

Consult the Action Plan:



PRIORITY 01

Employment creation & entrepreneurship
Promoting more and better jobs through a conducive environment for start-ups, social enterprises and inclusive growth



PRIORITY 02

Inclusive access to employment
Improving labour market access for vulnerable groups to foster more equitable participation across the region



PRIORITY 03

Skills development & lifelong learning
Strengthening workforce preparedness and adaptability in the face of economic and technological transitions

The regional Team Europe Initiative “Jobs through Trade and Investment” used the conference in Malta as a platform to present progress three years after its launch. Bringing together over 100 programmes and a collective investment of around €3 billion by the European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the initiative illustrated what coordinated European action for employment creation can look like in practice.

The following day, the 19th UfM Regional Platform on Employment and Labour convened national focal points from

employment for vulnerable groups; and strengthening workforce preparedness through skills development and lifelong learning. The Malta meetings gave those priorities both political validation and a clearer operational framework for what comes next, including the continuation of the UfM Community of Practices on Youth Employment and the UfM Community of Practices on Monitoring.

Closing the gap between skills and jobs for Mediterranean youth

Across the Mediterranean, youth unemployment and economic inactivity are not simply the result of a sluggish economy — they reflect a structural disconnect between what education systems produce and what labour markets require. Young people complete degrees and training programmes only to find that the competencies they have acquired do not match the roles available to them. Meanwhile, employers struggle to recruit. Closing that gap demands collaboration between institutions that have historically operated in separate spheres: universities, vocational training providers, private sector employers and policymakers. In December 2025, a conference in Alexandria, Egypt, brought these actors together.

UfM Member States alongside social partners and regional stakeholders to review progress under the 2022–2025 roadmap and set priorities for the forthcoming **UfM Action Plan on Employment and Labour 2026–2028**. The meeting marked a notable moment: the resumption of Syria’s participation in the UfM, acknowledged by participants as a meaningful step toward more inclusive regional dialogue.

The 2026–2028 Action Plan, discussed and shaped during the Regional Platform, will carry forward three priorities that defined the previous roadmap: promoting employment creation and entrepreneurship; improving access to

Held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the “**Education and Skills for Employment**” Conference was convened by the UfM Secretariat in collaboration with the MedNC network and the High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executive Recruitment (HOMERe) programme — two UfM-labelled projects serving complementary target groups: young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) on the one hand, and graduates on the other — with the support of the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) and the European Commission.

Three themes structured the day’s discussions. The first, **youth mobility**,

highlighted the measurable impact of international internship programmes on employability and the need to align academic curricula with labour market realities, while acknowledging that administrative barriers continue to obstruct mobility across the region. The second, **skills development**, examined how education systems can be redesigned to equip young people with competencies that remain relevant in rapidly changing markets. Speakers from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Education Outcomes Fund drew attention to the potential of results-based financing models, which link funding to measurable employment outcomes and incentivise private sector partners to engage directly in training design and delivery. The third theme, **skills for the jobs of the future**, confronted the challenge of artificial intelligence directly: not as a force that will eliminate entire professions wholesale, but as one that will transform specific tasks, making continuous, lifelong skills development a structural necessity rather than an optional investment.

Youth representatives from the MedN-Youth Council, HOMERe Alumni, Safir Ambassadors and the Mediterranean Student Summit contributed to the discussions, ensuring that the voices of those most directly affected by the region’s employment gap were reflected in shaping the agenda designed to address it.

UfM Women Business Forum champions inclusive investment for women-led businesses

Across the MENA region, the number of women-led businesses is growing. However, the financing available to them is not keeping pace. Women entrepreneurs face a compounding set of obstacles — legal, institutional and socio-cultural — that restrict their access to capital, markets and the support ecosystems that allow businesses to scale. Venture capital, the most visible form of early-stage financing, reaches women-led start-ups at a rate of just 1.2% across the region, marginally below a global average that is itself far from equitable. Closing that gap demands not only individual in-

The conference examined two interrelated questions: what skills the region’s workforce will need in the future, and what kinds of jobs will be available to absorb it.

Education and Skills for Employment Conference, Alexandria, Egypt.





InspireHer New Venture
NISRINE SADIK
Morocco Lumina

“ I come from challenges, but I design solutions. Every step I take is a blueprint for something better.

Nisrine Sadik
Lumina, Morocco
NEW VENTURE AWARD
Lumina offers an electric, solar-powered vehicle designed to meet mobility needs in underserved areas, blending clean energy with inclusive design.




InspireHer Established Business
THELAL SHMAILAH
Jordan EasyRobotKit

“ Create your own tech world and be a part of building a stronger community.

Thelal Alshamaileh
Easy Robot Kit, Jordan
ESTABLISHED BUSINESS AWARD
Easy Robot Kit Academy provides hands-on STEM training for children, fostering innovation and critical thinking through affordable, self-sustaining kits.




InspireHer Women Entrepreneurs Award
IMAN ELWASIFI
Egypt Muqbis

“ In talented hands... We believe.

Iman Elwasifi
Muqbis, Egypt
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AWARD
Muqbis is an eCommerce platform that connects local artisans – especially women – with wider markets, empowering them through digital access and economic opportunity.




InspireHer **SANAD**
NUHAYR ZEIN
Egypt Leukeather

“ The wound is the place where the light enters you. —Rumi

Nuhayr Zein
Leukeather, Egypt
SANAD INNOVATION CHAMPION IN SUSTAINABILITY AWARD
Leukeather is a plant-based leather alternative made from dried leucaena leaves – an eco-conscious solution to traditional leather with global market potential.



Venture capital reaches only 1.2% of women-led start-ups across the region.

interventions but a structural shift in how financial systems are designed, governed and oriented. In July 2025, the UfM Secretariat convened partners, financial institutions and entrepreneurs in Palermo, Italy, to advance that shift on multiple fronts simultaneously.

The **9th UfM Women Business Forum**, co-organised with the Union of Arab Banks (UAB) and the OECD, brought together over 60 participants from financial institutions, business support organisations and the entrepreneurial sector. Rather than limiting discussion to diagnosis, the Forum was structured around practical strategies: investor-led workshops examined how women entrepreneurs can build viable investment offers; a collaborative session explored how tailored technical assistance can be matched to businesses at different stages of growth; and a masterclass on innovative finance

models — drawing on contributions from the EIB UNDP, the EBRD and Finance in Motion — examined how new financial instruments can be better aligned with women entrepreneurs’ actual growth paths. An interim findings session presented results from the EU-OECD regional

programme on access to finance for women entrepreneurs, with national insights from Tunisia, Morocco and other countries pointing to the need for stronger gender-sensitive policy frameworks and expanded mentoring mechanisms.

