



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

# The UfM since the adoption of the 2017 Roadmap

*State of play  
and way forward*



The UfM Secretariat  
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# Introduction



The adoption of the Union for the Mediterranean Roadmap by Foreign Ministers in January 2017 marked a turning point for the institution, both at political and operational levels. The Roadmap gave the UfM a new impetus and allowed its Secretariat to define, under the guidance and support of the Co-Presidency, a 2018-2020 strategic vision to implement an enhanced cooperation framework in the Euro-Mediterranean region that contributes to achieving inclusive and sustainable development, in line with the UN 2030 Agenda.

At the Fifth UfM Regional Forum, held on 27 November 2020 in Barcelona, and which coincided with the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, Foreign Ministers reaffirmed that the

2017 Roadmap for Action remains the comprehensive strategic framework for the work of the UfM and recognised the need to prioritise, in the years to come, five areas of action where the UfM can play a crucial role and provide for comparative advantages towards a sustainable post-pandemic recovery, paving the way for the creation of more resilient societies and economies in the region.

The present document and the following sections provide, as requested by the Co-Presidency during the SOM meeting held in Barcelona on the 21st of October 2021, an update on the state of play of the UfM Roadmap implementation, highlighting particularly the milestones achieved in the five priority areas agreed by the Ministers in 2020.



# 1 Promoting regional cooperation: a unique dialogue forum in the Mediterranean

## 1.1. An enhanced political dialogue

Regional political dialogue continues to be main objective for UfM member states. Through this, the UfM contributes to create a political environment that is conducive to enhance peace and stability in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

### At the UfM level

#### 4 Annual Regional Forum

Since 2017, the UfM Regional Forum, which brings together Foreign Ministers of Member States, has been gaining momentum in terms of regularity, consistency, participation and results.

*The 5<sup>th</sup> UfM Regional Forum / 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Barcelona Process 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.*

On these occasions, as stipulated by the Roadmap, articles co-signed by UfM Co-Presidents and the Secretary General in international press, as well as by other Ministers of Member States on UfM-related issues were published.

- [Voices of the Mediterranean](#)
- [New era in the euro-mediterranean cooperation](#)

- [25 years later: What's next for the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation?](#)

#### 9 Sectorial Ministerial Conferences

Blue Economy; Employment and Labour; Energy; Environment and Climate Action; Strengthening the Role of Women in Society; Sustainable Urban development; Trade, Water

The regularity of Ministerial Meetings on strategic themes and the adoption of ambitious common regional agendas attest to the growing engagement of UfM Member States in promoting inclusive and sustainable development and strengthening regional integration in the Mediterranean.

#### 12 Senior Officials Meetings

Meetings at the level of UfM Senior Officials are regularly held, and continued during the Covid-19 pandemic through virtual technical meetings. They tackle current political and security issues around the Euro-Mediterranean region, and further enhance dialogue on key challenges faced. Communication between Senior Officials and the Secretariat was further improved through the launch by the Secretariat, of a digital interface, regular visits to the UfM Headquarters, as well as a monthly reporting of the Secretary General to the SOM.

### At regional level

The pressing challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region are characterized by their cross-border nature, and demonstrate the fundamental importance of multilateral, regional and sub-regional cooperation. In this respect, the UfM Secretariat endeavours to enhance synergies and complementarities among existing frameworks of cooperation in the region.

**The Mediterranean ecosystem** is not limited to the UfM Secretariat and includes other institutions bound to the objectives of the Barcelona Process, among which the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF), the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM (PA-UfM) or the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM). The UfM Secretariat is in **continuous coordination** with them, participating each year to their governing bodies meetings, and mutually complementing their respective work programmes.

*In 2020, UfM Ministers launched the **Day of the Mediterranean**, to take place each 28 November in view of giving further visibility to cooperation initiatives and coordination efforts among actors in the region. The strong cultural dimension of the celebration will be notably the occasion to enhance synergies with the ALF.*

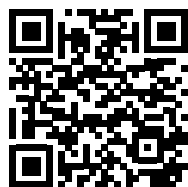
Furthermore, the UfM Secretariat works hand in hand with **regional organisations** and frameworks active in the Euro-Mediterranean region, notably the League of Arab States, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Visegrad Group, the Council of Baltic States, and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organisation.

*In November 2019, it hosted the **Annual Coordination Meeting of intergovernmental organisations operating in the Euro-Mediterranean area**, in view of guaranteeing complementarity of work and the pursue of mutual objectives with better results and greater impacts.*

In addition to the regular and active engagement in the **5+5 Dialogue Ministerial and Technical Meetings**, the UfM Secretariat co-organizes the MedThink 5+5 annual forums with the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) since 2016.

The UfM Secretariat supported the launch of the **Summit of the Two Shores** (Sommet des deux Rives) on several levels, including through the organization of a regional dialogue in May 2019 that brought together several members of civil society from the UfM region. The UfM has since participated in the steering committee of the initiative, supported both technically

Voices of the Mediterranean



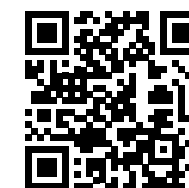
New era in the euro-mediterranean cooperation



25 years later: What's next for the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation?



Day of the Mediterranean website



and financially some of the projects retained, and is in close coordination with France to prepare the upcoming “Sommet des mondes méditerranéens” early 2022.

### 1.2. A multi-stakeholders approach

The UfM regional policy dialogue platforms deepen regional dialogue through a multi-stakeholders approach and complement the ministerial processes in each sector of regional cooperation, aiming at better understanding the specific needs of stakeholders, sharing experiences and promoting concrete projects.

