



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

25 YEARS 1995 - 2020
BARCELONA
PROCESS
Union for the Mediterranean

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



*Building
a Stronger
Mediterranean*



The UfM Secretariat
is co-funded by the
EUROPEAN UNION



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Message from the Secretary General Nasser Kamel



2020 marked a milestone celebration for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and dialogue with the 25th anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, otherwise known as the Barcelona Process, launched on 28 November 1995.

Looking back, the creation of the Barcelona process seemed to mark a zenith of a strong regional transformation towards cooperation and multilateralism between both shores of the Mediterranean.

But as we are taking stock of what has been achieved in the last 25 years as well as reflecting on the future of Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, the world as we know it is rapidly changing in the face of unprecedented challenges and pushes us to rethink the systems that we depend on.



We must learn the right lessons of the past 25 years, building on our region's inherent diversity and ensuring no one is left behind.

Indeed, in the span of the same year, the pandemic of COVID-19 has spread to every corner of the world, and has pushed us into a historic crisis, the severity of which has not been seen in almost a century.

The socio-economic repercussions of this crisis will be extremely far-reaching, and will likely unfold for years to come, exposing and exacerbating vulnerabilities and inequalities within and among countries.

This reality, valid at a global scale, is nonetheless a more urgent one for the Mediterranean region, where conditions of fragility and exposure are further concentrated, notably with high levels of socio-economic inequality, as well as a pressing climate change emergency, with the rise of temperatures progressing 20% faster than the global average across the region.

Resilience must therefore be at the heart of each and every action we undertake from now on.

The outbreak of the pandemic, coupled with the landmark 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process were stark and uncompromising reminders, in 2020, of the need for reinforced tangible cooperation across borders, between sectors and among citizens and their representatives.

As coronavirus leaves parts of the world more fragile and vulnerable, it also precipitates the need to think through the preservation and reinvigoration of smart and fruitful multilateral partnerships.

We must learn the right lessons of the past 25 years, building on our region's inherent diversity and ensuring no one is left behind. We will overcome these challenges, but it is essential that we do it together.

Nasser Kamel

The UfM at a glance

The Union for the Mediterranean brings together 42 countries to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue through the implementation of concrete projects and initiatives addressing inclusive and sustainable development, stability and integration.

Reinforcing cooperation and dialogue across the Mediterranean

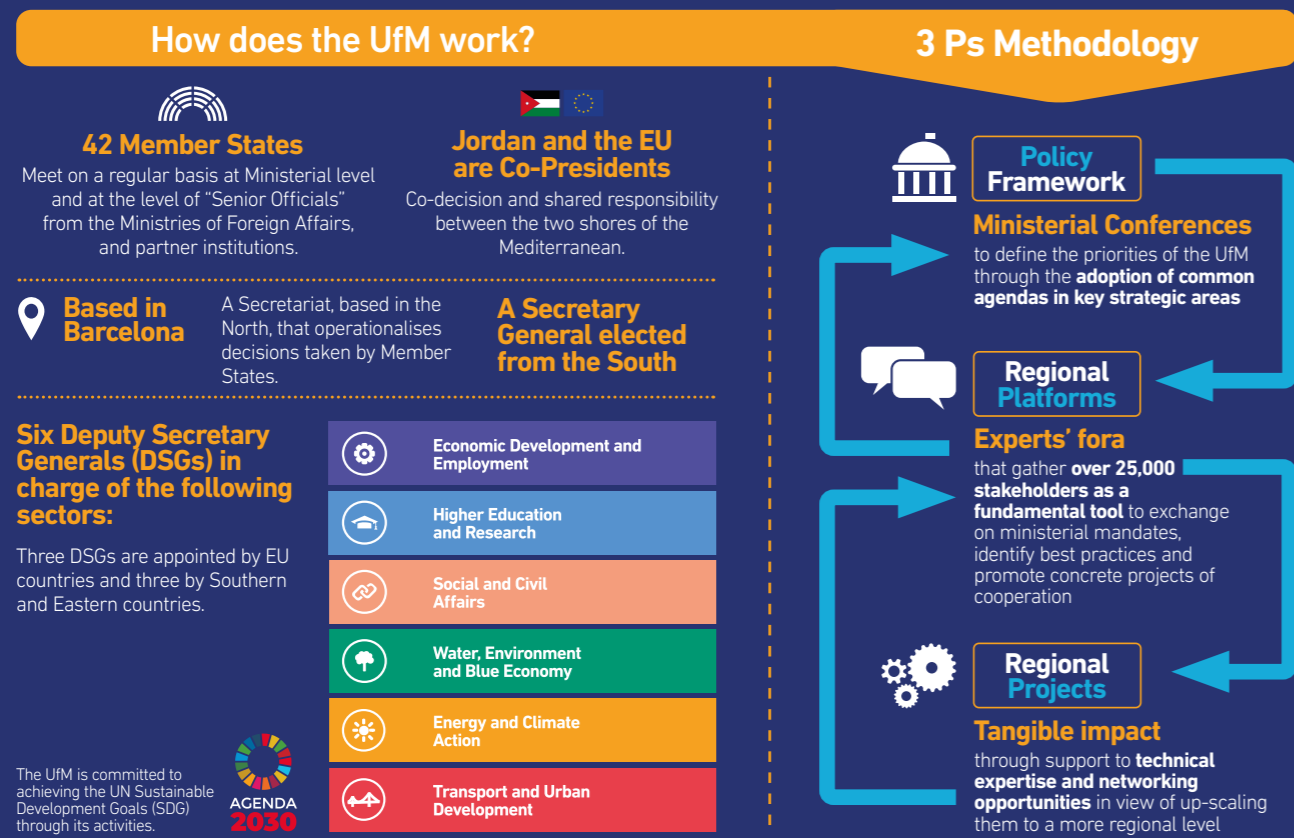
The first Euro-Mediterranean conference, held in Barcelona, Spain on 27-28 November 1995, launched the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, known as the Barcelona Process.

This dialogue framework was 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. It later led to the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

The Barcelona Process was focused around three main baskets:

- Political and Security Basket:** Definition of a common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of political and security dialogue.
- Economic and Financial Basket:** Construction of a zone of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the gradual establishment of a free-trade area.
- Social, Cultural and Human Basket:** Rapprochement between peoples through a social, cultural and human partnership aimed at encouraging understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies.

Since 2008, 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.



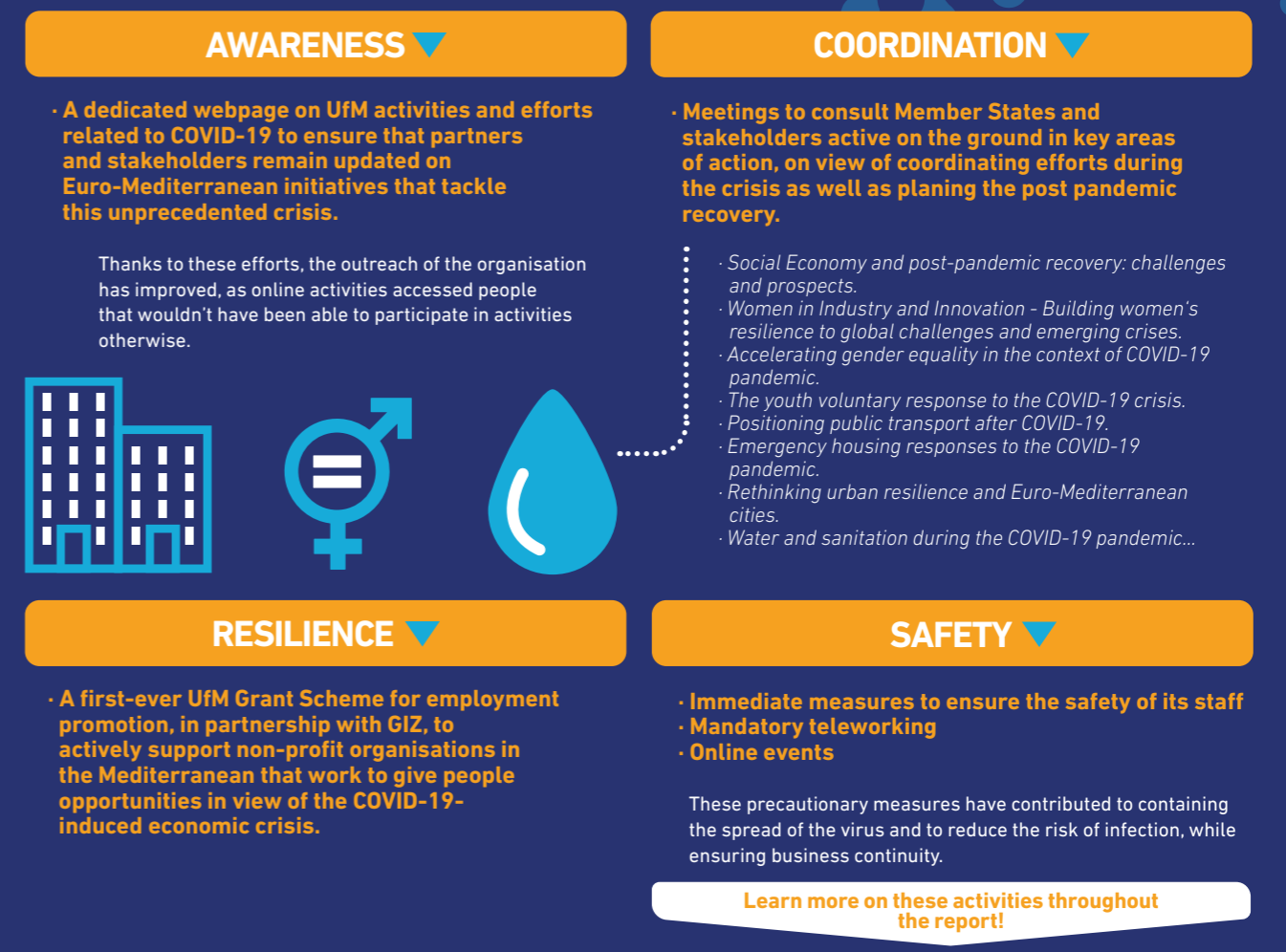
The outbreak of COVID-19 is an uncompromising reminder of the need for tangible cooperation across borders, between sectors and among citizens and their representatives.