A central outcome of the Forum was the **launch of the UfM Regional Network of Women Business Associations**: a collaborative platform designed to interlink national efforts, amplify collective advocacy and improve women entrepreneurs’ access to finance and markets across the Mediterranean. Representatives from women’s bu-

siness associations in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Spain co-shaped the network’s governance model and priorities during the Forum itself, ensuring that the platform reflects the diversity of contexts it is designed to serve.

The Forum also hosted the **2025 InspireHer Awards**, a UfM and UAB initiative celebrating financial inclusion and entrepreneurship across the MENA region. Ten finalists from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia and Morocco were recognised, with four category winners standing out for their innovation and impact:

Informal work is not a choice. For millions across the Mediterranean, it is the only option available

An estimated two billion people worldwide work in the informal economy. In the Mediterranean, informality is not a marginal phenomenon — it is a structural feature of labour markets on both shores, disproportionately affecting women, migrants, agricultural workers, and those in micro- and small enterprises. **Informal workers are excluded from social protection, denied fair wages, and rendered invisible in the data systems that shape policy.** The consequences extend far beyond individual livelihoods: informality erodes tax bases, weakens social cohesion, and constrains the very economic growth that could generate the formal jobs the region needs. In September 2025, the UfM Secretariat convened partners and stakeholders in Istanbul to confront this challenge directly.

The **UfM Informal Economy Workshop**, organised in partnership with GIZ and the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), and supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Türkiye, brought together over 90 participants from governments, the private sector, social partners, academia, and internatio-

nal organisations, including the ILO, the OECD and the European Labour Authority (ELA). The workshop built on a mandate issued by UfM ministers of employment and labour at their 2022 Marrakech meeting, which called explicitly for policies to support the transition from informality to formal employment, with particular attention to women.

A scene-setting presentation drew on a dedicated study on the transition from the informal to the formal economy in the MENA region, establishing a shared evidence base for the discussions that followed. Panels examined trends in informal employment, the role of digital technologies in preventing informality and strengthening compliance, and the importance of structured social dialogue and agile financial instruments in making the transition to formality a genuine option rather than an abstract goal.

The second day shifted register deliberately. Rather than expert panels alone, the workshop gave the floor to young entrepreneurs from across the region, who were also recipients of the UfM Grant Schemes, — storytellers whose experiences illustrated both the obstacles and the possibilities that formal economic participation represents. Initiatives ranged from supporting migrant women entrepreneurs in

Spain and impact funds for women-led businesses in Lebanon, to craftswomen empowered through digital marketing in Egypt and eco-friendly production cooperatives in Tunisia and Morocco. Across these varied experiences, a consistent message emerged: women are not a vulnerable group to be protected, but a significant economic asset — one that remains underutilised as long as structural barriers to formality persist.

Speakers converged on the importance of local solutions calibrated to local realities, and on the compounded challenge faced by the southern Mediterranean, where informality is most entrenched and where the distance between existing policy frameworks and the lived experience of informal workers remains widest.

Tourism employs one in nine people across the Mediterranean. The region has yet to make the most of it

Tourism is one of the Mediterranean's most significant economic assets. It accounts for over 11% of employment across the region, sustains coastal and rural communities, and connects cultures across shores that political circumstances sometimes struggle to bridge. Yet the sector faces structural tensions that a period of disruption has made harder to ignore: a persistent gap between training provision and the skills employers actually need, uneven access to the benefits of tourism-driven growth, and mounting pressure to reconcile economic ambition with the protection of the natural and cultural assets on which tourism itself depends.

An estimated two billion people worldwide work in the informal economy.



Tourism accounts for over 11% of employment across the Mediterranean

Snapshot of discussions at the UfM Conference on Tourism.



The **UfM Conference on Tourism**, organised in partnership with GIZ and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) in July 2025 in Athens, Greece, structured its discussions around three interconnected themes. The first examined **skilling and job creation** — specifically the misalignment between vocational training programmes and real labour market needs, and how educational institutions, training providers and industry can collaborate to close that gap. The second explored **private sector engagement and innovation**, with case studies of start-ups and accelerators illustrating how entrepreneurship, digital tools and customer-centred business models are reshaping the tourism value chain from within. The third addressed **sustainable and eco-tourism**, examining how community-based initiatives and responsible growth models can protect the cultural and natural assets that attract visitors in the first place — and ensure that the economic benefits of tourism reach local economies rather than bypassing them.

Beyond the panel sessions, the conference offered participants structured peer exchange through dedicated networking corners across all four thematic areas, as well as a field visit to the AKMI SA Vocational Education and Training School in Athens, where

masterclasses on artificial intelligence in tourism education and reskilling for small and medium-sized enterprises demonstrated how local institutions are already preparing workers for a sector in transformation.

The Mediterranean's tourism sector does not lack potential. What it has lacked is a sufficiently coordinated approach to unlocking that potential equitably: ensuring that the jobs it creates are quality jobs, that the growth it generates is sustainable, and that the communities it touches benefit rather than bear the costs.

On the margins of the Conference, the UfM Secretariat, with the support of the German Development Cooperation and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), launched the second edition of its Community of Practice on Youth Employment focusing on Supporting Transition from Education to Employment Readiness (STEER) to bridge the gap between education and labour market needs in the Euro-Mediterranean region. This Community of Practice fosters ongoing dialogue, knowledge exchange, and cooperation between academia, vocational education, training providers, and industry, ultimately aiming at addressing the persistent gap between education and business needs.

2nd UfM PROGRESS REPORT ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Five domains. One diagnosis. The Euro-Mediterranean region is integrating — but far below its potential.

Consult the conclusions of the 2nd UfM Progress Report on Regional Integration:



“Regional integration is key to unlocking the Euro-Mediterranean’s full economic and social potential. By modernising trade agreements, developing capital markets and investing in connectivity and green energy, countries from the Union for the Mediterranean can unlock stronger growth and prosperity.

The Euro-Mediterranean region accounts for one third of global exports. It is home to over 34 million intra-regional migrants. It sits at the intersection of Europe, Africa and the Gulf and yet, measured against its own potential, the region remains profoundly under-integrated.