#### Since 2017...

**15+ regional platforms, involving a network of over 30000 STAKEHOLDERS through more than 400 Expert fora**

**30+ partnership agreements**

**250+ events**

In light of the important role played by the **civil society** in the launch and development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the UfM Secretariat dedicates a special attention in offering it a platform to raise its voice.

*A UfM virtual Forum was notably held on 25 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 that promote Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on a daily basis. The conference saw the participation of more than 1500 stakeholders.*

With the Covid-19 pandemic, but also to mobilize a wider audience, the UfM

Secretariat has been developing online tools.

*For example, in 2017, UfM member states launched an online platform, the Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform, where up-to-date information on marine and coastal areas are available, and different initiatives and projects can be discussed. Being accessible to all member states of the UfM and managed by the Secretariat, the platform has been undergoing continuous improvements to better meet the expectations of its users, and contributes greatly to the consolidation of the Mediterranean Blue Economy community.*

### 1.3. An effective global player

The Mediterranean is at the heart of global challenges, making it a suitable ground to tackle them on a smaller scale, and subsequently share best practices and successful solutions with the international community aiming to inspire global action.

As the Co-Presidency of the UfM and its main financial contributor, the **EU is more than a partner**. It is a central stakeholder in the activities of the UfM. Interactions and synergies with the EU institutions have been consolidating significantly in the last few years. In 2020, the UfM Secretariat has been closely involved in the development and launch of the EU New Agenda for the Mediterranean, which underlines the EU's renewed confidence in the UfM's indispensable role to enhance regional cooperation, and as a privileged dialogue forum for its 42 Member States. Furthermore, the EU-Southern Neighbourhood Ministerial Meeting was held back-to-back with the V UfM Regional Forum.

*In 2019, the European Commission submitted for the first time an EU-funded project for the UfM label, a testimony of the growing added-value of the organisation. Since, the profile of the Clima-Med project has successfully been raised at regional and global level, notably through the UfM side-event at the COP25 “True-to-life steps to accomplish climate actions: From initiating policies to enhancing climate finance access & action implementation”.*

Since the UfM obtained observer status to the UN General Assembly in December 2015, **cooperation with UN agencies and international organizations with a Euro-Mediterranean vocation** has particularly grown to achieve better synergies among international and regional actions and

enable coherent implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the region. The UfM Secretariat participates annually to the UN General Assembly, as well as to the three Conventions of the Parties on Climate Change, Desertification and Biodiversity. It has regularly held side-events during the UNFCCC COPs, highlighting the challenges in the Mediterranean and coordinating the contribution of the region at global level.

*Since 2017, the UfM has joined forces with several United Nations agencies (UNDP, UNFCCC, WHO, FAO and UNOSSC), through MoUs, which give the organisation further strength and validity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda across the Euro-Mediterranean region.*

## 2 Enhancing regional stability, development and integration: 5 new priorities for the UfM

### 2.1. Environmental and climate action

The Mediterranean region is a climate change hotspot, warming up 20% faster than the global average. The lack of adequate information, among other things, delays the development of effective climate action policies.

In this regard, the UfM supported since 2016 efforts dedicated to the collection of existing scientific knowledge, in particular through a **report elaborated by 100 scientists of the MedECC (Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change) network**, which constituted the first-ever comprehensive scientific evaluation in this field at the regional level. The launch of the report received significant media coverage throughout UfM member states and globally, and was featured at the IV UfM Regional Forum. Furthermore, the UfM Secretariat has signed in October 2021 a MoU with the **European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF)** to support all UfM countries to access the critical data they need to tackle Mediterranean climate change challenges.

In addition, the UfM Secretariat supports its member states in the implementation of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) towards the achievement of the Paris Agreement at regional level.

The 2020 UfM Climate Week for example 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. Furthermore, at the COP25 in 2019, the UfM co-organised a side-event in partnership with the UNDP to discuss how to achieve the implementation of NDCs through supporting community-based mitigation, adaptation and cross-cutting actions in the region.

The UfM Secretariat also strives to raise awareness on the needs of **climate finance** in the region.

In 2021, it has created a **one-stop-shop** on its website to facilitate the sharing of climate finance information among decision-makers, including data, climate-related funding opportunities, and climate tracking requirements.

In October 2021, the UfM have witnessed a historical momentum of consensus among its members on the pressing global issues of climate change and environmental degradation. The **UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action** sets an ambitious and comprehensive course of action for the region, notably through the adoption of the **2030 Greener Med Agenda**.

### 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.

This Agenda strives to herald a decade of ambitious action in view of helping deliver the environment-related SDGs by 2030. The UfM Secretariat also prepared the ground for the introduction of a monitoring framework, adjusted to the possible post-pandemic scenarios. This process was performed in close coordination with the UfM Co-Presidency to guarantee the necessary political support but also sought to count on relevant regional projects to ensure collaboration from a bottom-up approach as well.

In these areas, the UfM Secretariat ensures coordination with other global and regional frameworks of action, notably the **Plan for an Exemplary Mediterranean 2030 (PAMEx)**, for which it is in close coordination with French authorities. The Secretariat took part of its launch at the IUCN Summit and a visit of the PAMEx team to the UfM Headquarters took place on 22 October 2021.

In view of achieving effective and long-lasting results, the UfM adopted a comprehensive sustainable development strategy that also addresses key challenges such as water, energy and urban development.

Since 2017, the **UfM Water Agenda** was launched to facilitate the application of integrated water resource management approaches, whilst including a strategy to encourage the financing of much needed water investments in the Mediterranean region.

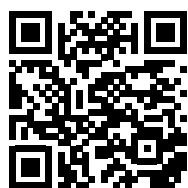
In this framework, the UfM Secretariat held, since 2019, national workshops on Sustainable Water Financing to support the implementation of the Water Agenda's financial strategy by UfM Member States, tailored to the demands and requirements of each country. Furthermore, it organised Water Governance and Business Fora, highlighting with International Financial Institutions, the link between water security and economic growth. With the growing relevance of water and sanitation during the Covid-19 pandemic, the UfM adapted its activities to mobilize Mediterranean actors on these issues.