From Fragility to Resilience: A Strengthened UfM in the face of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The onset of the pandemic left no one's way of life unaffected and even a year on, normal business is yet to resume for many.

Due to its unique role as a platform for dialogue in the region, accustomed to bringing people and opinions together as a place for ideas to be shared and actions to be decided on, the UfM was no exception.

However, the organisation was not deterred and continued to shoulder its responsibilities supporting the recovery of the post-pandemic world unflinchingly. By necessity, adaptations were made to its normal modus operandi. Changes included online events of all kinds, which became virtual spaces for debate and decisions. This ensured that the UfM's commitment to ensuring those most at risk did not fall behind was kept in sharp focus.



The 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process: commemorating a milestone of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation

#25BCNprocess campaign: a collaborative agenda

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the UfM Secretariat launched a regional campaign to mobilise Member States, regional actors and local stakeholders to celebrate this important milestone. A central webpage, with a collaborative agenda, was created as a hub for activities on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, to give more visibility to every event that took place across the region under the framework of the Anniversary.

Med Success Stories

The UfM Secretariat selected key achievements and success stories that addressed key challenges across the Euro-Mediterranean to be showcased during the 25th Anniversary. These included topics like water, the environment and climate change; job creation and local development; and the empowerment of women and youth.

The reality of the Mediterranean region is one where conditions of fragility and exposure are extremely concentrated. Therefore, it seemed pivotal for the UfM to give the spotlight to those projects and initiatives

2020 was the occasion for UfM Member States to celebrate past achievements, and renew their commitment to cooperation and their will to work together more than ever.

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic further reinforced this commemorative milestone as yet another wake-up call for the international community to move ahead in unity and solidarity. It called for a collective response, and led to true reflection on the ways in which countries cooperate.




30+ regional conferences organised by partners for the **25th** anniversary of the Barcelona Process

that tackled pressing issues on the ground, and that promoted hope and trust across the Mediterranean.

Voices of the Mediterranean

A campaign named “Voices of the Mediterranean” was launched to reinforce a common Mediterranean identity. The UfM Secretariat partnered with many personalities from all walks of life – politics, institutions, sportsmen and women, musicians, writers, scientists, explorers – to publish op-eds and interviews on their personal journey in the Mediterranean and their hopes for the region.



Voices of 30+

personalities from all walks of life

How they defined the Mediterranean in one word: *Light, odours, solidarity, cuisine, serenity, flavours, melting pot, exploration, portal of stories, bridge...*

5th UfM Regional Forum

The 5th UfM Regional Forum brought together the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the UfM Member States on 27 November 2020 to reaffirm their commitment to the principles of the Barcelona Process and reiterate their engagement in Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and cooperation.

The Forum has seen the highest-level of participation since 2015, notably with the interventions of His Majesty the King Felipe VI of Spain, and the President of the Spanish Government, Mr. Pedro Sanchez.

Five priority areas of action were laid out by UfM Member States at the 5th UfM Regional Forum: Environmental and climate action; Sustainable and



From left to right: **Josep Borrell**, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission; **Nasser Kamel**, UfM Secretary General; **Arancha González Laya**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain; **Ayman Safadi**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan.

Day of the Mediterranean

The 5th UfM Regional Forum resulted in the declaration by Member States of the 28 November as the ‘Day of the Mediterranean’, to be observed from now on each year with a view to fostering a common Mediterranean identity while promoting intercultural exchanges and embracing the diversity of the region. The day will also provide a yearly opportunity to increase the visibility of the overall regional efforts undertaken by all the stakeholders that work daily to enhance cooperation and integration in the area.

3,000+ people on social media voted to define the Mediterranean Day logo!

The olive branch was the option that appealed to the vast majority: olive trees are the only plant that can be found from Gibraltar to Syria, its leaf being a well-renowned symbol of peace, a beacon of hope.

inclusive economic and human development; Social inclusiveness and equality as an essential element in the socio-economic development of the region; Digital transformation; and Civil protection.

In light of the important role played by the civil society in the launch and development of the Barcelona Process, a virtual Forum was held on 25 of November 2020 to discuss the future of civil society cooperation in the region, as well as showcase 25 successful projects promoted by Civil Society Organisations working on the ground that promote Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on a daily basis. The conference featured keynote speeches by the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi, and the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Ouided Bouchamaoui.


25+ civil society initiatives on:

gender equality, environment and climate change, entrepreneurship, education, tourism, culture, agriculture and circular economy, blue economy and water management.

30+ speakers and moderators
1,500+ online participants

In partnership with ENI CBC Med Programme.

Learn more about the Civil Society Forum here:

DAY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
NOVEMBER 28
#MediterraneanDay



Check out the brochure on the **Day of the Mediterranean**, which will give you more insights on its origins, its objectives and several proposals and ideas on how to get involved.



Improving quality of life and responding to basic needs

Putting water at the top of the region's agenda

Just as melting ice caps have become symbolic of climate change in the Arctic, the shortage of water has become the image most commonly associated with this same emergency in much of the Mediterranean. The region is already one of the 25 “hotspots” impacted by climate change in the world. With a rapidly growing population, and more than 180 million people affected by water poverty, joining forces to address this common challenge is of the utmost importance. If nothing is changed by 2050, water-related issues with an impact on agriculture, health, and incomes could lower the GDP of the Middle East and North Africa by up to 14%.

Recognition of this drove the UfM Member States to agree on the UfM Water Agenda in 2017. Its continued implementation has been a priority of 2020, underpinned by the development of a financial strategy to help achieve access to water for all.

The outbreak of COVID-19 necessarily focused attentions even more, as water supplies and sanitation came under

Source: MedECC

COVID-19 has changed everything, yet at the same time, reminded us of some old truths. Until everyone in our region has access to basic needs, progress will be checked. Water in particular is an urgent challenge that runs through every Sustainable Development Goal that touches on the most pressing of priorities: food security, healthy lives and eradicating poverty.

greater strain whilst critical resources were diverted. The UfM has always used its unique platform for dialogue to find actionable solutions. Between three meetings held jointly with the Mediterranean Water Institute (IME) during the first half of the year, 55 experts and partners from 13 countries came together online to make urgent policy recommendations ensuring the continuity of services as well as to decide on measures to be taken after the pandemic.

This collaborative spirit was maintained throughout the year in two other consultations aimed at driving forward the UfM Water Agenda. The first, organised by the UfM Secretariat and supported by the UfM Water Expert Group and the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) addressed the implications of, and responses to, COVID-19 in relation to the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda. Synergies with the European Commission were also explored as regional priorities were underlined in view of the Green Deal and the joint pursuit of SDG6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all.

A final push before the year closed out was made in the second consultation

WHAT IS IT?



WATER STRESS

Water stress occurs when the demand for water exceeds the available amount during a certain period or when poor quality restricts its use. Water stress causes deterioration of fresh water resources in terms of quantity (aquifer over-exploitation, dry rivers, etc.) and quality (organic matter pollution, saline intrusion, etc.).

Source: European Environment Agency

in much the same vein: gathering the necessary technical expertise, financial know-how and political decision-makers to promote the only kind of cooperation and commitment between Euro-Mediterranean stakeholders that will make attaining water and climate resilience objectives possible. The tone was set by more than 30 representatives of the European Union, the League of Arab States, the Regional Cooperation Council, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the European Investment Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Bank, among others.

Bridging the finance gap to provide water for all

Globally, out of the estimated \$1 trillion needed to meet the SDGs, between 15% and 30% is needed for water related investment. Even if political will is both decided and united, the issues facing the Mediterranean area related to water security and scarcity cannot be resolved without adequate financial infrastructures, capable of facilitating the financing of water policies and projects. This can only be achieved by an increase in the number and effectiveness of public-private partnerships that bring together the water and finance sectors at national and regional level. It was in this context that the UfM Secretariat, together with the European Commission, convened the second edition of the EU-UfM Water

Business Forum. Held in partnership with the League of Arab States, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and GWP-Med, the Forum was identified as a flagship event during the 2nd Cairo Water Week and brought together 120 high-level actors. The event highlighted how the launching of the European External Investment Plan (EIP) and the European Sustainable Fund for Development (EFSD) had created fertile ground for potential future investment opportunities supported by the planned cooperation between the UfM, the EU, and International Financial Institutions.

Growing Partnerships

Zoom on cooperation with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)

The availability of fresh water in the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated territories in the planet, is among the lowest in the world. Currently, 2 million Palestinians in Gaza rely almost exclusively on the coastal aquifer as the only source of freshwater, which is inadequate to meet demand from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this dire situation, as simply washing hands regularly has become second nature to some, but a struggle to others.

As part of the ongoing collaboration between the Spanish Agency for Inter-

With more than **250 million inhabitants** the Mediterranean coast will **by 2040** experience an increase in **water stress**



The Palestinian government is determined to implement this vital Desalination Facility in Gaza, following the outstanding support of the UfM and the Spanish government, in order to provide people with hopes and basic needs. The provision of safe water for all is essential to protect human health.

—Mazen Ghunaim, Minister, Head of Palestinian Water Authority

This flagship project was the first one to be labelled by the UfM and will be the largest infrastructure project ever built in the Gaza Strip.

Understanding the water, food and climate nexus

So much of the UfM's work is driven by its deep understanding of how in current times, the region's most urgent priorities are too big for anyone to tackle alone. Not only this, but these same challenges are deeply interwoven. The pandemic, meanwhile, has reaffirmed that the systems on which we depend are not only increasingly interdependent, but also increasingly vulnerable. The region's existing elements of fragility – most notably the high levels of socio-economic inequality and the pressing climate change emergency – are indeed set to worsen as a result of the pandemic.