Trade agreements still focus predominantly on goods, leaving services and digital commerce largely unaddressed. In MENA countries, fewer than half of adults hold a formal bank account. Infrastructure connectivity — the physical substrate of economic integration — lags significantly in some areas. **The gap between what the region could be and what it currently is has a cost: in lost growth, in missed employment, and talent that leaves and does not return.**

Published in September 2025 to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the **2nd UfM Progress Report**

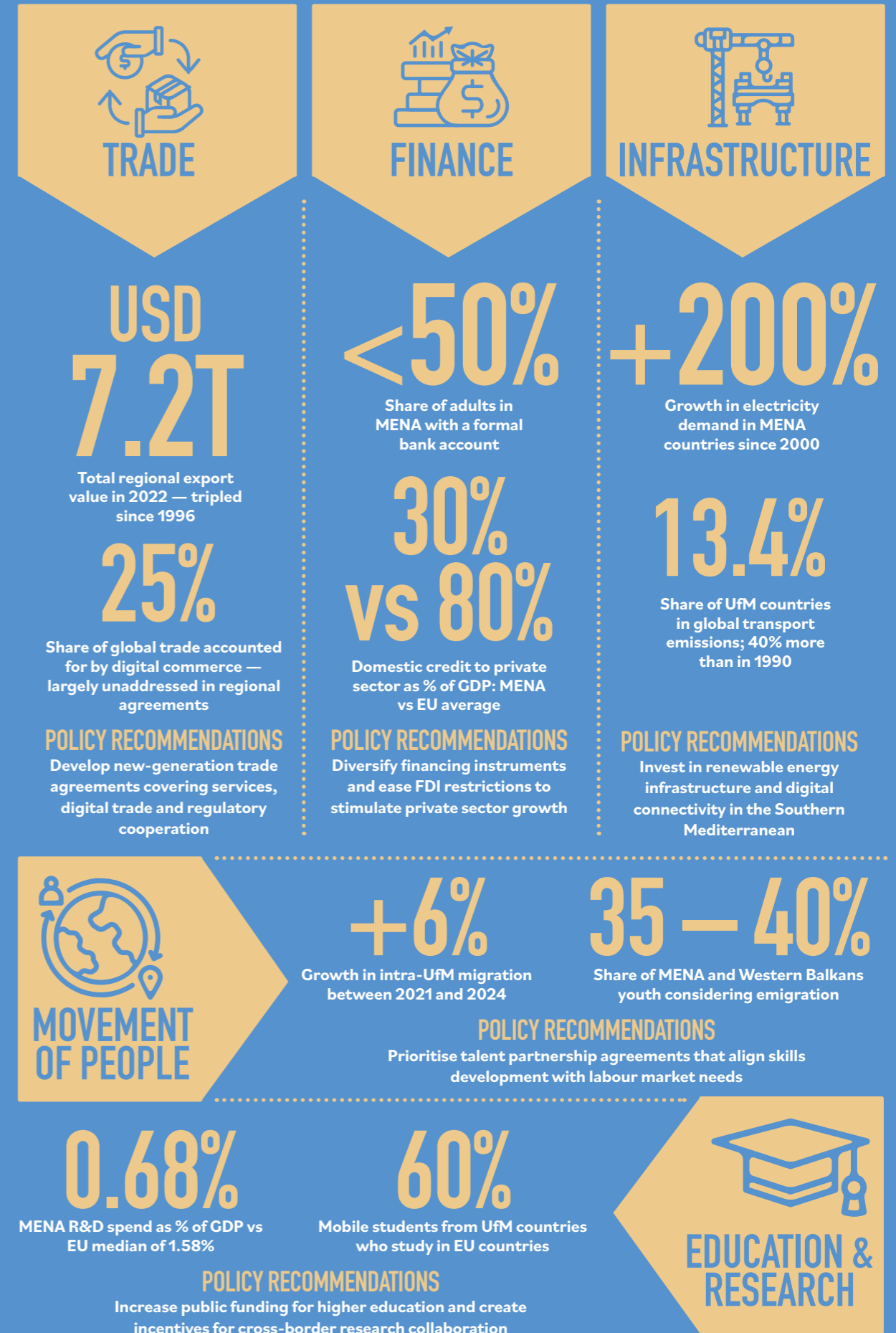
on Regional Integration, produced in collaboration with the OECD and with the support of GIZ, provides the most comprehensive data-driven assess-

ment of Euro-Mediterranean economic interconnectedness to date. Covering five domains — trade, finance, infrastructure, movement of people, and higher education and research — and incorporating three new transversal dimensions (gender, digitalisation and environmental protection), the report offers both a frank diagnosis and a concrete set of policy recommendations for deepening integration across the region.

The findings are clear-eyed about the context. The war in Ukraine, the war in Gaza and wider regional instability, and mounting climate pressures have disrupted supply chains, strained energy security and dampened investor confidence across the region since the first edition of the report in 2021. At the same time, the report identifies genuine momentum: growing trade ties with Gulf countries, the emergence of cross-Mediterranean renewable energy exchange as a structural opportunity, and the growing recognition that managed migration — through skills and talent partnerships — can serve both sending and receiving countries rather than depleting one to benefit the other.

The report’s central argument is not that integration has failed. It is that it has not yet been seriously attempted at the scale the region requires — and that the cost of that gap is now measurable.

OECD Secretary-General **Mathias Cormann**, at the launching ceremony of the 2nd UfM Progress Report on Regional Integration, held at the UfM Secretariat in Barcelona, Spain.



The cost of not integrating: why the Mediterranean can no longer afford fragmented trade and investment policies

Thirty years after the Barcelona Process set out an ambitious vision for Euro-Mediterranean economic integration, the region remains significantly under-integrated in practice. Fragmented regulations, non-tariff barriers, cumbersome customs procedures, and a persistent lack of harmonised data continue to constrain trade flows — particularly for the small and medium-sized enterprises that form the backbone of Mediterranean economies. Meanwhile, the global trading environment has

grown considerably more turbulent: geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, climate transition pressures and financial volatility have combined to produce what participants at the **7th UfM Trade and Investment Forum** described as a structural “polycrisis”: not a temporary shock, but a systemic reconfiguration of global economic patterns that demands a coordinated regional response.

The Forum marked seven consecutive annual editions of what has become the flagship platform for assessing regional trade and investment trends and

mobilising partners around actionable reforms. Discussions were structured around three interconnected themes. On **global trade disruption**, participants identified a decisive shift from “just-in-time” to “just-in-case” production models, and called for Mediterranean economies to strengthen supply chain resilience, diversify partnerships and shorten value chains, particularly in green energy, digital infrastructure and sustainable manufacturing. Sustainability, the Forum concluded, is no longer an optional consideration but an emerging dimension of competitiveness itself.

On **trade integration**, the Forum drew on the findings of the **2nd UfM Progress Report on Regional Integration** to examine the concrete cost of non-integration — costs that extend beyond

Untangling the rules of Mediterranean trade

Rules of origin — the criteria that determine where a product is considered to have been made — **are among the most technical and least visible components of international trade policy**. Yet they shape, in concrete and consequential ways, which goods qualify for preferential treatment under trade agreements, which businesses can access regional markets on favourable terms, and whether the economic benefits of integration reach the producers and exporters that need them most. **When those rules are outdated, complex or inconsistently applied, they become barriers in their own right.** The Regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean Rules of Origin (PEM Convention), which covers trade across a vast area spanning the European Union, Mediterranean partner countries, and neighbouring regions, entered into force in its revised form on 1 January 2025. The revision modernises rules that had long been identified as overly restrictive and administratively burdensome, particularly for exporters in Southern Mediterranean countries seeking to integrate into regional value chains.