UfM Ministers adopted in June 2021, a new Ministerial Declaration towards energy security and a low-carbon transition, which will be developed into concrete action plans by the three **UfM Energy Platforms**.

Empowering actors on a local level to be agents of change is an essential component of the sustainable energy transition. That is why the UfM launched, in 2018, an intense cooperation with local authorities on this issue. It has notably collaborated with the Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency in a new exercise involving more than 20 municipalities to gain valuable insights on the potential to accelerate energy efficient street lighting implementation.

Moreover, the UfM has labelled the EU-funded project *Clima-Med*, which aims to enhance the energy security

One-stop-shop





and adaptive capacity of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries while fostering their transition to low-carbon and climate-resilient economies, thereby contributing to more stable, efficient, competitive and climate-resilient socio-economic communities, while at the same time increasing energy independence and reducing emissions.

Finally, sustainable and future-proof urbanisation is key to addressing climate change, and Mediterranean cities have the potential to take the lead on sustainable development without sacrificing economic growth. This belief drives the UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040 and its Action Plan for Affordable and Sustainable Housing, launched in 2021 following the adoption of the UfM Urban Agenda at the 2nd UfM Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Urban Development in 2017.

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 with over 60 participants to take stock of the preliminary damage and needs assessment with due regard to Beirut's historic built heritage, a key part of the Mediterranean identity, and addressed its recovery and reconstruction.

## 2. 2. Sustainable and inclusive economic and human development

In view of unleashing economic development in the Euro-Mediterranean region, the UfM Roadmap mandated the Secretariat to develop a study on the levels of regional integration. In 2021, the **UfM Progress Report on Regional Integration** was launched together with the OECD, and provided key findings and policy recommenda-

tions in five domains: trade, finance, infrastructure, movement of people, and research and higher education.

Two Ministerial Meetings on Trade were held, in 2018 and 2020, and three successive editions of the **UfM Trade and Investment Forum** were organised as a concrete follow-up to the recommendations of the Ministerial Conferences. Furthermore, in 2021, a first conference was held on **SMEs Access to Finance**, and the Secretariat has delivered a series of technical trainings on **Rules of Origin for stakeholders from Egypt and Jordan**, with other trainings are planned for **Lebanon and Palestine**.

The UfM Secretariat supports trade integration between South Mediterranean partners, notably the **Agadir Agreement**. In 2019, the UfM started developing, in cooperation with the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)*, technical training in the area of trade policy for the Member States of the Agreement.

The UfM has consistently supported the need to advance efforts in the area of research and innovation (R&I). Since 2020, the **UfMisation of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on R&I** led to the successful adoption of three new research agendas for the Mediterranean, on Climate Change, Health, and Renewable Energy. A first UfM Ministerial Conference on R&I is under preparation and foreseen in 2022.

In 2021, in view of reinforcing the **Innovation-Employability Nexus in the Mediterranean**, the UfM launched, with the support of the *GIZ*, a new handbook for academia, industry and policymakers, which 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. It was followed up by digital trainings, notably to Jordan and Tunisia, for higher education institutions, research centres, policymakers, as well as industry representatives. A high-level follow-up Forum on Innovation and Employability will be held on 18 November 2021.

The UfM is actively engaged towards addressing the complex challenges facing the transport sector and developing an efficient, integrated, interoperable and sustainable transport infrastructure network, with a view to improving transport connectivity in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

*The UfM is developing a new comprehensive strategy on land and maritime transport and logistics connectivity*

**for the Mediterranean**, in close coordination with the UfM Co-Presidency and member states in the framework of the Regional Platform on Transport.

The second dimension towards an inclusive growth is the **development of human capital**.

Higher Education is therefore a strategic objective for the UfM. It notably launched a regional dialogue process on the **internationalisation of higher education in the Mediterranean region**, as well as a study on the issue, conducted by the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED) in 10 countries – Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia – focusing especially on resources and opportunities available at the national and regional levels.

In 2019, the **Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes (UEMF)**, a flagship UfM project, celebrated its first graduation ceremony of master's degrees. Thanks to the support of the UfM, it has been recording a steady increase in the number of registrations from all across the Mediterranean. In the same year 2019, the UEMF launched a School of Digital Engineering and Artificial Intelligence, with the largest university platform for digital engineering in Africa.

**7,000 STUDENTS** from across the Euro-Mediterranean region and Sub-Saharan Africa by 2024

**650 HIGHLY QUALIFIED** professors, researchers, administrative and technical personnel

**80% OF STUDENTS** participating in mobility experiences abroad

In light of the high unemployment rates in the region, sometimes the highest worldwide, the UfM also addresses the issue of job creation. Its **Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (Med4Jobs)**, which celebrated two editions of the Med-4Jobs Stakeholders Dialogue in 2018 and 2020, is steadily growing. So far, the initiative has 13 labelled projects and benefits about 100,000 individuals, mostly women and young people.

*In 2019, the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour launched an ambitious agenda for the Mediterranean in these areas. In 2021, the UfM produced the Report "Visions and Actions to Promote Employment in the Southern Mediterranean: Role and Contribution of the Union for the Mediterranean", that sums the UfM action in this sector.*

Furthermore, in light of its comprehensive crosscutting action, the UfM also promotes job creation through other sectors, notably **Blue Economy**. In the 2nd UfM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy adopted in February 2021, Ministers firmly committed to promote transformative policies and tools such as maritime clusters or maritime spatial planning, and support the overall shift towards low-emission technologies and circular blue economy.