Just as issues concerning water, the climate and food are interlinked, so must be the solutions.

Source:
FAO

This appreciation inspired the debate organised by the UfM and the Partner-

ship for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) on 15 July 2020, which sought to offer concrete solutions and initiatives in response to the results of the survey 'Future Scenarios for the EuroMed Agrifood'. Counting on the insights of 185 experts, the survey was launched to understand current trends, emerging needs, challenges and best practices within the agrifood sector in the context of the recovery from COVID-19. Reinforced by its findings, speakers at the debate highlighted how food security will become increasingly dependent on innovation, if no one is to be left behind and healthy and affordable diets are to be guaranteed for all. The area of e-commerce and the consolidation of local supply chains will also be ever more relevant as consumers pay more attention to traceability, whilst businesses will have to give more importance to risk management activities that manage exposure more effectively.

Dialogue on this topic continued as the UfM teamed up with the FAO and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) to develop a multi-stakeholder platform on sustainable food systems to promote innovative solutions for the sustainable production and consumption of the diets of Mediterranean citizens. The initiative gained visibility as the UfM Secretariat co-organised on 3 December the event, 'Sustainable Food Systems in the Mediterranean: accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda in the context of the COVID-19 recovery', as part of the 3rd Global Conference of the One Planet Network (10YFP) Sustainable Food Systems Programme.

Read more about the findings of the survey on "Future Scenarios for the EuroMed Agrifood" here!



The digital workshop gave the opportunity to discuss the disruptions resulting from the COVID-19 crisis and the fragility of contemporary food systems. It highlighted the importance of adopting an integrated context-specific Mediterranean approach, leveraging the Mediterranean Diet for sustainable food consumption and production, while coping with the intertwined environmental, economic, socio-cultural, educational and nutritional challenges that the region is facing today.

Innovate out of the health crisis, research to avoid the next one

The UfM has consistently supported the need to advance efforts in the area of research and innovation (R&I) and celebrated its potential to unlock solutions capable of making previously unattainable gains in areas of need. Indeed, the COVID-19 crisis has evidenced what can be achieved through R&I with multiple vaccines developed in record time thanks to unprecedented levels of cooperation between governments, academia and the private sector.



Research and Innovation has been a pillar of the EU-South Neighbourhood cooperation as it underpins all of the challenges both regions are facing, such as climate change, health and digital transformation. Our future strategy, that we are now developing with the Union for the Mediterranean, should be even more ambitious".

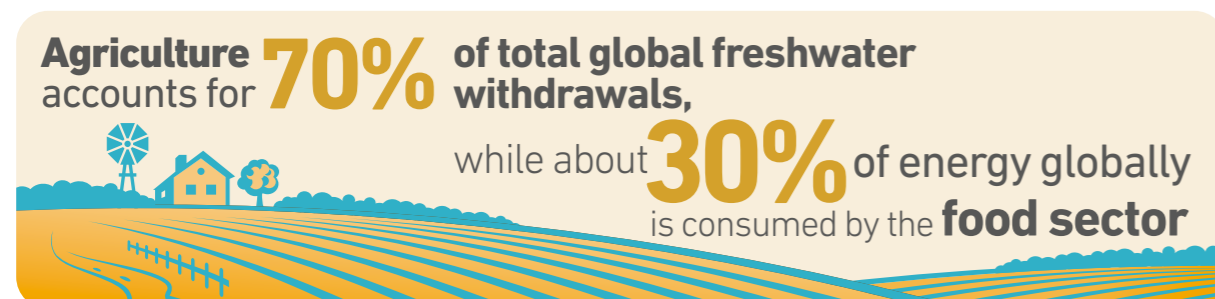
— Maria Cristina Russo, Director for International Cooperation, DG for Research and Innovation - European Commission, Co-chair of the UfM Regional Platform on Research and Innovation

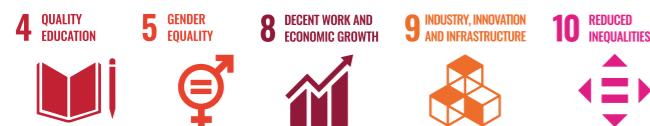
The UfM was quick to make this reflection at the beginning of the first lockdown, prioritising R&I as a means of tackling and overcoming the global pandemic as early as 6 April, as it invited

UfM Member States to discuss actions to tackle the COVID-19 crisis through R&I, with a particular focus on a strategic regional cooperation approach to define common priorities to speed up collaboration in the context of the global pandemic.

Countries from both shores of the Mediterranean shared their ongoing research actions, ranging from calls for proposals, clinical trials to trainings. When unprecedented crises hit, learning from each other is of paramount importance. Several interesting – and replicable – initiatives were disclosed during the meeting: in Jordan for instance, universities have launched a « Teach yourself initiative » to engage students, doctors and researchers through distance learning. Meanwhile in France, the platform « REACTing » brings together a multi-disciplinary collaborative network of French research institutions working on emerging infectious diseases to prepare and respond to epidemics. Spain, on the other hand, has launched an emergency research package to accelerate results applicable to the current situation along with €500 million for SMEs to accelerate production systems and treatments. Tunisia also shared their experience with a scientific multi-disciplinary committee involving education and health experts that led to the set-up of a production line of ventilators and masks in an engineering university.

Similarly, the UfM Regional Platform on Research and Innovation, in collaboration with the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission and the Higher Council for Science and Technology of Jordan, underlined this commitment during several co-organised meetings, whilst also shifting the debate to consider more explicitly the needs in a post-pandemic world and importance of a new updated research agenda. With the participation of researchers and representatives from academia, industry, and research institutes, technology transfer centres, incubators, technology platforms, and grant offices from universities and research centres of the 42 UfM countries, the UfM Secretariat continues to exploit its unique platform as a space for dialogue, placing the power and potential of R&I at the centre of its agenda for the region.





Providing equal and fairer opportunities

Trade and investment: unlocking the keys to Mediterranean growth

The Mediterranean region remains one of the most economically fragmented areas in the world, with trade flows sharply asymmetric. The figures could in fact not be starker as 90% of all Euro-Mediterranean trade takes place within the EU whereas South-South trade accounts for just 1%. The remaining meanwhile 9% occurs between the EU and its Southern and Eastern UfM neighbours. Whilst this



The Southern Neighbourhood needs to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis as a prime location for investments, offering growth and jobs in a sustainable way and providing for stronger societies that give hope and opportunity to the young generations to find their future in the region. We are working together with partners to prepare a new economic development strategy for the region.

—Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement

kind of imbalance exists, instability will reign. The challenge is therefore clear, leading the UfM to make the creation of new initiatives and support for existing efforts towards trade and investment facilitation a key objective.

Source: UfM Secretariat

In 2020, both the potential and possibility of improvement were underscored

90% of all Euro-Mediterranean trade takes place within the EU whereas South-South trade accounts **for just 1%**



The hardships that befell us all in 2020 brought us together in impressive demonstrations of humanity, but they also served to highlight once again how in times of crisis, certain groups in society stand to suffer most. Building back better must be more than a slogan. Traditionally vulnerable citizens need to be able to believe there are opportunities for everyone, women must feel empowered as business leaders and decision makers, and the voice and energy of our young people should guide all that we do.

at the 11th UfM Trade Ministerial Conference, where Ministers highlighted several positive signals of progress in the area of bilateral trade relations in the last years. Member States agreed this trend would need to become a matter of habit if the region is to regain its competitive edge and attract more trade and investments.

This belief was reiterated soon after at the UfM Trade and Investment Forum, which attracted over 400 experts, policymakers and representatives from the private sector, the civil society and international organisations. They gathered to discuss trade, investment and employment opportunities in the Mediterranean region in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The event, which was co-organised by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), was the forum's second edition, following the UfM Business Forum held in Cairo, Egypt, in 2019. The forum and its collective goal of increased economic development in the region were buoyed up by the BMZ's commitment to finance the creation of a UfM Hub for Jobs, Trade and Investment Promotion.

Acting in good faith: the UfM takes concrete steps towards regional integration and financial integrity

Watch the 1st EMNES-UfM-GIZ regional webinar on the Blue Transition Scenario, in REPLAY



More on investments aiming to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals here! Together with ANIMA Investment Network and the GIZ

Fighting corruption and promoting integrity can be one of the keys to attracting investments in the region. Learn more about this EU-OECD seminar, hosted by the UfM, here



The hub will aim to promote job creation through more trade and sustainable investment in the Mediterranean, including through a focus on the potential of trade agreements, digital trade, trade in services, the development of regional value chains and an improved investment environment.

Growing Partnerships

Zoom on cooperation with Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

In 2017, the UfM Secretariat signed a joint declaration with the BMZ to push forward regional integration, support the creation of a wide range of employment opportunities, in particular for young women and men, and boost trade within the Mediterranean region and beyond. To achieve these goals, the BMZ supports the UfM Secretariat, through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), with an advisory project for the years 2017-2021.

Thanks to this support, exchanges on employment and trade have been enhanced among private sector, civil

society and government stakeholders in the UfM region.

How?

- On the one hand, the project expands the technical capacities of the UfM Secretariat, enabling it to consolidate its position as a competent mediator and technical platform for solution-oriented work on regional political challenges. Where employment is concerned, special focus is placed on social dialogue, the integration of the private sector and employment for women and young persons. In the case of trade, the focus is on reducing trade barriers, promoting regional value chains and facilitating e-commerce.
- On the other hand, the project supports and advises the UfM Secretariat in shaping and moderating the expert exchange among relevant regional stakeholders. The aim here is to develop practical policy recommendations and implementation-oriented measures to address the employment and trade challenges facing the UfM member countries.

Open dialogue: the fabric of our society

The work of the UfM and its stakeholders to forge consensus between international partners about the need for economic integration is essential for sustainable growth. But, the lasting impact of multilateral agreements concerning international trade and investment will be left wanting for many citizens if these are not accompanied by arrangements that seek similarly equitable relationships on a grassroots level in the areas of job creation and workers' rights.