To support the effective implementation of the revised rules, the UfM Secretariat, in close cooperation with the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Trade (DG TRADE) and Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD), organised a **two-day regional workshop** in Barcelona, bringing together customs authorities, government representatives and private sector actors from the Convention’s contracting parties. Sessions covered the full scope of the revised rules: cumulation possibilities, wholly obtained and tolerance rules, accounting segregation, product-specific rules, and the digitalisation of proof-of-origin procedures — a modernisation that carries significant practical implications for exporters

GDP losses to include diminished employment quality, persistent inequality and missed opportunities for innovation. Regulatory harmonisation, digital trade facilitation and modernised customs procedures were identified as priority areas for practical progress.

On **cross-border investment**, participants examined why strong potential in green energy, digital services and sustainable industries is not translating into bankable projects at scale, and explored the role of blended finance, development finance guarantees and coordinated de-risking mechanisms in closing that gap. Participants also expressed interest in exploring the feasibility of a Mediterranean Green Investment Facility to accelerate climate-resilient and inclusive investment flows across the region.

The systemic reconfiguration of global economic patterns demands a regional response.



THEME 01 Global trade disruption

Key findings

- Structural “polycrisis” — not a temporary shock, but a systemic reconfiguration
- SMEs most exposed due to limited financial buffers
- Sustainability is now a dimension of competitiveness, not a regulatory burden
- Lack of harmonised regional data weakens the investment narrative

Priority recommendation

Shorten and diversify value chains in green energy, digital infrastructure, and sustainable manufacturing

THEME 02 Trade integration in the UfM region

Key findings

- Region remains under-integrated despite longstanding political commitments
- Non-tariff barriers and customs burdens constrain SME participation
- Cost of non-integration extends beyond GDP to employment quality and inequality
- Trade agreements must evolve to cover services and digital trade

Priority recommendation

Accelerate regulatory harmonisation and digital trade facilitation in priority sectors

THEME 03 Cross-border investment & bankability

Key findings

- Strong investment potential in green energy and digital services is not translating into bankable projects
- Regulatory fragmentation and insufficient project preparation are key obstacles
- Development finance guarantees are critical to de-risk and mobilise private capital
- Smaller economies face visibility and capital mobilisation challenges

Priority recommendation

Explore the feasibility of a Mediterranean Green Investment Facility to scale climate-resilient projects



Consult the complete Outcome Report of the 7th UfM Trade and Investment Forum:

Ports are the backbone of Mediterranean trade.

navigating cross-border paperwork. The workshop built on a series of national training activities carried out by the UfM Secretariat and GIZ across UfM Member States in the Southern Mediterranean over preceding years, reflecting a sustained commitment to capacity-building that moves beyond political declarations toward practical implementation.

Modernising the rules of origin that underpin Mediterranean trade will not make headlines. But for the exporters, customs officials and businesses navigating those rules every day, it is precisely the kind of concrete progress that determines whether regional integration remains a political aspiration or becomes an economic reality.

Mapping the governance of Mediterranean ports for the first time

Ports are the backbone of Mediterranean trade. Together, the basin's major port facilities handle the overwhelming majority of the region's freight and passenger traffic. Yet the governance structures that determine how those ports are owned, regulated and operated have never been analysed in a structured, comparative way. Different

countries have developed different models, reflecting different legal traditions, political economies and strategic priorities. That diversity is not inherently a problem. The absence of a shared evidence base to understand it is.

In December 2025, the UfM Secretariat and the MEDPorts Association addressed that gap directly with the launch of the **Study on Governance Models of Mediterranean Ports**, the first comprehensive comparative overview of port governance across the region. Developed in collaboration with MEDPorts

and with analytical work carried out by CENIT-CETMO, the study maps ownership structures, regulatory frameworks and operational responsibilities across 16 Mediterranean countries: Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain and Tunisia.

The findings confirm that public administration remains central to port governance across most of the region, with national ministries or specialised public entities defining strategic objectives and investment frameworks in the majority of cases. In 12 of the 16 countries analysed, some form of the landlord port model predominates — combining public oversight with private operational responsibilities, though the balance varies significantly. Roles related to digital transformation, decarbonisation and the energy transition are emerging but remain unevenly developed across the region.

The study responds to a mandate from UfM transport ministers and forms one of the first building blocks of a permanent knowledge centre on Mediterranean transport systems. By providing a shared evidence base across MEDPorts members — representing over 70% of freight traffic and 90% of passenger traffic in the basin — it lays the analytical foundation for future cooperation on port governance, maritime connectivity and the transition toward more sustainable and resilient port systems across the region.

Skills, rights, cities: three dimensions of a digital transition in the region

In July 2025, Bratislava hosted the **UfM Digital Transformation Conference**, bringing together digital experts, policymakers, entrepreneurs and practitioners from both shores of the Euro-Mediterranean region. Co-organised with GIZ and supported by the European Commission, the conference examined three dimensions of digital transition

that are often treated separately but are in practice inseparable: rights and principles, skills and job creation, and the role of cities. The findings that emerged across the three panels highlighted both the opportunities and the risks.

On **digital rights**, participants noted that awareness of data humanism and digital ethics is growing, but that access to digital technology remains deeply unequal — along gender lines, economic lines, and along the persistent divide between urban and rural areas. Data privacy and the unregulated exploitation of personal data by large technology companies were identified

as structural concerns, not peripheral ones. On **digital skills and employment**, the private sector's growing role in co-designing curricula and anticipating market needs was welcomed, while participants flagged that the pace of transition to digital labour ecosystems is outrunning the capacity of education and training systems to reskill workers at scale. Digital jobs, several speakers noted, continue to replicate existing gender gaps in both positions and pay. On **cities**, the conference converged on a clear finding: the most successful models of urban digital transformation share a triple-bottom-line approach that integrates social, economic and



Zoom on an initiative

Women in AI Awards

Women remain significantly underrepresented in artificial intelligence — as researchers, developers and entrepreneurs. The Women in AI Awards, a UfM initiative in partnership with

allWomen and supported by GIZ, addressed that gap by spotlighting outstanding women-led AI projects across the Mediterranean with tangible social, environmental and technological impact.

THE 2025 WINNERS



MOST SUSTAINABLE AI INITIATIVE

Ynes Hafi (Tunisia) — ARSELA
A no-code automation platform enabling organisations to design and scale business applications without writing code, lowering the cost of digital adoption across the region.



MOST SOCIALLY IMPACTFUL PROJECT

Safaa Ayyad (Palestine) — FORAS
A women-led digital platform connecting youth across the MENA region with career-building opportunities.



MOST DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION

Petra Awad (Lebanon) — 1-DREAM
A machine learning toolbox for extracting and analysing filamentary structures within large astrophysical datasets, developed at the University of Leiden.

Consult the first comprehensive study on Governance Models in Mediterranean Ports:





UfM Digital Transformation Conference, Bratislava, Slovakia.