*Since 2017, the UfM Secretariat supports the **BlueSkills project**, which promotes opportunities for "marine and maritime careers by developing skills, exchanging knowledge and valorising research for more sustainable Mediterranean Sea. In 2021, a training on blue jobs and cross-cutting skills for young professionals and graduates of the was held by the Secretariat.*

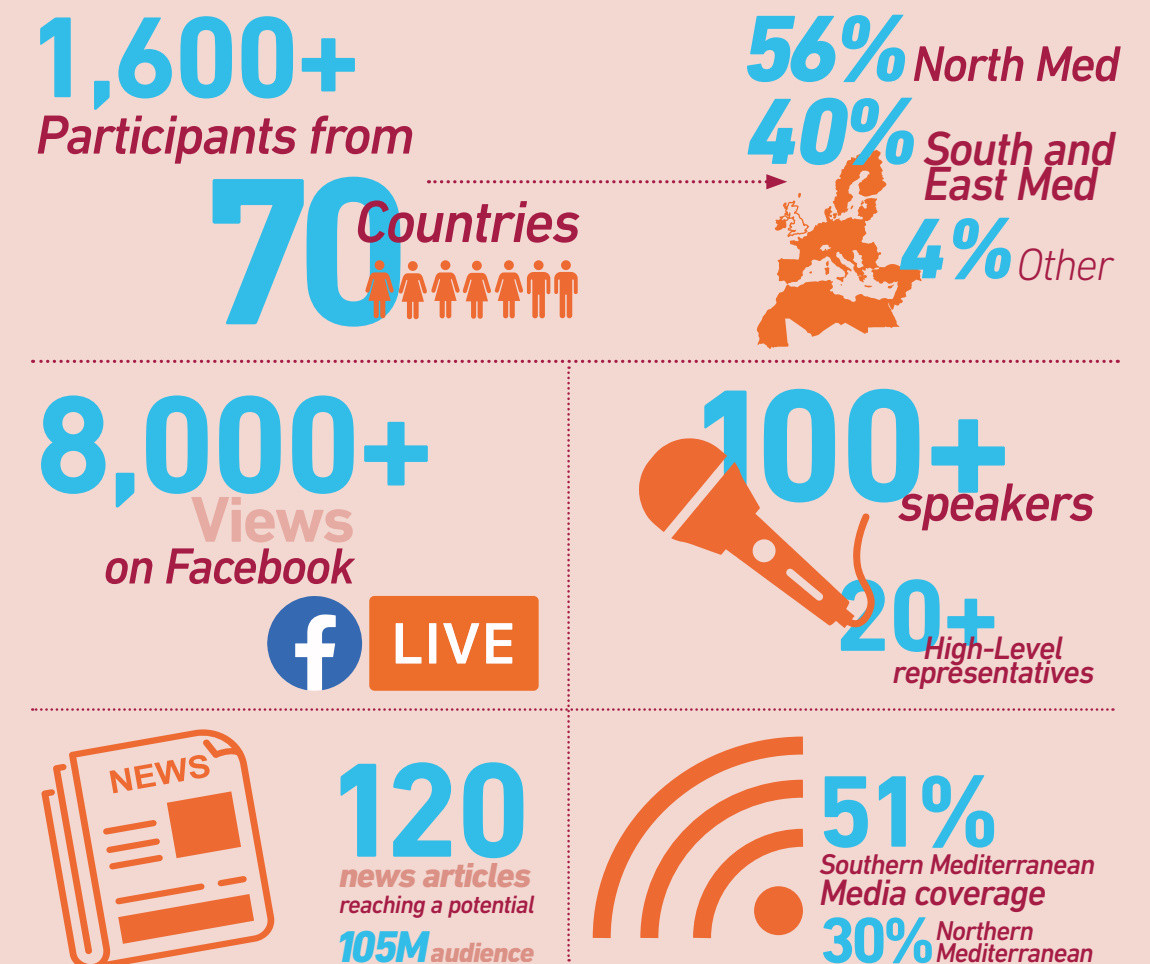
### 2.3. Social inclusiveness and equality as an essential element in the socio-economic development of the region

In 2017, the UfM launched a shared **Euro-Mediterranean agenda on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society** at the Ministerial Conference in Cairo (November, 2017). The agenda aims to increase women's leadership and political participation, enhance women's economic empowerment, combat all forms of violence against women and girls, and end gender stereotypes.

*In 2020, an **intergovernmental monitoring mechanism**, the first-ever of its kind in the region, was endorsed by all UfM Member States. It aims to gauge efforts to promote women's rights and 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. The support of Member States for this monitoring system attests to their growing commitment to achieving concrete results on such a critical front.*

*Furthermore, the UfM Women Conference has become a reference rendez-vous in the Euro-Mediterranean regions for exchanging experiences on gender equality.*

### The Women4Mediterranean Conference in numbers



The Euro-Mediterranean is one of the youngest regions in the world. The UfM has therefore placed youth at the heart of its actions. Building on the outcomes of youth-related activities organised since 2017, the UfM Secretariat has been working on the development of a **structured and coordinated youth strategy** in the Euro-Mediterranean area, horizon 2030, in close consultations not only with youth of the region but also national governments, international organisations and civil society actors working in the field.

*In 2016, the UfM Secretariat supported the creation of the **Mediterra-***

***nean Youth Climate Network (MYCN)**, composed of seven youth associations, to work with youth as a full partner in climate action efforts. The network participates as an observer in the UfM Climate Change Expert Group. Furthermore, tapping on its observer status, the UfM Secretariat co-organised side-events with the MYCN during the COPs 24 and 25 to raise their visibility at global level. Finally, the UfM also works with **vulnerable populations** focusing on two fronts: informal workers and school dropouts.*

*A UfM Workshop on **Informal Business Integration** was held in 2019 to tackle*

the expanding informal economy, with informality being a recurring theme in UfM conferences and webinars in 2020 and 2021. Furthermore, 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 equitable relationships on a grassroots level in the areas of job creation and workers' rights. The five editions of the **UfM Social Dialogue Forum** ensured progress in these areas, despite interruptions to so many work sectors caused by the pandemic.