The 4th UfM Social Dialogue Forum, dedicated to ensuring progress in these areas, is not side-lined, despite interruptions to so many work sectors caused by the pandemic. UfM experts, representatives of the European Commission and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) met with employers' and workers' organisations to establish current and future priorities in employment as a prerequisite for inclusive growth.

Over the course of the two-day meeting, more than 100 participants gathered to address the most pressing issues facing the Euro-Mediterranean labour market during the COVID-19 crisis. They also discussed the role of social dialogue as a means of tackling migratory flows, as well as concerns surrounding the "brain drain" effect in certain job markets. On all these topics, social dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean was once again underscored as the way forward and commitment was renewed by the UfM to follow up on progress in 2021 with an event focused on how to remedy skills shortages in employment.

People power: jobs and opportunities key to recovery

Raising awareness about the need to foster job creation has been central to the UfM's efforts since its foundation. Creating national monitoring processes in the areas of employment and labour

is however another key objective, as only then can progress be tracked and priorities be ascertained. Indeed, the rates of youth unemployment in countries right across the Mediterranean basin make this focus of paramount importance. These rates are among the highest in the world, reaching up to 50% in some UfM Member States, especially for young women, and are only increasing as a consequence of the economic downturn caused by COVID-19.

Beyond policy recommendations, concrete measures and grassroots action on the ground are also needed. The UfM's flagship cross-sectorial initiative, Med4Jobs, has been providing just this with over 100,000 beneficiaries whilst supporting more than 800 SMEs in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

With this track record of impact and the current crisis in mind, the 2nd Med4Jobs Stakeholders' Dialogue was very timely as it took stock of the status of the initiative and how best to address repercussions and challenges related to COVID-19. With 50 participants driving the discussion, different experiences in the wake of the pandemic and ideas for creating more resilient labour markets were put forward.

Projects such as CEED GROW: Growing and Scaling Small and Medium-Sized Businesses, High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executive Recruitment (HOMERe) and the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI), were given the floor during the event to present their latest developments.

The 10th UfM Regional Platform on Employment and Labour also provided the opportunity to take stock of the UfM's work in this area. Partners' assessments of progress were made considering the priorities identified by the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour (Cascais, 2019), using the different indicators proposed as references for its measurement.

This commitment to evaluating success is a crucial development and is the purpose behind the state-of-the-art matrix devised by the UfM Secretariat and the European Training Foundation as part of the work conducted to set up a framework for national monitoring processes. The matrix aims to serve as a basis for UfM Member States to select areas on which they are ready to regularly report and update each other with the objective of first sharing information to promote evidence-based policies, to then formalise bilateral or regional cooperation between UfM Member States and their institutions.

Building resilience in the labour market in the face of COVID-19

The economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are enormous and have led to unprecedented economic shocks that are directly felt by households worldwide. According to the ILO, almost 94% of the worldwide labour force lives and works in countries that are affected by company closures. The economic crisis will account for a loss of working hours equivalent to 305 million full-time employees.

In the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, where conditions of fragility and vulnerability are already very deep, the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic threaten to undo years of economic development.

In light of this context, the UfM is setting up a Grant Scheme for employment promotion as a regional response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to support

non-profit organisations in the Mediterranean that work to give people opportunities in view of the COVID-19-induced economic crisis. It focuses on projects that enable people to find jobs, continue to earn a living and improve their work and living conditions. At the same time, it seeks to support projects that encourage entrepreneurship and improve the business climate for Micro-, Small and Medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) as crucial providers of employment in the Mediterranean region.

Learn more about the grant scheme here:



Source: World Economic Forum

How?



Priority 1: Improving the economic resilience of citizens, especially vulnerable demographic groups, through employment-related capacity development.



Priority 2: Promoting new channels of training and skills attainment in order to foster employability and economic activity.



Priority 3: Supporting entrepreneurial activity and building the capacities of MSMEs to enable income generation and job creation.

Teaming up to build back better

Anchored to the efforts to contribute to the post-pandemic recovery and support vulnerable groups, the UfM set a schedule of four online webinars in 2020, open to the general public but focusing on subjects of special relevance to young people.

In the Mediterranean, unemployment is higher among those with tertiary education than those without it,



reaching an average of **30% across the region**

Find out more here:



Targeting young professionals and entrepreneurs, recent graduates and university students, as well as start-ups, the webinars capitalised on the in-house expertise at the UfM. These webinars provided much-needed learning opportunities tailored towards young people, a group whose prospects have been particularly jeopardised by the pandemic's far-reaching and uneven socioeconomic impacts. The UfM's social responsibility and its commitment to reach out to target groups could therefore be maintained under the COVID-19 pandemic, with vital lessons shared and learned.

Digital transformation driving sustainable innovation

In the digital age, integrating new technologies into our education systems is no longer a matter of choice for any country seeking smart and sustainable growth. It must be a key strategic responsibility if citizens entering the job market are to be equipped with the right skills to fit the ever-evolving demands of the economy with an increasing emphasis on the service sectors where digital literacy is fundamental to business. The onset of COVID-19 has only served to underline the need to catalyse the transition and prepare teaching and learning on all levels for widespread digital integration.

With recognition of this fact and its urgency in mind, the UfM organised an online brainstorming, with the very aim of kick-starting this process through higher education. The event counted on the participation of different stakeholders including the Erasmus Student Network, the European Commission and the EuroMed University of Fes (UEMF),

who all explored how the current challenges facing teachers, students and academic leaders can be transformed into opportunities for the improvement of the quality and inclusiveness of education.

One key learning highlighted how the use of technology is uneven from country to country. In that sense, commitments to multilateral collaboration will be essential in order to counter digital divides. By bringing stakeholders together, bridges can be built that empower educators to improve their capacity, develop innovative pedagogies, foster sustainable innovation and formulate new targeted strategies at institutional, national and regional level across the Mediterranean.

Unleashing our region's brain power

The Mediterranean region currently faces an imbalance between job seekers and appropriately skilled work opportunities that is inhibiting its sustainable growth and hindering efforts to modernise its economies. On the one hand, due to its success in improving the standard of higher education on offer in recent years, the region now has a wealth of highly qualified graduates. On the other hand, however, its above average unemployment rates, especially amongst young people, means these same graduates often struggle to find employment that best utilises their skillset.

The UfM's appreciation of this issue saw it launch an initiative with the support of GIZ, branded as "Reinforcing the Innovation-Employability Nexus in the Mediterranean", which specifically aims to increase and improve collaboration between stakeholders involved

Source: European Commission, McKinsey

Currently, only **57%** of EU citizens declare having basic digital skills while little over **50%** of households in the MENA region have access to internet.

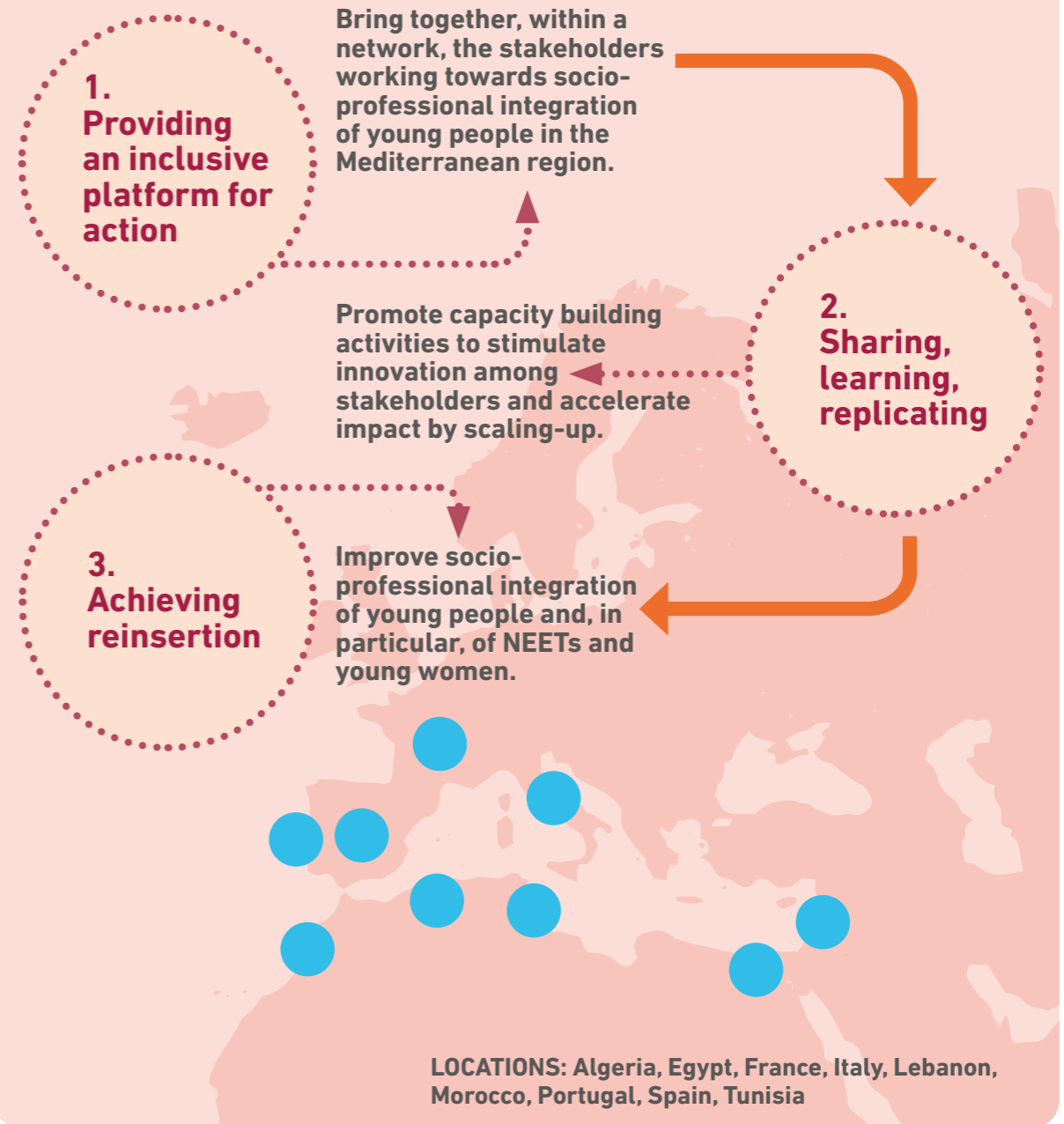


Taking a closer look **MedNC**

The Mediterranean New Chance (MedNC) project gathers a network of 'second chance schools' to help those youngsters who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs), and has been coordinated by the European Institute for Cooperation and Development (IECD) since 2018.