The private sector is an indispensable vehicle for digital transformation.

environmental objectives. Human-centred design consistently outperforms top-down deployment, which tends to deepen inequalities rather than reduce them.

Running through all three panels was a shared concern about inclusion. The private sector was recognised as an indispensable vehicle for digital transformation and a multiplier in bridging skills gaps, but only where governance frameworks ensure that its role is guided by rights-based principles and accountability mechanisms. Participants called for sustained regional exchanges on digital transformation — a signal that the appetite for structured dialogue on these issues across the Euro-Mediterranean region is growing faster than the platforms available to support it.

Research that stays in the laboratory creates knowledge. Research that reaches the market creates jobs

That proposition was the organising

logic behind the **“From Research to Business”** conference, held in Malta in October 2025 in the same week as the UfM High-Level Conference on Employment and Labour — a deliberate pairing that framed research valorisation not as an academic exercise but as a direct lever for employment creation and economic diversification across the Mediterranean.

Organised by the UfM Secretariat with GLZ, in partnership with the European Commission and Xjenza Malta, the event brought together representatives from academia, industry and the public sector across two days of interactive workshops. Discussions covered the full journey from laboratory to market: commercialisation pathways, funding and legal frameworks, and the structural conditions that either enable or obstruct meaningful collaboration between research institutions and the private sector. Regional programmes, including PRIMA and Horizon Europe, were presented as working examples of how research cooperation is already contributing to sustainable development and economic diversification across the region.

The Mediterranean region has no shortage of scientific talent.

Among the featured speakers was Sara Sabry, astronaut and entrepreneur, whose account of science-driven entrepreneurship offered participants a reminder that the distance between a research finding and a viable business is navigable — given the right ecosystem, the right funding, and the right connections.

The conference also served as a consultation platform for the **UfM Research Scalability Strategy**, a regional roadmap designed to reinforce innovation ecosystems and guide the work of the UfM Regional Platform on Research and Innovation. It concluded with the announcement of a dedicated Research to Business initiative, sponsored by AECID, which will support Mediterranean

researchers and innovators through capacity-building and matchmaking activities in 2026 and 2027.

The region has no shortage of scientific talent. What it has lacked is a structured pathway for turning that talent into economic opportunity. The initiative launched in Malta is designed to build exactly that.

Building the bridge between science and decision-making

The challenges the Mediterranean faces — climate change, water scarcity, energy transition, health resilience — are well documented in scientific literature. They are considerably less well represented in the policy decisions that determine how governments actually respond to them. The distance between research and policy is not simply a communication problem; it reflects a structural gap in how scientists are trained, what skills they are equipped with, and whether they have meaningful access to the decision-making processes their work is designed to inform.

In June 2025, the UfM addressed that gap with a concrete intervention. In partnership with the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) and Spain’s National Office for Science Advice (ONAC), the UfM Secretariat brought together almost 30 early-career researchers and scientists from across the Euro-Mediterranean region for a **two-day training programme** held at the Spanish Prime Minister’s Office in Madrid. The programme, which is **part of a wider UfM effort to strengthen science-policy cooperation** in line with the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Research and Innovation (2022), combined sessions on policy process dynamics, scientific communication for non-specialist audiences, and interactive workshops that simulated real-world decision-making scenarios, facilitated by JRC experts with direct experience at the science-policy interface.

The choice of participants was deliberate. **Early-career researchers are at the stage where new skills and orientations take root most durably.** Equipping them now with the tools to engage policymakers — to translate findings into accessible language, to understand how political decisions are actually made, and to navigate institutional processes — multiplies the long-term return on a single training investment.

A dedicated session on Mediterranean cooperation presented regional initiatives including MedECC (the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change network) alongside the role of institutions such as the European Forest Institute in advancing science-based policy solutions across the region, giving participants a concrete map of the landscape to which they are being trained to contribute.

ACTING TOGETHER ON SHARED GLOBAL CHALLENGES

How does the Mediterranean act together on issues that no country can solve alone?

Mediterranean Pavilion at COP30: one pavilion, one voice, one message

The Mediterranean is warming approximately 20% faster than the global average. Sea levels are rising at 2.8 mm per year. Precipitation is projected to decline by 10 to 30% across the region by the end of the century, intensifying water

Precipitation is projected to decline by 10 to 30% across the region by the end of the century.

stress across agriculture, energy systems and cities. Yields of emblematic crops — olives, grapes, wheat — are falling. Coastal cities from Alexandria to Barcelona, Venice to Izmir face heightened flood risk. These are not projections from

a distant future; they describe trajectories already under way. At COP30 in Belém, the UfM Secretariat brought that evidence to the global negotiating table — and built the political and scientific architecture to act on it.

Over 12 days, the **Mediterranean Pavilion** hosted 25 events covering climate

adaptation and mitigation, water scarcity, decarbonisation pathways, coastal vulnerability, climate finance and regional cooperation. Implemented in close partnership with a coalition of regional and international partners, **the Pavilion demonstrated the added value of collective action in advancing regionally grounded climate solutions, ensuring that a region often overlooked in global negotiations was heard clearly.**

A standout feature was the “**Entangled Destiny: Trees and Humans of the Mediterranean**” exhibit, organised by the European Forest Institute’s Mediterranean Facility (EFIMED) and supported by the National Geographic Society. Using virtual reality to immerse visitors in the sensory landscape of the Mediterranean — its olive groves, carob trees and stone pines — the exhibit made the case that climate change in the region is not only an environmental threat but also a cultural one. Within a negotiating environment dominated by emissions accounting and finance flows, that intervention carried particular weight.

A dedicated press briefing presented **the latest findings from the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC)** network, delivered by the UfM Secretariat and EFIMED. The findings confirmed the Mediterranean as a global climate hotspot, with average warming already at +1.5°C and projections reaching up to +5.6°C by 2100 under high-emissions scenarios. The MedECC network is currently preparing its Second Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR2), which will provide an updated scientific foundation for regional and national policy processes. COP30 offered a preview of its central themes — particularly the nexus between water, food and ecosystem health — ensuring those themes are already shaping policy discourse ahead of publication.

The Mediterranean Pavilion demonstrated the added value of collective action in advancing regionally grounded climate solutions.

The Pavilion’s programme extended well beyond science communication. On **transport**, the UfM Secretariat advocated for stronger inclusion of sustainable mobility in updated Nationally Determined Contributions, with Morocco’s high-speed rail investment and Jordan’s Bus Rapid Transit system in Amman presented as bankable regional models. On energy transition, frank discussions on the **just transition** addressed the divergent positions of energy importers and hydrocarbon exporters within the UfM Member States, with sessions examining economic diversification pathways for post-fossil-fuel economies and the conditions under which green hydrogen development can serve local needs rather than export markets alone.