Since 2017, the UfM Secretariat has been actively supporting the development and expansion to new countries of the **Mediterranean New Chance (MedNC) project**. This network of 'second chance schools' helps young people who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs), and has been coordinated by the European Institute for Cooperation and Development (IECD) since 2018. MedNC brings together a network of more than 26,000 young people and 100 partner centers in nine Euro-Mediterranean countries.

## 2.4. Digital transformation

In the digital age, integrating new technologies into education systems is no longer a matter of choice for any country seeking smart and sustainable growth. 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.

In 2019, the **UfM Conference on Digital Transformation and Digital Skills for the Future**, held in Tallinn, marked an important step towards the UfM's engagement with the rapidly shifting technological landscape across the

labour market. The conference drew on Estonia's experience as one of the most advanced digital societies worldwide.

As a follow-up to the Conference, the UfM launched in 2021 a series of three **workshops on e-governance** implemented in Algeria and Palestine, in partnership with GIZ and the Estonian ICT Cluster, with more Southern and Eastern Mediterranean UfM countries to follow. Additionally, the **2021 Women Business Forum** focused on digitalisation as an opportunity for women-led business growth, and brought together over 500 women entrepreneurs, regional women business organizations, international leading organizations and business support schemes from the Euro-Mediterranean region. They were provided with training on Digital transformation, E-commerce, Gender sensitive Innovation for Business Support Organisations (BSOs) in Rural areas.

## 2.5. Civil Protection

With an increasing number of forest fires, floods, earthquakes, marine pollution, pandemics and other natural catastrophes across the Euro-Mediterranean area, cooperation among UfM Member States is a priority in civil protection. After 10 years of hiatus, the UfM Secretariat and the European Commission convened a **meeting of Directors-General of Civil Protection of UfM Member States** on 11 February 2019 and pushed forward the preparation of a regional action plan. Attention was focused on stronger cooperation concerning disaster risk management and increased resilience, including inter-institutional collaboration between political, operational and scientific players.

Since then, the working groups were established and have convened successfully in 2020 and 2021, launching the discussion on the **regional action**

**plan and future PPRD-Southprogram** for the Mediterranean. The UfM with the support of an external technical assistance drafted an Action Plan reflecting the recommendations and final reports of the 3 working groups.

## 2.6. Cross-cutting issues

The importance of **tourism** for the economies of the Euro-Mediterranean region, with its potential impacts on growth, job creation, infrastructure and cultural understanding, is evident. The consolidation and development of a sustainable tourism sector, cross-linked with other sectors of the economy, can significantly contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

With this in mind, the UfM Secretariat launched its first tourism-related activities in 2018. It held a brainstorming meeting, which focused on the digitalisation of SMEs in the sector, as well as on the need for innovative approaches to climate action and energy efficiency. This meeting served as an initial opportunity to exchange with experts and stakeholders towards building a more structured UfM regional dialogue on

tourism-related issues. In 2019, the UfM gathered young entrepreneurs to exchange ideas on their projects and success stories in the tourism area, with a view to discussing the sector's role as a catalyst for job creation on both shores of the Mediterranean, especially for youth and women.

Within the current context, **Intercultural and Interfaith dialogue** in the Mediterranean is an important underlying dimension of all regional cooperation activities in the framework of the UfM and is paramount to fight against extremism and all forms of racism, as well as to build upon a common heritage and aspirations.

In addition to the launch of the Day of the Mediterranean, the UfM Secretariat organised activities aimed at encouraging intercultural dialogue. In 2018, for example, the UfM and Tarragona City Council jointly organised the **1<sup>st</sup> UfM Youth Forum for the Mediterranean** as part of the XVIII Mediterranean Games. Moreover, in 2021, it held an online event with young people from the region to address the forms and practices of **hate speech** and to combat it on social media.



# 3 Strengthening impact on the ground for the citizens: a reinforced capacity for action

## 3.1. Stronger engagement for greater impact

The UfM Secretariat has developed a long-term financing strategy that involves the establishment of structured partnerships with the region's main donors in order to strengthen the impact of its actions.

The UfM Secretariat has signed a multiannual financial agreement with the **Swedish Development Agency (Sida)** in February 2017 to support the UfM Secretariat's activities towards more inclusive and sustainable development in the region. This agreement is primarily aimed at funding the Secretariat's regional dialogue activities in the areas of women's empowerment, energy, climate action, environment, water and the blue economy. The UfM and Sida are currently discussing a second phase, with an extended scope and scale.

In 2017, the UfM Secretariat signed a joint declaration with the **Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development** 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. The scale of the project has been enlarged during its implementation.

An agreement was signed in 2014 with the **Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** to fund UfM-labelled projects in the field of gender equality. A renewed and expanded agreement, covering the period 2019-2021, was implemented to finance projects emphasizing women and youth empowerment, as well as strengthening gender equality, in several UfM Southern Mediterranean Member States.

## 3.2. Enhanced action on the ground

These last years, the UfM Secretariat has consolidated its capacities to support and follow up on the development and implementation of projects, particularly at the technical level. The Secretariat allows notably overcoming deadlocks through the mobilisation of governments and stakeholders towards the success of the projects, facilitates access to finance through a dynamic network of donors and financial insti-

tutions, and helps kick-start projects with the support of internal experts and technical partners.