Through practical training, tailored according to the students' natural abilities and interests, the schools give hope to younger generations, rebuilding their confidence in a brighter future, and most of all, in themselves. To date, the network gathers over 222 centres across the region and has benefited over 54,000 young people.

How?



in addressing the unemployment of highly qualified graduates. The content of the initiative was shaped by a steering committee made up of multiple stakeholders that reflected exactly the mix of players needed to build capacity in this area. The European Commission, OECD, GIZ, national ministries, universities, the Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises (Businessmed) and several UfM-labelled projects were all represented as the initiative's main output took shape in the form of a handbook addressed to academia, industry leaders and policymakers.

This handbook examines how to enhance career development among students and researchers by fostering entrepreneurship and supporting universities. Its main themes such as skills development, collaborative doctorates, international mobility, internships, career services, partnerships for innovation, digital innovation or capacity development of higher education institutions, emerged through the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from 35 organisations around the Mediterranean, as well as the mapping of 146 programmes, initiatives and best practices, and a literature review of 1350 publications.

Doubling down on the positive potential of the handbook, the UfM co-organised a webinar with UNIMED as part of the UNIMED Week to connect research and innovation with the employability of students and researchers. Capacity building events and trainings sessions are planned for 2021 in Tunisia and Jordan, as well as a regional seminar in Italy.

Women's rights: encouraging accountability, empowering change

For all the setbacks endured last year, the positive agenda led by the UfM secured a critical milestone in 2020 in the area of women's empowerment, as a region-wide monitoring mechanism dedicated to women's rights and opportunities was endorsed by all UfM Member States. This

achievement could not have been more timely as data confirmed once again that the impacts of crises are never gender neutral. Indeed, COVID-19 has been no exception with up to 700,000 women in the MENA region who are likely to be pushed out of work by 2021 due to the pandemic, disproving the dangerous narrative that the pandemic has acted indiscriminately causing equal suffering for all. The most vulnerable therefore need extra support now more than ever.

This has come in the form of an intergovernmental monitoring mechanism, the first-ever of its kind in the region that aims not only to gauge efforts to promote women's rights, but also empower policymakers to tackle areas where progress is too slow. A total of 20 gender indicators are covered in addition to a proposal of tools that will be used in the monitoring and reporting, guided by the four priority areas of the 2017 Cairo Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, namely: women's access to leadership and deci-

and standardisation of data collection processes that will contribute to the UfM reporting exercise. UfM Member States are fully aware that this is a complex and a long process, requiring regional cooperation from the participating countries and their respective national statistics organisations. However, the high number of participants at the event showed the widespread interest in strengthening data collection to allow in-depth analysis on gender equality and women's empowerment in the region.

Change driven by women, for women

The Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2020, having marked a turning point in gender equality and the empowerment of all women everywhere.

An important catalyst for driving this progressive blueprint for women's empowerment in the region was the UfM Women4Mediterranean Conference, which celebrated its 5th edition in 2020. This landmark event offered the opportunity to review 25 years of progress in equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region and look ahead to what remains to be achieved. In light of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the conference also analysed its specific impacts on women and girls and highlighted the key roles played by women in the response to the pandemic.

As a signal of progress, 80% of the diverse stakeholders in gender equality and women's empowerment that participated were women as the conference welcomed more than 1,600 registered participants from 70 countries, and more than 100 experts. During the conference both the long and short terms were considered as speakers compared their expertise and experiences in relation to the pandemic and gender equality, as well as offering key recommendations for building back better on women's rights in the future.

This intergovernmental monitoring mechanism, the first-ever of its kind in the region, aims not only to gauge efforts to promote women's rights, but also empower policymakers to tackle areas where progress is too slow.

sion-making; women's economic participation; combatting violence against women and girls; and combatting gender-based stereotypes.

Even international law has its limitations to enforce standards if consensus is lacking on a national and local level. However, the activation of the monitoring system benefitted from further positive momentum at the UfM Regional Dialogue Platform on Women Empowerment, as 80 participants came together to agree on the importance of the harmonisation

20

GENDER INDICATORS

IN 4 PRIORITY AREAS

| | |
|--|--|
| <div style="font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: #0070c0;">3</div> <p>indicators on women's access to leadership and decision-making</p> | <div style="font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: #0070c0;">4</div> <p>indicators on women's economic participation</p> |
| <div style="font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: #0070c0;">10</div> <p>indicators on combatting violence against women and girls</p> | <div style="font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: #0070c0;">3</div> <p>indicators on combatting gender-based stereotypes:</p> |

Overarching legal frameworks

Marriage and family

Participation in public life

Violence against women including access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education

Employment and economic participation


A specific indicator about perceptions and stereotypes is proposed for each priority area.

The Women4Mediterranean Conference in numbers

1,600+
Participants from
70
Countries



56% North Med
40% South and East Med
4% Other



8,000+
Views
on Facebook



100+
speakers




20+
High-Level
representatives

120
news articles
reaching a potential
105M audience



51%
Southern Mediterranean
Media coverage
30% Northern
Mediterranean




Despite many difficulties, responses to the pandemic have also created opportunities to transform society in positive ways. The pandemic has shone a spotlight on the real value of care workers and care work. It has demonstrated the real risk of overlooking gender inequality and discriminatory gender norms.

—Emily Yiolitis,
Minister of Justice and Public Order, Republic of Cyprus

Read the full report of the UfM Women4Mediterranean Conference here:



In parallel to the conference, the UfM, in collaboration with CEED Grow, turned the focus on improving women’s standing in the world of entrepreneurship with the Women Business Forum. Two sessions were held to provide training opportunities. The first offered practical solutions to help navigate the crisis, whilst the second was led by the first female director of a banking company in Morocco. She shared tips on how to build and grow a company even during times of crisis, as well as offering her experience on managing her role as a CEO at one of the top financial institutions in Morocco during the crisis.

On top of these sessions, a Challenge Lab was also launched prior to the conference that included a session designed to review the proposals selected for examination at the conference. The proposals that were addressed focused on how women entrepreneurs in the MENA region can adapt to the challenges of the pandemic so their business ventures are more resilient.

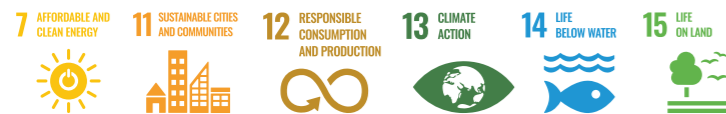
Masters of positive change: young people, the media and gender stereotypes

Young people are consuming more digital content than ever, and video material in particular is on the rise. The prevalent messaging, values and narratives portrayed in this content, especially when it comes from popular or established sources and brands, has an enormous

power to influence young people. This is why backing from public authorities is not enough, the private sector and citizens themselves have essential roles to play when it comes to tackling gender stereotypes.

To facilitate this process, the UfM, in collaboration with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Foundation, organised a side event at the UfM Women4Mediterranean Conference entitled, *The role of Youth in combating gender stereotypes in the audio-visual sector*. The event’s objective was first to map the kinds of discrimination that exist and then examine the barriers related to tackling gender stereotyping in the media. Experts from academia, audio-visual stakeholders, policymakers, young female activists and media influencers explored how the media can in fact be an effective lever to amplify women’s voices and combat gender stereotypes. It was however also concluded that the role of young people in influencing and modifying cultural attitudes must be central to any plans that aim to challenge negative gender stereotypes regarding the roles of women.

This kind of open consultation and multilateral action not only reflected the UfM’s inclusive approach to reaching consensus but was also in keeping with its broader objective of developing a UfM strategy for young people that counts on their engagement with the region’s development and decision making process.



Enhancing environmental and climate responsibility

Future-proof climate action: towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement was a landmark show of international commitment and cooperation. By setting out a global framework to act on climate change, by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C, it became the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate change agreement. A lesser-known but still critical outcome was its stated aim to strengthen countries' ability to deal with the impacts of climate change and support them in their efforts through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Much of the UfM's work tackling the climate emergency is guided by the recognition that the crisis is far more complex than simply rising temperatures. Indeed, the issues and impacts vary from region to region, right down to the local level. That is why the tailored approach that NDCs help foster is so important. As climate plans are specific to each country, they serve to highlight climate actions, including the climate-related targets, policies and measures each government aims to implement in response to climate change and to contribute to global climate action. Central to the NDCs is therefore the concept of national determination and responsibility for the mutual benefit of all.

Read more about **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean** here



Scientists over the world are in unanimous agreement as the global pandemic has rightly refocused the link between human health and the wellbeing of the environment. COVID-19 is just the latest manifestation of the many terrible symptoms caused by the unsustainable management of our planet. Climate action, especially in the Mediterranean, must respond to the urgency of these devastating trends.

The 2020 UfM Climate Week sought to support the implementation of the region's NDCs through a series of sessions dedicated to the establishment of science-driven policy as well as sourcing the necessary finance to fund these policies.

The meeting also provided the occasion for the UfM Secretariat to present the overriding structure of the UfM Climate Action Plan for 2021-2025, as it seeks to reinforce the crucial nexus between science, society and policy, including the role of youth, the active regional participation in the NDCs of the Paris Agreement and the mobilisation of climate finance.