On **finance**, a key outcome was the advancement of the **MedBank Toolkit** — a digital platform designed to support project preparation and improve investment readiness across the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, helping public and private developers structure bankable climate and energy projects and access financing from sources including the Green Climate Fund. The Pavilion also hosted a high-level session on **Mediterranean-Gulf climate cooperation**, co-convened with the World Green Economy Organization (WGEO), which resulted in an agreement to explore a formal collaboration mechanism and a follow-up meeting in 2026 to develop joint action plans on green economy transition.

Throughout COP30, the **UfM Energy and Climate Action Youth Delegate Programme** ensured that the perspectives of the next generation were woven directly into the regional dialogue — with young professionals from across the Mediterranean contributing to panel discussions, moderating ses-

sions, and building the networks that will shape climate action in the years ahead.

Universities as first responders: a Mediterranean academic coalition signs up for the climate emergency

Climate change does not respect the boundary between the laboratory and the lecture hall. The Mediterranean’s universities produce the scientists, policymakers, engineers and communicators who will determine how the region responds to a crisis already reshaping its coastlines, food systems and water supplies. Yet higher education institutions across the region have rarely been positioned as protagonists in that response. In 2025, the UfM Secretariat and the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED) moved to change that.

The process began in Girona in June, when over 40 academic leaders and experts from across the Euro-Mediterranean region gathered for a higher education stakeholders’ meeting co-organised with the University of



We reimagine the role of universities in the Mediterranean — not only to respond to the climate crisis, but to nurture human potential, protect our shared ecosystems, and advance justice for all.

Consult the complete Girona Manifesto here:



Girona. The meeting produced the first draft of what would become the **Girona Manifesto** — an open, inclusive call to action inviting universities, research centres, students, faculty and policymakers across the Mediterranean to unite around four shared commitments: advancing regional cooperation in climate education; making climate literacy a curricular baseline across all disciplines; including students in climate governance; and supporting campus-based innovation hubs as incubators for climate solutions.

By July, an open call had been launched for universities across the region to formally endorse the Manifesto and join the **Euromed University Initiative for Climate Action** — a coordinated platform designed to make Mediterranean higher education a genuine driver of regional climate resilience. The initiative was officially unveiled at COP30 in Belém, where the UfM Secretariat used the Mediterranean Pavilion to broaden the coalition and deepen its reach on the global stage.

The Manifesto’s ambition is deliberately structural. It asks institutions not

only to add climate content to existing curricula, but to reimagine their role entirely — embedding sustainability across disciplines, establishing joint Euro-Mediterranean master’s and doctoral programmes on climate governance, aligning graduate employability with the demands of green markets, and adopting carbon neutrality targets for their own campuses. It also calls explicitly on local, national and international authorities to align investment accordingly.

The 2nd Mediterranean Green Week — held in Brussels in June, featuring high-level participation from European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica, UfM Secretary General Nasser Kamel and Malta’s Minister for Environment Miriam Dalli — provided the broader political backdrop for the initiative’s launch, bringing together policymakers, youth leaders and practitioners to advance regional cooperation on clean energy transition, climate adaptation and the integration of science into policymaking.

The four commitments of the Girona Manifesto

COMMITMENT 01

Advance regional cooperation in climate education
Map climate-related academic offerings across the region, develop shared curriculum guidelines, and establish joint Euromed master’s and doctoral programmes on climate governance.

COMMITMENT 02

Make climate education a curricular baseline
Integrate sustainability across all disciplines, make climate literacy a graduation requirement, and expand interdisciplinary faculty training including arts, humanities and social sciences.

COMMITMENT 03

Include students in climate governance
Encourage regional mobility, align graduate employability with green market demands, and support youth-led climate initiatives, campaigns and campus actions.

COMMITMENT 04

Support innovation smart hubs
Promote living labs for societal co-design of climate solutions, adopt campus carbon neutrality targets, and foster university-based incubators for climate-related startups.



Mediterranean Pavilion at COP30, Belém, Brasil.

What good is the world’s best climate data if nobody knows how to use it?

Held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in December 2025, the first joint training organised by the UfM and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) brought together 60 participants selected from over 500 applicants across the Mediterranean region. The turnout reflected

a genuine and largely unmet demand: policymakers, researchers and practitioners who recognise that the Copernicus climate data services exist, but lack the practical skills to extract, interpret and translate that data into decisions.

climate data can inform solar energy planning, strengthen grid resilience and support evidence-based energy policy. Egypt’s Solar Energy Atlas served as a practical entry point, illustrating how atmospheric monitoring data can be applied directly to national energy planning contexts.

Sea-level rise, temperature extremes, and intensifying storms place World Heritage sites under accelerating stress.

The two-day programme was structured around two of the Mediterranean’s most pressing and interconnected challenges. The first was the **renewable energy transition**: participants worked with data from the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) and the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) to explore how

The second was the **protection of cultural heritage from climate change**. Sea-level rise, temperature extremes and intensifying storms are placing World Heritage sites across the Mediterranean under measurable and accelerating stress. A dedicated session, drawing on UNESCO’s regional strategies and local expertise from Alexandria University and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina’s research centres, examined how C3S data can be integrated into heritage management, urban planning and risk assessment frameworks. A field visit to the historic Qaitbay Fort on Alexandria’s coast grounded those discussions in tangible reality: standing at a coastal heritage site visibly exposed to erosion and sea-level pressure, the connection between climate data and physical risk became concrete in a way that no presentation could replicate.

Field visit of the Traditional Building Skills programme. Marseille, France.

Hands-on sessions facilitated by trainers from University College Cork gave participants direct experience navigating Copernicus portals, working with the Climate Data Store and producing simplified communication outputs — infographics and dashboards — designed to make complex data accessible to non-technical audiences and policymakers.

The Mediterranean's oldest buildings know things about climate adaptation that modern construction has forgotten

Earthen walls that regulate temperature without electricity. Stone facades carved to channel desert winds. Whitewashed surfaces that deflect summer heat. Oasis water systems engineered a thousand years ago that still sustain communities today. **Across the Mediterranean, vernacular architecture embodies generations of accu-**

mulated knowledge about how to build in harmony with a demanding climate. That knowledge is at risk of disappearing — not because it has been superseded, but because it has not been transmitted.

The **UfM Programme on Urban Heritage and Traditional Building Skills**, launched in 2023 with the support of GIZ and AECID, is designed to reverse that trend. Working with Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, the programme identifies and promotes best practices in vernacular architecture, supports the creation of certified vocational training schemes in traditional construction techniques, and connects the preservation of built heritage to concrete economic opportunities — skilled employment for youth and women in communities where heritage protection and economic development are inseparable goals.

In 2025, the programme moved from planning to field action on multiple fronts simultaneously.

The Mediterranean's built heritage is not a museum exhibit.



