

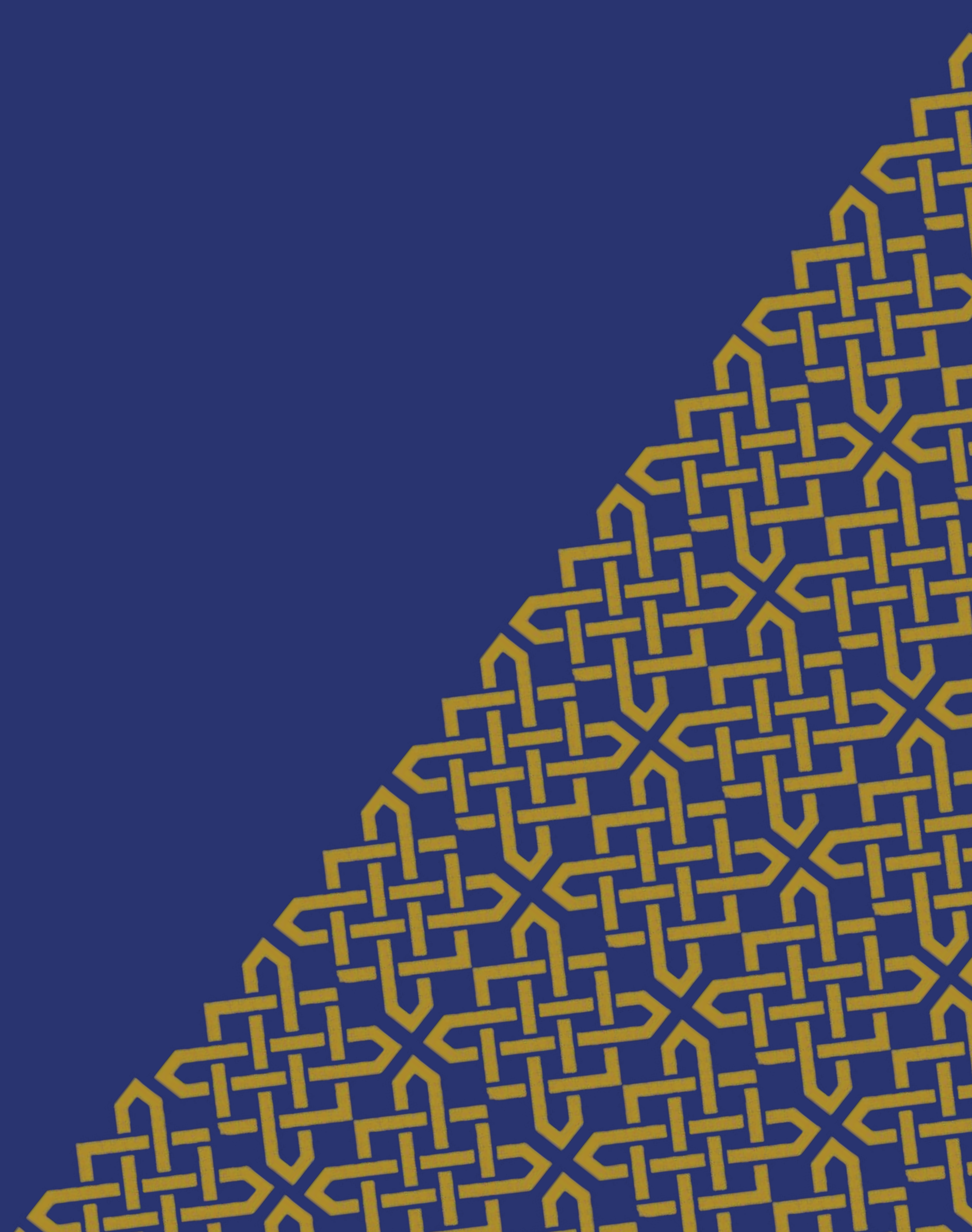


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# EU-OECD Regional Action Women's Economic Empowerment in the Southern Mediterranean

*Enhancing Women Entrepreneurs'  
Financial Inclusion and Access to Finance  
in the Digital Age*





# Enhancing women's financial inclusion and access to finance



## Women's Economic Empowerment in the MENA region

Over the past decade, MENA countries have made remarkable strides in ensuring better access to education for women, recognising their crucial role in fostering competitive and sustainable economies. While women in the region are more educated than ever before, their participation in the labour force remains the lowest globally. Numerous factors contribute to this disparity, but the private sector is crucial in facilitating women's access to employment. To address this, the region needs a more robust and inclusive private sector and investment climate, with entrepreneurship being a vital avenue to achieve this. Women entrepreneurs need support in their endeavours, particularly in accessing finance.

## Targeted Regional Action

The EU-OECD regional action aims at promoting an enabling policy and regulatory framework for women entrepreneurs' financial inclusion and access to finance, in line with OECD standards and best practices. The initiative adopts an intersectional approach to ensure that all groups of women entrepreneurs, and particularly the under-served and most vulnerable, are informed about policies and initiatives that specifically target their financial inclusion.



## Strategic Partnership

The EU and the OECD have joined forces to support women's economic empowerment in the Southern Mediterranean. Women's economic empowerment is a priority of the EU's external action under the Gender Action Plan III, which promotes women's economic and social rights and leverages digital opportunities. It is also reaffirmed in the Agenda for the Mediterranean of 2021, which gives special attention to women's participation in society and in the economy. Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment is also a strategic priority of the OECD. The MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme established the MENA-OECD Women's Economic Empowerment Forum over a decade ago as its specialised working group to advance gender equality in the Middle East and North Africa.





The EU-OECD Regional Action on Women's Economic Empowerment in the Southern Mediterranean: Enhancing Women Entrepreneurs' Financial Inclusion and Access to Finance in the Digital Age supports policy and regulatory reforms to advance access to finance for women in Middle East and North Africa region. The initiative engages stakeholders from public authorities, including policymakers and regulators, the financial sector and from women entrepreneurs' networks, from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia.

The specific outputs include:



### **Raising Awareness**

Ensuring policymakers and financial institutions are aware of the barriers to women entrepreneurs' access to finance, through regional multi-stakeholder policy dialogues.



### **Building capacities**

Supporting policymakers, financial institutions, and women entrepreneurs' networks in developing effective policies and strategies to enhance women's financial inclusion and access to finance through targeted capacity-building workshops.



### **Policy recommendations**

Developing policy recommendations and implementation guidance, based on identified action gaps and best practices.

The action builds on OECD tools and methodologies that promote women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion, and support women-owned SMEs (e.g., OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship; OECD Recommendation on Financial Literacy; OECD Recommendation on SME and Entrepreneurship Policy). It leverages OECD standards, policy communities, and partner groups such as the OECD International Network on Financial Education and the Committee on SMEs and Entrepreneurship.

## *Project Champions*

Our project champions are engaged stakeholders from public authorities, the financial sector, and women entrepreneurs' support networks, with proven capacity to mobilise and influence policymaking and initiatives supporting women entrepreneurs in their country. The champions network aims to ensure strong commitment and sustainability by supporting project implementation, engaging local stakeholders, disseminating project outputs and participating in regional events. Champions will notably benefit from capacity-building workshops, peer advocacy visits, and follow-up webinars. This network will support the concrete development of both cross-country and multi-stakeholder dialogues, peer learning, and exchange of good practices.





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