Following the region's scientists' lead: tackling climate change together

As highlighted by the Paris Agreement and the subsequent development of the NDCs, the climate emergency is a global problem but with distinct regional ramifications that no country can tackle alone. For the Mediterranean Basin, these regional threats are particularly acute. Seeking to address these challenges, the UfM has been using its unique capacity to bring different players and representatives to the table to coordinate efforts with a scientifically-driven, multi-disciplinary and multilateral approach to the crisis.

By acting in unison, substantial progress has already been made. The UfM supported the network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental

94% of primary and secondary emissions come from human activity and in particular from our choices regarding heating, transportation, energy sources, heavy industry and agricultural production.

Change (MedECC), consisting of over 600 scientists, to develop the first-ever report on the impact of climate change in

the Mediterranean. Among its main conclusions, the report shows that around 94% of primary and secondary emissions come from human activity and in particular from our choices regarding heating, transportation, energy sources, heavy industry and agricultural production.

If progress is to be made in these areas, more region-wide collaboration will be needed as the UfM strives in its mission of achieving sustainable development for all. By continuing to support the MedECC network, a supplement to the original report has been developed, focusing on encouraging the adoption of more effective and tailored policy responses to climate and environmental changes, equipping policymakers to make science-based decisions whilst helping to improve the North-South data gap. The inclusion of a consultation phase with

UfM Member States and stakeholders was also critical in helping to garner ownership of the key messages shared just as the NDCs help foster responsibility for the action taken.

Climate finance: investing today to safeguard tomorrow

In the global commitment to fight climate change, the current lack of data regarding international private climate finance is a significant obstacle. It limits the ability of governments to make informed decisions in their attempts to scale up climate projects. Climate finance was therefore the sole focus of a separate session at the 8th meeting of the UfM Climate Change Expert Group (CCEG) that presented the draft UfM report on Climate Finance flows in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, which was finalised later in the year with the input of all the experts and taking into consideration adaptations needed due to COVID-19. The UfM Secretariat's role at COP 25, providing technical expertise on the topic of climate finance, helped advance preparation of the report's first draft. Despite the onset of the COVID-19

Read the full conclusions of the report here:



Main findings of the 1st scientific assessment on climate and environmental change in the Mediterranean

FOOD SECURITY
90% of commercial fish stocks are already overfished, with the average maximum body weight of fish expected to shrink by up to **half** by 2050

WATER RESOURCES
Within 20 years, **250+ million people** will be classified as "water-poor"
Fresh water availability is to **decrease by up to 15%** among the largest decreases in the world

SEA LEVEL
Sea level rises may exceed 1 metre by 2100, impacting **1/3 of the region's population**

ECOSYSTEMS
700+ non-indigenous animal species recorded due to warmer conditions
Increasing water acidification causes **mass deaths of marine species**
Mega fires have destroyed record areas of forest due to climate change

The Mediterranean region IS WARMING 20% FASTER than the global average

Regional temperature increase of

2.2°C
by 2040 with current policies
Paris Agreement's target of 1.5°C

HEALTH AND SECURITY
Increase in **frequency, intensity and duration of HEAT WAVES** imply significant **health risks** for vulnerable populations, especially in cities
Conflicts concerning limited natural resources **may increase** large-scale human migrations

pandemic, all the planned sub-activities providing technical assistance were confirmed.

The current lack of data regarding international private climate finance limits governments' ability to make informed decisions in their attempts to scale up climate projects.

The headline findings of the report showed how international climate finance commitments accounted for €695bn in 2018, 9% of the global flows. In terms of sectors, renewable energy generation represented 15% of the total commitments, while water and supply sanitation received \$971m to help advance the region's climate priorities. The invaluable knowledge acquired in the development of the report has strongly positioned the UfM to contribute to the international debate on climate finance with authority. Under the framework of making the report's recommendations operational, the UfM Secretariat has joined the Green Growth Knowledge Platform (steered by the OECD), and is also now an Observer to the UN Capital Development Fund.

Region's collective expertise to guide energy policy

For many of the crises or priorities facing the Mediterranean and the world today, be it the climate emergency or women's rights, political pledges and international agreements are no longer enough. With the added pressure of the impacts of COVID-19 putting public policy under greater strain, all efforts and endeavours need to be measured and monitored. Success and results must be tracked so that shortcomings and failures can be rectified.

In keeping with this kind of self-assessment and in order to collect the evaluation of the work done under the 2016 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Energy, the UfM Secretariat launched an external evaluation. The preliminary findings were presented to the UfM Member States representatives for Energy and the final report will also include a set of recommendations for the future.

The UfM has coordinated and analysed the contributions from Member States and relevant stakeholders to the 2021 UfM Ministerial Meeting on Energy that include strategic priorities for the energy sector. Taking these priorities on board, the UfM Co-Presidency set up an Advisory Board to support the drafting of the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Energy composed of high-level energy experts from the region, including former Energy Ministers and EU Commissioners. Equipped with their deep understanding of the challenges facing the Mediterranean region in the field of energy, they can be trusted to determine with great accuracy and insight what the next priorities should be. Their first draft was shared with UfM Member States to finalise the process seeking not just engagement but consensus from all.

Embracing the energy transition, town by town

Empowering actors on a local level to be agents of change will be an essential component of the sustainable energy transition.

The local authorities of towns and cities play a key role and are in the best position to take action on the ground, meeting

local needs capable of addressing the growing energy demand, climate emergency and the necessity to both find and implement innovative and efficient solutions. The Mediterranean region is favourably positioned in many respects to make these changes and as a climate change "hotspot", it needs no other motive to act now. It is rich in renewable energy sources and has a huge potential to increase energy efficiency in areas such as street lighting, cooling and heating as well as building construction and renovation.

implementation. The toolbox provides solutions for the street lighting sector with the aim to accelerate the energy efficiency at a local level. By facilitating the uptake of local solutions that can be spread region-wide, the UfM remains optimistic about making the energy transition a reality.

Landmark solar power plant project marks shift towards greener energy

Driving the shift towards renewable energy will always fall short if it is only focused on traditional centres of green energy production. The less energy has to travel and the more control local authorities have over its production, the greater the impact individual green energy projects can have in their surrounding area, as they become more autonomous, and in time, even self-sufficient. This is why the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is promoting the expansion of renewable energy in Egypt by supporting one of the first green private-to-private projects in the country, a powerful six Mega-Watt peak solar photovoltaic power plant located at Dina Farms in the Beheira governorate.

This is the EBRD's first project in Egypt under the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Private Renewable Energy Framework (SPREF), labelled by the UfM and created to promote the deployment of private renewable energy markets. The power plant will enable Dina Farms, the largest dairy farm in Africa, to cover part of its energy consumption with clean energy and is the first private-to-private renewable energy project financed by the EBRD in Egypt. By enhancing energy connectivity and paving the way for reliable sustainable energy supplies, the UfM is working towards its objective of helping the region pivot towards a future that is not only greener but also more stable and independent, supporting a sustainable transition for the Mediterranean region.

Source: Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency

Take street lighting for example, in many places around the world, it represents up to 40% of the electricity bills on a municipal level, with electricity use for lighting expected to grow by around 50% in the next two decades. However, energy efficient lighting solutions, such as LED, can help reduce demand by 40%. As always, self-assessment and up-to-date local data is crucial to gauge demands, shortages and ultimately, decide where the greatest gains can be made.

In line with the priorities of the UfM Energy Platforms (a regional dialogue forum to exchange on energy issues in the Mediterranean), the UfM Secretariat collaborated with the Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency in a new exercise involving more than 20 municipalities from different Mediterranean countries. Using a toolbox for rapid self-assessment developed by the Centre, the municipalities will gain valuable insights on the potential to accelerate energy efficient street lighting

Want to know more about climate finance?

Check out the latest report on Climate finance flows in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region here!



Land, air and sea: boosting regional interconnectivity and mobility

The harmonisation of financial protocols and university accreditation, as well as the alignment of political priorities and values, are all crucial for the integration of the Mediterranean but can all to an extent be negotiated and advanced remotely. The transport of both goods and people, however, requires the creation and maintenance of physical networks; without these integration will always be limited. The Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean Region (RTAP) 2014-2020 sought to both generate economic growth and encourage further integration across the region by reforming regulation and boosting interconnectivity and mobility. In order to take stock of what has been achieved in this regard, and lay the groundwork for the future UfM Ministerial Conference on Transport Connectivity, the UfM organised in 2020 two rounds of meetings addressing the logistics of transports on land, by air and at sea. The first round of working groups provided a platform for key stakeholders and UfM Member States impacted by the RTAP to assess both the achievements and shortcomings of actions implemented as part of the plan, as well as priorities and additional topics to be dealt with moving forward. These include resilience, digitisation, cyber security and multimodality, among others. The results of these discussions are set to help inform the evaluation report of the current RTAP 2014-2020, as well as the next UfM Ministerial Conference on Transport Connectivity.

In conducting the thematic working groups, the UfM has further consolidated its position as a key player in facilitating collaborative and cohesive reform within the transport sector across the Mediterranean. Increasing connectivity in this way will not only boost trade flows throughout the region, but will also ultimately help to accelerate the integration of the two shores of the Mediterranean.

Setting the agenda for sustainable and crisis-resilient transport

With the active participation of so many players needed to improve the interconnectivity of the region, the UfM's role to foster cooperation in this area saw it undertake several key initiatives in collaboration with significant partner organisations in order to help bolster regional cooperation and promote the best sustainable practices within the transport sector. Indeed, it co-organised the MARLOG International Conference on Maritime Transport and Logistics dedicated to the fourth industrial revolution in port-city integration and the World Ports Sustainability Program. It also participated in the 33rd Session of the Sustainable Transport Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics, detailing the latest developments regarding transport in the Mediterranean region.