Zoom on an initiative

In March, a pilot architecture workshop brought students from the University of Algiers, the École Nationale d'Architecture Paris Val-de-Seine and the École Nationale Supérieure de Paysage de Versailles to Timimoun in Algeria's deep south. Over five days, the **students studied the relationship**

between the town's ancient foggaras underground water systems and its urban morphology — producing detailed plans and sections that documented how a purely hydraulic logic had, over centuries, shaped the entire organisation of a city. The exercise was simultaneously an act of documenta-

GET-MED – Grounded Ecological Transition for the Mediterranean

The **UfM Academic Advisory Group of Schools of Architecture and Urban Planning** brings together architecture and urban planning faculties from across the Euro-Mediterranean region to align curricula with the shared challenges the Mediterranean faces — from climate adaptation to sustainable urban development. It is precisely the connections forged within that platform that gave rise to GET-MED.

In 2025, the GET-MED consortium secured €769,000 in Erasmus+ funding under the Capacity Building in Higher Education call. The project unites 10 universities across nine cities in Southern Europe, North Africa and the

Western Balkans in a shared effort to reform how architecture and urban planning are taught across the region.

GET-MED's central premise is that Mediterranean cities need urban strategies designed for Mediterranean realities — not imported frameworks that fail to account for local climate conditions, spatial traditions and development pressures. Through newly developed curricula, joint research and cross-border knowledge exchange, the project will equip the next generation of architects and planners with the tools to design cities that are resilient, inclusive and ecologically grounded.

THREE STRUCTURAL GAPS THE PROJECT ADDRESSES

1 – Policy implementation gap

Global frameworks rarely translate into effective local action.

2 – Fragmented urban planning

Uncoordinated, sector-specific approaches that fail to address complexity.

3 – Slow higher education response

Graduates not yet equipped to address real development needs in the region.

10 PARTNER UNIVERSITIES ACROSS 9 CITIES

Alamein | Barcelona | Cairo | Cagliari | Fez | Lisbon | Podgorica | Rabat | Tirana

tion, a teaching tool and a contribution to Algeria's candidature for recognition as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS) by the FAO. A subsequent visit to the M'Zab Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, connected students and UfM partners with local associations offering vocational training in traditional construction, reinforcing the programme's focus on certified skills transmission.

Also in March, a series of field visits to exemplary vocational training institutions in Marseille brought together participants from Tunisia and Morocco to examine models directly transferable to the Maghreb context. Visits to Acta Vista, the École d'Avignon and the Compagnons du Tour de France — institutions that combine heritage

restoration, apprenticeship and social inclusion — produced a set of clear takeaways: **that vocational training in traditional craftsmanship must be embedded in broader educational and regulatory frameworks to survive;**

that there is an acute and growing shortage of trained craftspeople relative to architects; and that digital platforms and cross-border exchange programmes offer scalable pathways for democratising access to these skills before they are lost entirely.

The programme's underlying argument is both cultural and practical: the Mediterranean's built heritage is not a museum exhibit. It is a living, functional body of climate knowledge — and investing in its transmission is one of the most cost-effective climate adaptation strategies the region has available.

Financing the Mediterranean's blue future

Since the first UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy

in 2015, more than €500 million has been mobilised for over **250 regional projects** spanning maritime clusters, decarbonisation, marine biodiversity, renewable energy, blue jobs and pollution prevention. That track record reflects a decade of patient institutional work. In June 2025, at the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in Nice, France, that work produced something more concrete: the first investments of the **Blue Mediterranean Partnership (BMP)** were announced, alongside a major new funding commitment.

The BMP is a multi-donor fund promoted by the UfM Secretariat to mobilise investment in sustainable blue economy projects across the Southern Mediterranean and Red Sea areas. It functions as a technical assistance and feasibility grant mechanism, helping countries that might otherwise struggle to access larger-scale financing from multilateral development banks to structure bankable projects capable of attracting institutional capital. At UNOC3, Spain formally pledged **€8.5 million** to the fund, joining existing donors Sweden, Germany, France and the European Union and bringing the BMP's total available resources to **€22 million**.

The session, opened by EU Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans Costas Kadjis, Jordan's Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority Commissioner Aiman Soleiman, Spain's Minister for Ecological Transition Sara Aagesen and UfM Secretary General Nasser Kamel, also marked the unveiling of the first three projects to be developed through BMP investments — each addressing a distinct dimension of the blue economy challenge across three countries.

In Morocco, an **offshore wind farm near Essaouira** will be the country's first offshore wind project, with the potential to generate up to 1,000 MW, and construction set to begin by 2029. In Jordan, the **Ayla Oasis Coral Rege-**

Across the region, vernacular architecture embodies generations of knowledge about how to build in harmony with a demanding climate.

neration Project in the Gulf of Aqaba will restore a degraded coral ecosystem while installing a thermal energy storage system projected to reduce electrical power consumption by over 1.2 million kWh annually — with coral cover expected to increase by 240%. In Egypt, the **East Alexandria Wastewater Treatment Plant**, expected to become operational by 2028, will treat 300,000 m³ of wastewater per day, managing sanitation for 1.5 million inhabitants and reducing marine pollution along one of the Mediterranean's most densely populated coastlines.

Three countries. Three projects. One fund designed to make the Mediterranean's blue economy ambitions financeable.

Building a green energy bridge across regions

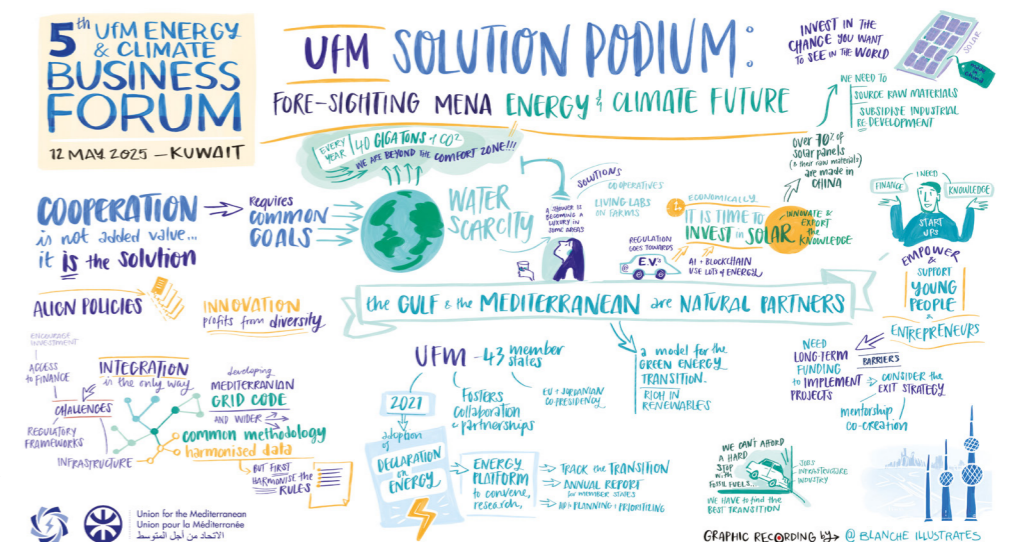
The **5th UfM Energy and Climate Business Forum**, held in Kuwait City in May 2025 on the margins of Kuwait Sustainable Energy Week, marked a first in the UfM Secretariat's history: the organisation's inaugural sustainable energy event in the Gulf. That choice of location was deliberate. Southern Mediterranean countries possess vast renewable energy potential — solar and wind resources capable of positioning the region as a green energy corridor for Europe. Gulf Cooperation Coun-

cil countries, meanwhile, are actively diversifying their energy portfolios and seeking investment opportunities abroad. The Forum was built on the premise that connecting those two realities is one of the most productive things regional cooperation can do.