Through the unanimous endorsement of its member states, the UfM Secretariat awards a **label** to regional projects that contribute to the overall goals of stability, development and regional integration, and offer meaningful impact for the citizens of the Euro-Mediterranean region. The **60 UfM-labelled projects, with a total budget of 5 billion euros**, aim to benefit more than **15 million people**, with an estimated indirect impact that includes more than **100 million people**. In September 2018, a proposal for the **reform of the UfM label** was adopted by UfM Senior Officials to streamline the labelling process. (For a comprehensive presentation of the UfM-labelling process, see the Annex: "UfM-labelled projects: background, state of play and highlights").

In 2020, the UfM Secretariat set 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.

The estimated total number of beneficiaries for the 4 awarded projects under the Scheme is **18,000 individuals from 7 UfM Member States**. The projects are:

1. **SEARCHED** - Strengthening Employment and entrepreneurial Activities to Recover Covid-19 Epidemic Damages
2. **RISE** - Resilience and Innovation through Strengthened Entrepreneurship

3. **FLOWER** - Fostering Local Market Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Resilience

4. **MAST** - Mediterranean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism post COVID-19

The UfM Secretariat mobilises governments, financial institutions and other potential donors to **broker finance** for its labelled projects.

For example, in 2018, the **Gaza Desalination Plant** received the necessary financing (€456 million) to launch the construction of this largest infrastructure project ever in the area, thanks to the political and financial support of UfM member states and the European Commission following a donor roadshow organised by the Secretariat.

The same year, the UfM Secretariat also supported the **Plastic Busters** initiative in its fundraising phase and accompanied the promoter in the presentation of the project to European funds. 'Plastic Busters MPAs' received €5 million from the EU Interreg Med Program for the period 2018-2022.

Over the last years, the UfM has notably focused its action on climate finance and sustainable impact investment by working with several partners but most important among them R20 (Regions for climate action) and Multilateral Development Banks (EBRD, EIB).

Lastly, the Secretariat also helped UNIDO's project "**Promoting Women's Empowerment for Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development in the MENA Region (PWE)**", to finance a pilot initiative through a funding agreement with the Principality of Monaco. The objective of the agreement, foreseen to last four years, is to promote the development of women-led micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in order to create more business oppor-

*tunities and jobs for women of working age in Tunisia.*

### 3.3. Better capacity for action

To cope with the exponential growth in UfM activities, the Secretariat continuously adapts and reforms its governance and methodology of work to ensure efficiency.

Member States approved, in July 2018, a **major administrative reform package**, in an effort to improve governance and accountability, increase transparency, and further strengthen the Secretariat's capacity to implement concrete activities.

*Following the adoption of the **Anti-Fraud & Anti-corruption Policy** at the Senior Officials Meeting on 17 July 2018, a **UfM Oversight Committee** was launched by the UfM Co-Presidency, and submitted its first memo in 2021.*

*In the context of updating the governance and the internal control system of the UfM Secretariat, notably the segregation of duties among financial actors, UfM Senior Officials have approved the appointment of an **Accounting Officer** during their meeting in Brussels in 2019.*

The onset of the **Covid-19 pandemic** left no one's way of life unaffected and more than a year and a half, 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 continued to shoulder its responsibilities supporting the recovery of the post-pandemic world. 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.

*A dedicated **webpage** on UfM activities and efforts related to COVID-19 to ensure that partners and stakeholders remain updated on Euro-Mediterranean initiatives that tackle this unprecedented crisis. Thanks to these efforts, the outreach of the organisation has improved, as online activities accessed people that wouldn't have been able to participate in activities otherwise.*

## The way forward



2020 marked a milestone celebration for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and dialogue with the 5<sup>th</sup> Regional Forum/25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, otherwise known as the Barcelona Process.

Strengthened by the renewed commitment of its member states on this occasion, and with an updated direction of travel set for the years to come, the UfM Secretariat will strive to contribute to the post-Covid 19 recovery throughout the Euro-Mediterranean, building on the region's inherent diversity and resources.

It will continue implementing the 5 priorities set in 2020, always in line with

the larger framework of action mandated by the 2017 Roadmap. It will notably build on the recently adopted mandates in the areas of Employment and Labour, Energy, Blue Economy, Environment and Climate Change, and pave the way towards updated regional strategies in the fields of Women Empowerment, Urban Development, Transport or Civil Protection.

Moreover, the UfM Secretariat will endeavor to enhance its action in the fields where its capacities have been limited so far, namely cross-cutting issues such as tourism, or the prevention of radicalisation and extremism, notably through the further consolidation of its capacities for action.

*For more details on the activities of the Union for the Mediterranean since 2017:*



UfM Annual Report  
2017



UfM Annual Report  
2018



UfM Annual Report  
2019



UfM Annual Report  
2020

## Annex UfM-labelled projects: background, state of play and highlights

*In the UfM Roadmap for Action, Ministers confirmed that “the concept of labelling” was “at the heart of the Secretariat’s activities” and that the “the real nature of the label, and in particular its added value, is a matter of central significance”.*

As recognised in the UfM Roadmap, the label is an essential tool for the UfM, which allows the latter to translate the priorities defined at a political level and in the policy dialogues, taking place within sectoral platforms, into support for concrete projects to deliver benefits on the ground.

**The label provides political leverage and visibility and serves to showcase the value of regional cooperation, by the strong political commitment from 42 countries, the regional recognition and visibility at the highest level and potential replication and best practice sharing of successful projects.**

It is worth recalling that the Paris Declaration of 2008 provided the initial mandate for the UfM to work on “*projects taking into account the regional, sub-regional and trans-national character of proposed projects as well as their size, relevance and interest for the parties involved, in line with the scope and main objectives of the initiative*”.

The Projects Guidelines, adopted by the UfM Senior Officials UfM in April 2011, are the core reference document. Thanks to their general nature, they have allowed for a very broad range of projects to be considered.