Moreover, the UfM Secretariat took part in the 28th Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean (GTMO) 5+5 meeting that centred on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

on both freight and passenger transport in GTMO 5+5 countries, as well as the effectiveness of its initiatives to counteract such challenges, which led to the *Reflection on post-COVID scenarios (RPCS)* initiative. Given the impact of the pandemic is still unfurling, it is vital

The UfM's role to foster cooperation in this area saw it undertake several key initiatives in collaboration with significant partner organisations in order to promote the best sustainable practices within the transport sector.

that strategies and policies develop in parallel. With this in mind, the UfM Secretariat took part in the 1st Editorial Committee meeting of the RPCS initiative alongside the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), the Centre for Transportation Studies for the Western Mediterranean (CETMO), and the Sustainable Transport Division of the UNECE, to both help identify potential topics and contributors and to ensure that the initiative respects existing regional policies.

Urban development fit for 2040

Sustainable and future-proof urbanisation is key to addressing climate change, and our cities have the potential to take the lead on sustainable development without sacrificing economic growth. This belief drives the UfM's urban vision for 2040, which aims to improve the liveability of Mediterranean urban areas while innovating to create new opportunities. The Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040 and its Housing Action Plan bridge the North-South divide, bringing together governments, civil society and business.

Following a comprehensive multi-stakeholder consultation, the UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040 and the UfM Action Plan for Affordable and Sustainable Housing were devised by an academic team from the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the Delft University of Technology (TU Delft), with the support of the Dutch Government and input from the World Heritage Centre at UNESCO.

These drafted action plans were shared with both the UfM Member States and the relevant stakeholders to decide on which action plans will be adopted and put into immediate effect.

Furthermore, as part of its aim to revamp regional urban areas, Member States also assigned in 2020 the UfM label to the Urban Projects Finance Initiative - Economic Resilience Initiative (UPFI-ERI). This label acknowledges the initiative's potential to attract investment for innovative and widely replicable urban development projects in Southern Mediterranean countries and the Western Balkans by helping them meet the standards for the European Investment Bank and other EU institutional funding sources. The UfM tracked the projects' progress by attending the UPFI Steering Committee meetings as an observer.

Growing Partnerships

Joining hands in solidarity for Beirut

In response to the devastating blast of 4 August 2020 in the Port of Beirut, and in view of coordinating a regional response, the UfM Secretariat organised three informal meetings virtually, on 2 and 15 September and on 13 October 2020, with over 60 participants from key Lebanese institutions, other UfM Member States, along with inter- and non-governmental organisations based in Beirut.

The first two preparatory meetings took stock of the preliminary damage and needs assessment in the immediate and short term, with due regard to Beirut's historic built heritage, which is a key part of the Mediterranean identity.

The third meeting focused more in-depth on the "Recovery and Reconstruction of the Built Heritage and Historic/Regular Residential Buildings" of the city, and will be followed-up with a second meeting in 2021, as soon as the groundwork is concluded.

WHAT IS IT?



CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity is essentially about networks. These can be in the form of transport links: by air, land or sea. Connectivity can be digital networks: mobile or fixed, from cables to satellites, from the internet backbone to the last mile. Connectivity also includes energy networks and flows: from gas, including liquefied natural gas (LNG) to electricity grids, from renewables to energy efficiency. Finally, connectivity has a very obvious human dimension: from cooperation in education, research and innovation to travel and tourism.

Source: European Commission

Going further by going together: mobilising consensus on environment and climate action

The UfM’s consensus-building activities continued throughout 2020 in attempt to mobilise engagement in the process of agreeing the priorities and agenda of the 2nd UfM Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Action set for 2021. Discussion on this topic commenced with a stakeholder consultation that sought to involve an even broader number of actors in this critical area of work for the region.



The UfM Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action will also define the future regional agendas in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

—Jihad Alsawair, Director of the Green Unit, Ministry of Environment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

With 197 participants from 29 different countries and an even split in responses from men and women, the level of interest signalled positive engagement from a diverse range of voices as the consultation addressed issues such as reinforcing the science-society-policy nexus, the enhancement of NDCs, mobilising finance, monitoring and reporting systems and the impacts of COVID-19. The conclusions stemming from the consultation were gathered to create a comprehensive report that dissected and analysed the data collected in order to feed future discussions.

Read the full conclusions of the stakeholders’ consultation on the priority themes identified for the post-2020 Environment and Climate Action Agenda



In line with the priorities highlighted by the consultation, efforts undertaken by UfM Member States should aim to ensure further coordination in the Mediterranean region to shift towards a greener, more circular, carbon-neu-

tral and socially inclusive economy. This will also imply working on the prevention and reduction of land, sea, and air pollution as well as the protection of natural resources through an integrated ecosystem-sensitive approach. Closely inter-linked, these areas must be addressed by a holistic vision capable of incorporating and integrating the intricate policies targeting each area.

Laying the foundations for 10 more years of collaboration

For the past fourteen years, the UfM regional flagship initiative “Horizon 2020 Initiative for a cleaner Mediterranean” mobilised stakeholders from all over the region for the fight against pollution in the Mediterranean Sea. With 80% of sea pollution coming from municipal solid waste, urban waste water and industrial pollution, the H2020 Initiative needed to be a collective endeavour and saw, for more than a decade, contributions from a broad set of actors, including UfM partner countries, inter-governmental bodies, international financial institutions, cities and regions, non-governmental organisations, academia and the private sector.

2020 marked the end of this chapter, which led to the joint initiative between the UfM and the EU funded Water and Environment Support (WES) project to produce the report “Reaching the 2020 Horizon: 14 Years of Cooperation on Environment”, which drew on the main outcomes and lessons learned from the implementation of the H2020 Initiative. The report evidences all that can be achieved thanks to more than 10 years of regional collaboration between Horizon 2020 stakeholders on key environmental matters and how the lessons learned fed into the wider UfM 2030 Agenda for a Greener Med, the direct continuation of the H2020 Initiative.

The report also earmarked the 2nd phase of the Horizon 2020 initiative. In the Mediterranean, the focus now shifts to

2030 Agenda for a Greener Med



Shift towards a greener, more circular, carbon-neutral and socially inclusive economy.



Prevent and reduce pollution on land, sea and air.



Protect and restore natural resources in the Mediterranean region through an integrated ecosystem approach.

fostering and integrating operational links between elements of the environment agenda so they can function in a way that is mutually beneficial to other related UfM agendas, plans and activities, such as the blue economy, climate change and water.

The 2030 agenda for a greener Mediterranean

When it comes to saving our planet, there is no time to lose. The UN’s Decade of Action to deliver on the SDGs makes this absolutely clear. Progress is being made in many places, but, overall, current action is not seeing the necessary results at either the speed or scale required. In the Mediterranean, this urgency for action on the environment and climate is even more imperative, but a strategic view must be taken to ensure efforts are coherent and concerted if the tide is to be turned on this great challenge of our generation.

The UfM’s plan of action, Towards 2030: Agenda for a Greener Med - Contributing to Achieving the Environmental SDGs in the Mediterranean” (2030GreenerMed), aims to serve this exact purpose. By ensuring the engagement of all 42 UfM Member States in a collective endeavour that will contribute directly to the UN’s Decade of Action, it has been developed to accelerate the formation and implementation of environmental solutions capable of tackling the world’s most pressing crisis.

More information on the UfM Sustainable Blue Economy Agenda here:



The 2030 Agenda for a Greener Med was developed in tandem with the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action and promotes a similar approach that focuses

on shifting towards greener, more circular and socially inclusive economies, whilst emphasising the need to prevent and reduce pollution on land, air and sea as well as protecting, preserving and restoring natural resources in the Mediterranean region.

To ensure the finalisation of the 2030 Agenda for a Greener Med succeeds in heralding a decade of ambitious action to help deliver the climate-related SDGs by 2030, the UfM Secretariat also prepared the ground for the introduction of a monitoring framework. This framework has been adjusted to the possible post-pandemic scenarios that could evolve as the recovery plays out differently across the region. This process was performed in close coordination with the UfM Co-Presidency to guarantee the necessary high-level political support but also sought to consolidate and count on relevant regional projects to ensure collaboration from the bottom up as well. Multilateral partnerships of this kind are fundamental, because with the stakes so high, the 2030 Agenda for a Greener Med will only succeed if it is able to mobilise everyone, everywhere in this critical and collective Decade of Action.

A green pivot for the region’s sustainable blue economy

The Mediterranean Sea is to be thanked for much of what unites our region. It has helped harbour many of its defining civilisations throughout the ages, it has provided the highways on which ideas and culture could spread, and it has of course created both food and prosperity. But, the Mediterranean Sea is in an alarming situation. Despite stren-

uous efforts to arrest the situation, 75% of fish stocks in 2020 still remain subject to overfishing. As the region warms 20% faster than the world average, this spells disaster for many of its ancient coastal settlements, large and small. Indeed, it is estimated that around 15 mega port cities are at risk of flooding, unless action is taken. Maritime transport is one of the most important blue economy sectors in the Mediterranean, both in terms of growth and employment. Yet, it accounts for 10% of marine pollution and 3% of

air-polluting emissions. On top of that, about 8 million tonnes of plastic waste enters the ocean every year and single-use plastics generated by the COVID-19 crisis are undoing much of the good work in this area.