Held under the patronage of Kuwait's Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, the Forum brought together government representatives, international organisations, investors, entrepreneurs and researchers from across the Mediterranean, Europe and the Gulf. Four panels structured the day's discussions.

The opening panel on **green investment** examined how Gulf capital can be channelled into Mediterranean renewable projects, with participants identifying regulatory alignment, risk-sharing instruments and public-private partnerships as the key levers. The second panel addressed **climate resilience**, with experts from the Mediterranean and Gulf — two regions facing accelerating water scarcity, extreme heat and food security pressures — exploring joint early warning systems, nature-based solutions and technology exchange as pathways to shared adaptation. The third panel focused on **green entrepreneurship**, highlighting the role of start-ups and innovators; speakers

Snapshot of discussions at the 5th UfM Energy & Climate Business Forum.



cited the National Bank of Kuwait's USD 10 billion sustainable-assets pledge and STC's InspireU incubator as models for empowering clean-tech ventures across the region. A closing **solution podium** synthesised the day's discussions into a forward-looking vision, with participants calling for an integrated Mediterranean electricity market, continued renewables investment and robust talent-retention schemes to secure green jobs for youth.

Ten entrepreneurs from across the region pitched live, showcasing solutions ranging from AI-powered climate risk detection and community-owned solar grids for rural areas, to modular bamboo housing for climate-displaced populations and wave energy harvesting for coastal cities.

Scarce water, scarce investment: the Mediterranean confronts both problems at once

Across the Mediterranean, water systems are under pressure from multiple directions simultaneously: climate change is intensifying scarcity, ageing infrastructure is failing to meet growing demand, and the financing gap between what is needed and what is being invested remains vast. Bridging that gap requires more than political will — it requires the active engagement of commercial banks, development finance institutions and public bodies in a conversation that has historically been dominated by engineers and project managers rather than financiers.

The **6th Annual Conference on Water Finance and Investment**, co-organised by the UfM Secretariat and the European Union Delegation in Cairo, and with the support of the Global Water partnership for the Mediterranean, as part of Cairo Water Week 2025, was designed to advance exactly that con-

versation. At its centre was the presentation of the **UfM Recommendations on Water Finance** — a set of **nine regional priorities and 41 actions** developed over six years of sustained work by the UfM Working Group on Water Finance and Investment, which received broad support across the conference.

What distinguished this edition was its deliberate focus on the role of banks — an angle described by participants as long overdue. Dedicated sessions brought together commercial banks from Morocco and Egypt, national public development banks from Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and France, and international development finance institutions including the African Development Bank (AfDB), the EIB, and the EBRD. A high-level opening panel drew ministers, ambassadors and senior officials from Palestine, India, Sweden and Finland, underscoring the political weight the water finance agenda is now carrying at the regional and global level. The Conference was organised thanks to the support of the African Development Bank, the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation of Egypt, OECD, and the Union of Arab Banks.

The parallel **4th Meeting of the UfM Working Group on Water Finance and Investment** confirmed the programme's forward direction: drafting a dedicated policy brief on water finance, developing country-level implementation dialogues, and laying the groundwork for a 7th Annual Conference in 2026 focused on coordinating investments across the WEF Nexus.

Six years of regional dialogue are converging on a shared set of recommendations. The infrastructure that will determine the Mediterranean's water security in the coming decades is being financed — or left unfinanced — by decisions being shaped now.

Countries around the Euro-Mediterranean region share similar water finance challenges.



10th UfM Regional Forum.



2nd UfM Progress Report on Regional Integration.



UfM Grant Schemes' Stakeholders Dialogue: Making Development Work for Development.



Mediterranean Day Concert in Barcelona.



7th UfM Trade and Investment Forum.



UfM Med Youth Lab.



Women Business Forum.



EU Pact for the Mediterranean.



UfM Network of Climate Women.



UfM High-Level Policy Conference on Employment and Labour.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AECID Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation

AfDB African Development Bank

AI artificial intelligence

ALF Anna Lindh Foundation

BMP Blue Mediterranean Partnership

C3S Copernicus Climate Change Service

CAMS Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service

CENIT Centre d'Innovació del Transport

CETMO Centre d'Études des Transports pour la Méditerranée Occidentale
Cewas - Centre for Water and Sanitation

CIHEAM Zaragoza International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

DG EMPL European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

DG TAXUD Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union

DG TRADE Directorate-General for Trade

DG ECHO Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

EBRD European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

ECMWF European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts

EFIMED European Forest Institute's Mediterranean Facility

EIB European Investment Bank

EMNWJ Euro-Mediterranean Network of Women Journalists

ETF European Training Foundation

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FIDIC International Federation of Consulting Engineers

GDP gross domestic product

GET-MED Grounded Ecological Transition for the Mediterranean

GIAHS Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems

GIZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

HOMERe High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executive Recruitment

IEMed European Institute of the Mediterranean

ILO International Labour Organization

IRF International Road Federation

ITF International Transport Forum

JRC Joint Research Centre

MAR2 Second Mediterranean Assessment Report

MedECC Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change

MENA Middle East and North Africa

NEET not in education, employment or training

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

ONAC Spain's National Office for Science Advice

ONCE Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles

PEM pan-Euro-Mediterranean Rules of Origin

PPRD Med Prevention, Preparedness, Response to natural & man-made Disasters in the Southern & Eastern Mediterranean

PRIMA Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area

SFS Sustainable Food Systems

Sida Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

STC Saudi Telecom Company

UAB Union of Arab Banks

UCPM Union Civil Protection Mechanism

UEMF Université Euro Méditerranéenne de Fès

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNIMED Mediterranean Universities Union

UNOC3 Third United Nations Ocean Conference

WEFE water, energy, food and ecosystems

WGEO World Green Economy Organization

WPS Women, Peace and Security



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط



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The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is the intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation that brings together the 27 Member States of the European Union and 16 countries from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. The UfM's mission is to enhance regional cooperation, dialogue and the implementation of projects and initiatives with tangible impacts on our citizens, with an emphasis on young people and women, in order to address the three strategic objectives of the region: stability, human development and integration.

Building an inclusive and resilient Mediterranean



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