These are further operationalised in the internal UfMS Project Manual, which deals in a very detailed manner with procedures covering the whole range of issues, from project proposal, presentation, labelling, to follow up and monitoring.

As described in the above reference documents, the label is formally granted by the SOM at the end of an elaborate preparatory procedure, while it is the UfMS that is responsible for shaping the projects on the basis of prior proposals from project promoters. The evaluation and selection of projects for the SOM are conducted within the UfMS involving senior experts from the 6 sector divisions.

As per the UfM Roadmap for action, a **reflection on the nature, process and added value of the labelling was mandated by Ministers of Foreign Affairs, calling to launch a reflection on the UfM label and its added value.** The UfM Secretariat has supported this reflection by launching an external study to provide an assessment of the current UfM labelling process, an in-depth

analysis of the labelling experience, and a projection of possible options, scenarios and recommendations for areas of improvement. In addition, a non-paper was issued, including recommendations for improvement of the labelling process, which were adopted by the Senior Officials in October 2018.

Since the adoption of the recommendations, the Secretariat has ensured the effective application of the decision taken by Member countries in this regard, and adapted its project processing methodology accordingly, in particular:

- Encouraging the discussion of projects to be potentially labelled within the UfM sectoral regional platforms, as a way of raising interest of and receiving feedback and support from all Member States, promoting complementarity and avoiding duplication with other ongoing activities in the region.
- Supporting, when justified, to label “Initiatives” or “Programs”, which would by definition aim to promote a common regional approach

and to cover as many countries as possible in the Region, even though individual projects may remain national. This would have the added benefit of allowing for a more aligned and systematic approach within a given sector across the region.

The revision of the labelling also foresees that *“In the context of an enhanced project follow-up, all labelled projects should be re-assessed at three-year intervals in order to allow the SOM to determine whether the Label should be maintained or discontinued.”*

To allow the SOM to determine whether the Label should be maintained or discontinued, the UfMS has set a defined procedure, which is being applied.

**Labelled projects cover the six different sectors defined for the UfM action and are very diverse, in terms of their nature, size or maturity.** A major distinction is made between “hard” projects, involving significant amounts of long-term capital investment in infrastructure, and “soft” projects, focusing on training, capacity-building and networking.

*Since the inception, 65 projects have been labelled, out of which:*





**Thus, to date, the number of labelled projects is 60, with a total budget of 5 billion euros.**

Labelled projects are identified according to the regional priorities, within the two strategic thematic areas of Regional Human Development and Regional Sustainable Development. Going more into concrete illustrations of labelled projects, to showcase the diversity of the thematic covered and their impact on the region, here some examples that can be highlighted:

**Regional Human Development: 33 projects**

*Economic Development and Employment: 11*  
*Social and Civil Affairs: 10*  
*Higher Education and Research: 11*

**Sustainable Development: 27 projects**

*Environment, Water and Blue Economy: 14*  
*Transport and Urban Development: 9*  
*Energy and Climate Action: 4*

*Cross-cutting: 1*

—The **Desalination Facility for the Gaza Strip project** is a landmark operation consisting of three integrated projects on the Gaza Strip: the construction of a 55 million cubic metre desalination Sea Water Reverse Osmosis (SWRO) plant, to be increased to 100 million cubic metre capacity; a North-South conveyance system; and a Non-Revenue Water reduction project.

The project will help to address the major water deficit for a population of over 2 million people. It is also part of a broader Palestinian Water Programme in Gaza, which aims to address the water crisis on the Gaza Strip, where 95% of the water is undrinkable due to the over-pumping of the Coastal Aquifer, the only available water source in the region. Furthermore, it will help reduce the pollution of the Mediterranean, by preventing the collapse of the



Desalination facilities of Gaza.

Coastal Aquifer and supporting political stability in the region by tackling water scarcity.

The creation of this desalination facility and distribution system will foster job creation and sustainable, economic development in this highly-populated region.

On 20 March 2018 the European Commission organised in partnership with the UfM the High Level Donor Pledging Conference for the Desalination Facility for the Gaza Strip

Project, held in Brussels. The Conference was an overall success since pledges amounted to more than 80 percent of the funding needed for the project. The Donor Handbook was also updated at this occasion.

Spain committed EUR 1 million to the construction of the desalination in 2020. The project is currently under design and preparation of the tendering documents, while the World Bank led component regarding the North-South carrier is under construction. AFD (Agence française de dével-

oppement) signed an agreement for which EUR 35 million will be disbursed with GEF (Global Environment Facility) to support green activities that are related to the Desalination as well as to the wastewater treatment in Gaza. The German contribution raised to EUR 52 million approximately.

—The **High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executive Recruitment (HOMERe)** project is predominantly aimed at high-achieving students in their last year of study before graduation, with the objective of easing their transition from an academic environment to a graduate position in their own country.

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, counter-intuitively, youth unemployment often increases as the level of education increases - that is, highly qualified graduates struggle to find work. Despite their solid academic backgrounds, graduates often do not have the soft skills that potential employers are looking for, such as teamwork, problem-solving and leadership.

HOMERe meeting in Rabat, 2018.







*CEED GROW is helping women overcome the traditional obstacles they are faced with by offering business and financial management training.*

HOMERe uses mobility internships as a tool to combat this skills gap. Through its network of academic institutions, the project aims to attract transnational private companies in the Mediterranean region that are searching for brilliant employees. The programme provides help in the identification, preparation and mentoring of appropriately qualified students, while the host companies commit to allocating a tutor to their interns and to pay them a monthly allowance. The internships last on average for 6 months.

Implemented in 9 countries, thanks to a network of 100 universities, the project has already benefitted over 500 students (47% female) taking part in international internships in the Mediterranean region (South-to-North, South-to-South, and North-to-South).