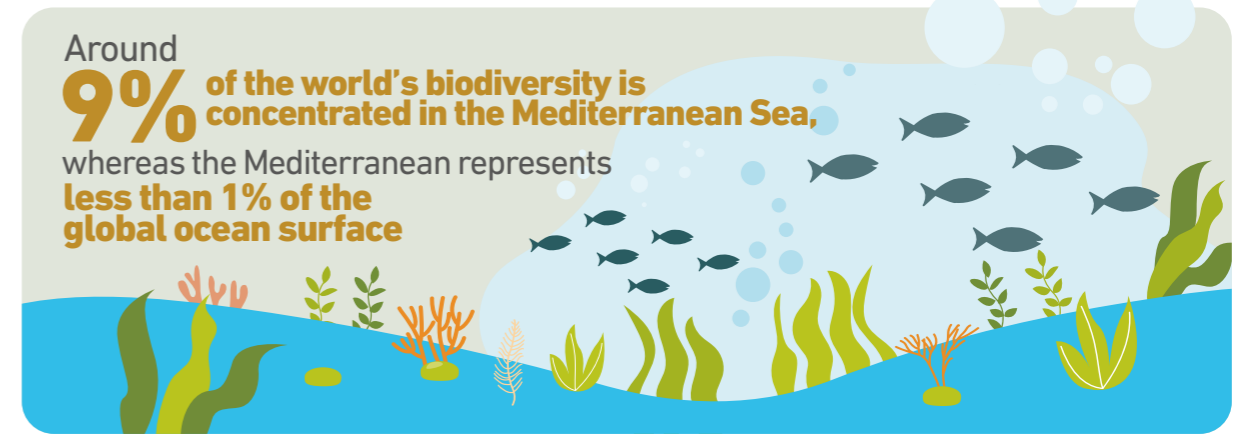
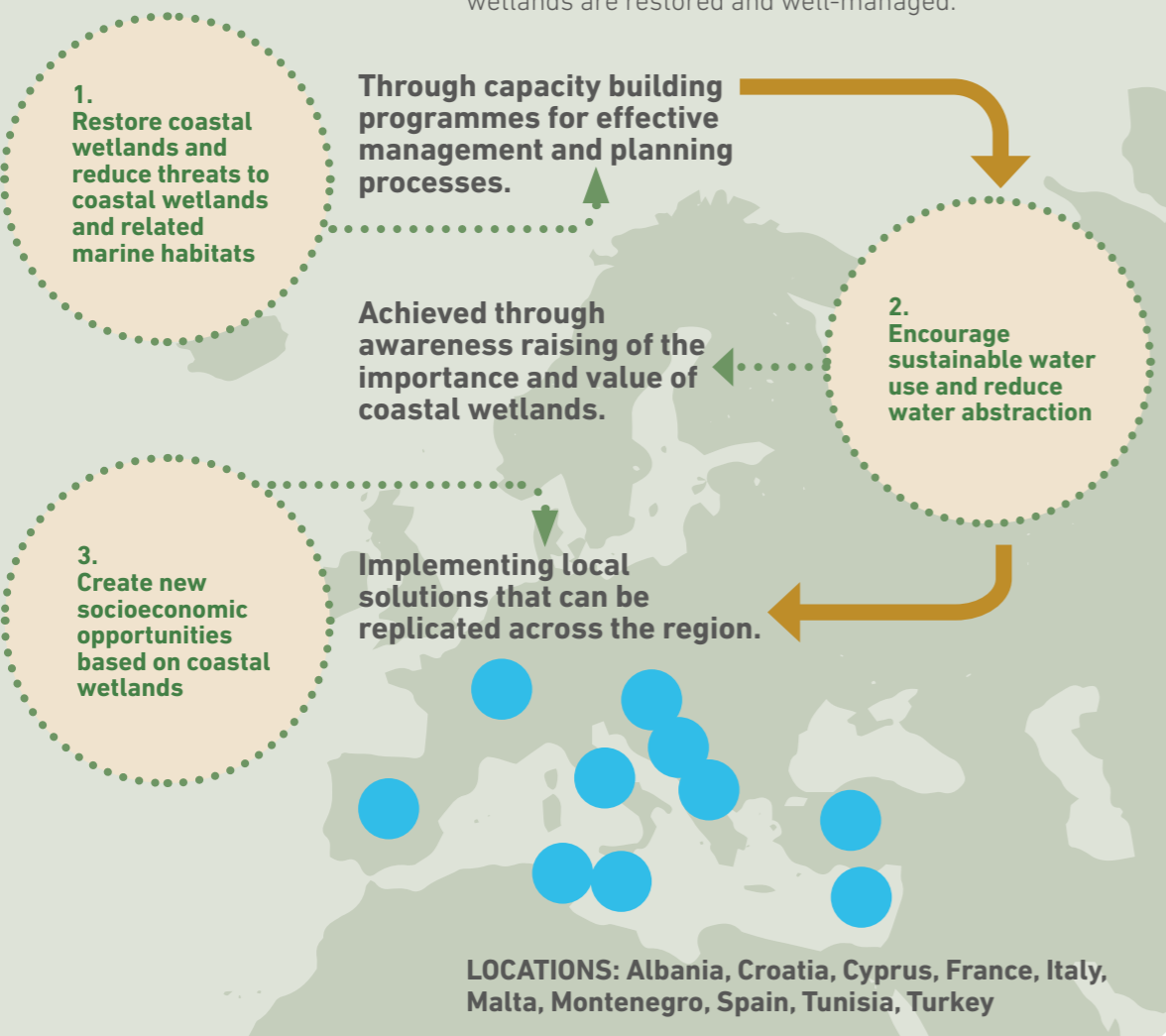
In view of the 2nd UfM Ministerial Meeting on Blue Economy, the UfM Co-presidency and Secretariat conducted a consultation on the priority themes identified by countries via the Mediterranean Blue Economy Stake-



Taking a closer look Wetland-based solutions

Wetlands are vital habitats for wildlife, as well as important tools for mitigating the effects of climate change. They help to manage extreme weather events like floods and storms, and can store 10-20 times more carbon than temperate or boreal forests on land. With the support of the **MAVA foundation** and MEDWET, the project "Wetland-based Solutions" gathers more than 30 partners in 10 countries to ensure Mediterranean coastal wetlands are restored and well-managed.

How?



Source: UNEP/MAP

holder Platform. The consultation was structured around priority themes identified with the UfM Member States, ranging from maritime governance, sustainable food, tourism, maritime transport to adaptation to climate change, blueskills development and employment. Around 100 participants – including research centres and universities, public administrations, private sector representatives, international organisations and NGOs – submitted over 350 substantial entries. The online consultation identified how urgent technical assistance is needed in areas such as digitalisation, the integration of circular economies and how to apply for sustainable financing. This wealth of information gathered was then used to inform the preparation of the 2nd UfM Ministerial Meeting on Blue Economy.

Reassuring optimism and the potential for untapped rewards were however also forthcoming as the consultation highlighted that the Mediterranean region is among the world's leading tourist destinations, hosting more than 300 million tourists per year. As the leading sector in the Mediterranean blue economy, tourism is also a driving force for young entrepreneurship and SME growth. Although tourism has been one of the industries most affected by COVID-19, an opportunity will arise if the sector is able to successfully pivot and position the Mediterranean as a truly 'green' tourist destination, securing sustainable growth as both natural and economic resources are safeguarded.

Read the full report tacking stock of 14 years of cooperation: "Reaching the 2020 Horizon: 14 years of Cooperation on Environment":



A step closer towards tackling disasters together

With an increasing number of forest fires, floods, earthquakes, marine pollution, pandemics, and other catastrophes across the Euro-Mediterranean area, cooperation among UfM Member States is a priority in civil protection. Furthermore, the outbreak of COVID-19 has further highlighted the need to build stronger regional civil protection services and networks, which will benefit not only countries on a national level but also as a region through resource and knowledge sharing.

In 2020, the UfM Member States progressed on the recommendations of the Directors-General 2019 meeting to continue working together to enhance their cooperation on disaster risk management, with the UfM providing a key platform for Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on civil protection, by facilitating links between the political and operational levels. The proposed three Working Groups on Preparing for efficient mutual assistance in the Euro-Mediterranean area, Engaging citizens in disaster risk management, and The role of volunteers in civil protection have convened successfully with their respective Final Reports completed. Proposed Action Plans for the Working Groups have been developed for discussions and follow-up.

In light of this progress, a fourth meeting of the Civil Protection Directors-General of the UfM is foreseen in 2022.

Acronyms and abbreviations

10YFP

10 Year Framework of Programmes - One Planet Network

AECID

Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
(*Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo*)

BMZ

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
(*Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung*)

CETMO

Centre for Transportation Studies for the Western Mediterranean

CIHEAM

International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

COP 25

United Nations Conference on Climate Change

DG

Directorate-General, European Commission

DSG

Deputy Secretary General

EBRD

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

EIP

[European] External Investment Plan

EMNES

Euro-Mediterranean Network for Economic Studies

EMUNI

Euro-Mediterranean University

ENI CBC Med Programme

European Neighbourhood Instrument Cross-Border Cooperation Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme

EFSF

European Fund for Sustainable Development

EU

European Union

FAO

Food and Agriculture Organization

GDP

Gross Domestic Product

GIZ

German Development Agency
(*Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*)

GTMO

Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean

GWP-Med

Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean

HOMERe

High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executive Recruitment

KAS Foundation

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Foundation

IECD

European Institute for Cooperation and Development

IEMed

European Institute of the Mediterranean

ILO

International Labour Organization

IME

Mediterranean Water Institute

LNG

Liquefied Natural Gas

MedECC

Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change

MedNC

Mediterranean New Chance

MENA

Middle East and North Africa

MSME

Micro-, Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise

NDCs

Nationally Determined Contributions

NEET

Not in Education, Employment or Training

OECD

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PRIMA

Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area

R&I

Research and Innovation

RPCS

Reflection on Post-COVID Scenarios

RTAP

Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean Region

SDG

Sustainable Development Goal

Sida

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SMEs

Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises

SPREF

Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Private Renewable Energy Framework

TU Delft

Delft University of Technology

UEMF

Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes

UfM

Union for the Mediterranean

UN

United Nations

UNECE

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNEP/MAP

United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan

UNIMED

Union of Mediterranean Universities

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UPFI - ERI

Urban Projects Finance Initiative - Economic Resilience Initiative



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The **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)** is an intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation which brings together all countries of the European Union and 15 countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. The UfM's mission is to enhance regional cooperation, dialogue and the implementation of projects and initiatives with tangible impact 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.



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