—The objective of the **one-year** duration project **CEED GROW: Growing and Scaling Small and Medium-Sized Businesses** is to enhance the leadership, management and entrepreneurial

skills of existing small and medium sized businesses led by women, diminish the human capital gap and increase the number of women entrepreneurs and managers who own/manage SMEs and scaling companies to increase the number of jobs created and who contribute to the national economies of the region. With CEED's cross border model, the project promoter committed to offer the opportunity to entrepreneurs from **Tunisia and Morocco** to network with like-minded entrepreneurs from the various countries to learn about different ways to overcome challenges while learning about various business opportunities internationally. The program kick-off took place on February, and few weeks after the team started preparation actions, both Morocco and Tunisia authorities announced strict restrictions as a reaction to the covid-19 pandemic.

By December 2020, with a budget of 180.000 euro, the following targets were achieved:

- On-board and provide training to 127 beneficiaries
- Identify mentors and form 54 mentoring relationship
- Facilitate 530 hours of mentoring country
- Organize 2 networking and learning events per country

In terms of impact, it's worthy to be highlighted that in **Morocco a total of 119 new jobs were created during the implementation of the program, this includes 83 males hired and 36 female hires during this reporting period.** The program has revealed to be successful in helping the participants reach their forecasted revenue collected in June 15th 2020 of 377,000 MAD (€34.683) and enable them to survive and sustain the pandemic crisis. **We inspire participants' revenue** decreased by 52% compared to 2019 but they **reached by 99% their revenue forecast for 2020** due to the activities such as coaching session and online training for consultant which actually helped them sustain their activity and maintain their clients. Besides that, other e-commerce companies had to sell their products on social media to reach out to new clients and survive. In summary, we can state that the **digitalization was key success** for navigating the crisis.

As far as Tunisia is concerned, on average the beneficiaries attested that **they made 16.75% increase in revenues in comparison to 2019.** If we compare to the national Tunisian average, according to the UNDP estimates on the impact of COVID19 on the Tunisian economy, change in revenues vary between -0.6% and -29% depending on the sector. Beside that, within the reporting period at least one (1) job was created per company.

—Over a 4-year period, the **Plastic Busters MPAs project** addresses the

entire management cycle of marine litter, from monitoring and assessment to prevention and mitigation. The project also includes actions to strengthen networking between pelagic and coastal marine protected areas (CMPAs) located in Albania, Croatia, Greece, Italy, France and Spain. The results and achievements are planned to be expanded to the Mediterranean basin at large.

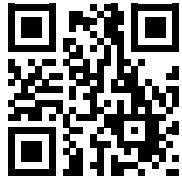
A series of concrete prevention and mitigation actions have been developed, tested and promoted during the project in several pilot areas in the Mediterranean basin. These include: fishing for litter; removing and collecting derelict fishing gear; establishing recycling mechanisms such as the Healthy Seas Initiative; and establishing return/deposit systems for packaging. Following life-cycle thinking and a circular-economy approach, the project will also carry out systemic evaluations of feasibility, reliability and sustainability, while involving relevant stakeholders such as port authorities, fishermen and municipalities.

The project further foresees a wide range of actions to enhance the awareness of stakeholders and promote change in their perceptions and attitudes towards waste. The label granted by the UfM recognises the urgency of the need to work together towards a shared and coordinated regional approach, in order to provide regional actions and solutions to this common problem.

The project, building on a well-thought coordination between the project promoter, University Siena (UNISI), and the UfM, and a strong fundraising strategy, has conducted a campaign to finance project activities in both rims of the Mediterranean Basin.



ENI CBC Med



During the first semester of 2021, the UNISI team was informed that:

- The project *Fostering knowledge transfer to tackle marine litter in the Med by integrating EbA into ICZM* | **Plastic Busters CAP** submitted to the ENI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme 2014-2020 was approved. This project is currently in the negotiation phase with the ENI CBC program.
- The project *MUssel Sustainable production (re)cyCLES* | **Muscles** submitted to the EU LIFE Program was approved and is expected to start in end of 2021.
- The project *Monitoraggio, censimento, raccolta e avvio al riciclo delle reti fantasma: i pescatori protagonisti della salvaguardia del mare* submitted to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) was approved and started in May 2021 under the coordination of ISPRA.

The UfM labelled project has now activities funded in both the North and the South of the Mediterranean. Such financial set-up constitutes a value added from the project implementation viewpoint, as it will allow 1) bringing up-to-speed actors from the South rim and 2) proceeding with a harmonization of activities related to the whole management cycle of Marine Litter across the whole Mediterranean region.

Country-wise, Plastic Busters MPAs sets to implement activities in **Albania, Croatia, France, Italy, Greece and Spain** and is the **first project at basin scale where EU and IPA countries join forces** to tackle marine litter (ML) via a coordinated approach to: i) diagnose ML impacts on biodiversity in MPAs, including the identification of “ML hot-spots”; ii) define and test tailor-made ML surveillance, prevention and mitigation measures in MPAs; iii) develop a common framework of ML actions for

**Interreg Med** regions towards the conservation of biodiversity in Med MPAs. Meanwhile, the **COMMON project** (an **ENI CBC Med** project) aims at applying the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) principles to tackle ML in 5

*The Plastic Busters project is analysing the effects of plastic litter to reduce its impact in the Mediterranean Sea.*

pilot coastal areas in **Italy, Tunisia, and Lebanon**, promoting an effective participatory approach and testing a model transferable across the Mediterranean basin. Within this general objective COMMON sets to transfer and deploy

the Plastic Buster MPAs approach (i.e., toolkit on harmonized ML methodologies and sampling methods), thus, contributing to the activities of Plastic Buster MPAs about transferring.







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