



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

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



The UfM Secretariat  
is co-funded by the  
EUROPEAN UNION



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# Message from the Secretary General Nasser Kamel



**The future of the Mediterranean will not be determined solely by its past but by what we do—the understandings we reach, the policies we implement, and our ability to build the agreements and consensus needed to ensure their effectiveness.**

The Euro-Mediterranean region faced yet another challenging year in 2024, posing a grave threat to the promise of shared peace, stability, and prosperity brought about by the Barcelona Process. A sustainable ceasefire in Gaza must be reached to put an end to the months of devastating violence and to the profound ongoing humanitarian tragedy that has had ripple effects across the region and the world.

Throughout 2024, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) participated in important multilateral events dealing with the alarming situation in the Middle East, including the international conference “Call for Action: Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza,” held in Jordan. Furthermore, I addressed the UN Security Council on the role of youth in tackling security challenges in the Mediterranean. These were occasions at which the UfM was able to represent the collective

voice of the Euro-Mediterranean region—a testament to the confidence placed in us.

The difficult geopolitical and socio-economic context in the Middle East motivated the UfM to forge ahead with its rigorous internal reform process, aiming to ensure that our organisation is fit for purpose—capable of responding to common regional challenges and meeting the aspirations of our citizens. We have prepared the ground for the launch of an inclusive consultative process, with input from our Member States, partner institutions, financial institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), and academia, on the vision and mandate of the UfM in 2026–2030. The results of this process will be presented to our Co-Presidency and the Foreign Ministers of our Member States at the 10<sup>th</sup> UfM Regional Forum in November 2025—on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Barcelona Process—allowing for a renewed commitment to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

While working on the UfM’s strategic direction, we have remained committed to meeting the needs of the people by promoting inclusive

and sustainable development. Our efforts focus on creating socio-economic opportunities that help tackle the detrimental impacts of the climate crisis across the Mediterranean Basin. The UfM actively participated at COP29, where we hosted the Mediterranean Pavilion—an initiative conceived by our organisation to highlight both the urgent challenges the region is currently facing, and the innovative solutions being developed to meet these challenges. One of the highlight events of the Pavilion was a presentation by MedECC, an independent network of scientists, of their latest findings on the impacts of climate and environmental change on coastal zones and the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus. I invite you to read the executive summaries of both reports, which paint a bleak picture of our shared future if we fail to act.

Moreover, the selection of Alexandria and Tirana as the first-ever Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue was announced in 2024. Jointly coordinated by the UfM and the Anna Lindh Foundation, and in close partnership with ARLEM, this initiative promotes a true Mediterranean identity and helps build greater trust and understanding—key elements in ultimately consolidating the promise of shared peace, stability, and prosperity in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The future of the Mediterranean will not be determined solely by its past, but by what we do—the understandings we reach, the policies we implement, and our ability to build the agreements and consensus needed to ensure their effectiveness. In this context, I welcome the creation of a Mediterranean portfolio at the European Commission and the announcement of a New Pact for the Mediterranean, which presents an opportunity to reinvigorate cooperation between its northern and southern shores.

As the leading multilateral platform for dialogue and cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region, the UfM stands ready to contribute to the strengthening of results-oriented and impactful regional cooperation.



# The UfM at a glance

## What is the Union for the Mediterranean?

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

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

## 43 Members

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

\*Syria suspended its membership in December 2011  
| Libya has an observer status

## What is the Barcelona Process?

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, known as the Barcelona Process, is a dialogue framework born out

of a commitment to strengthen relations between Europe and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, with the overall objective of establishing a Mediterranean area of peace, stability and shared prosperity. The Barcelona Process was focused around three main baskets: Political & Security; Economic & Financial; and Social, Cultural & Human.

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.

## 2 Co-Presidents

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

## 1 Secretariat

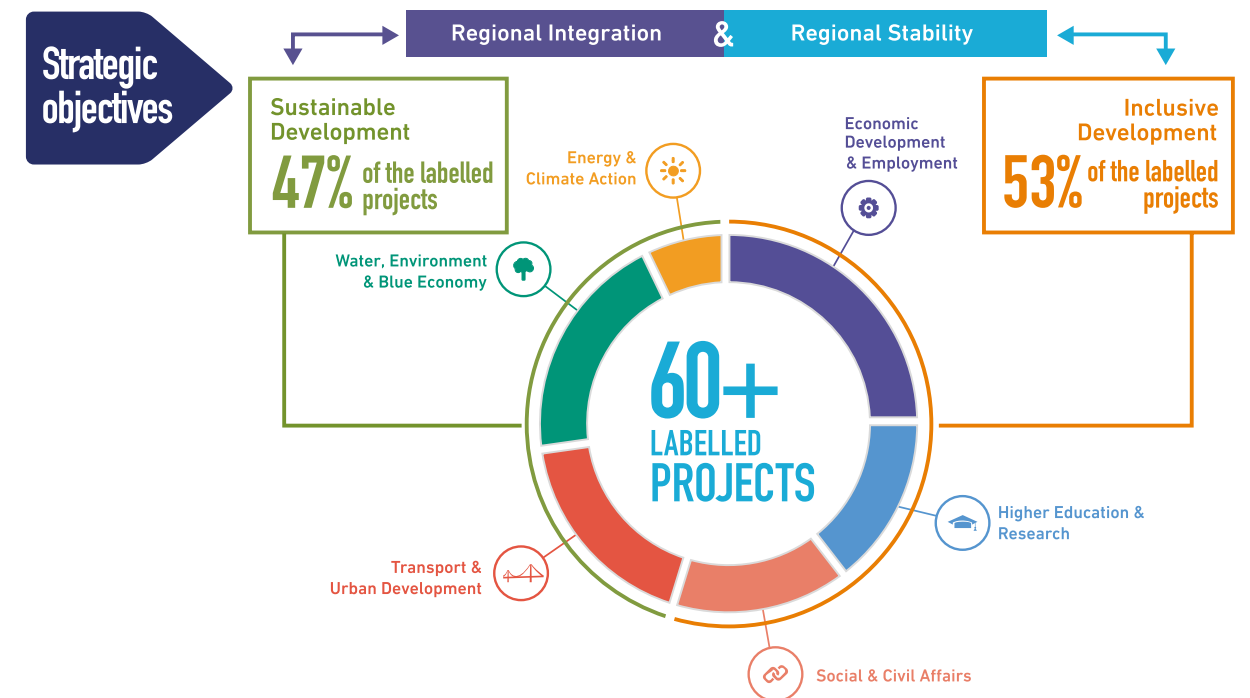
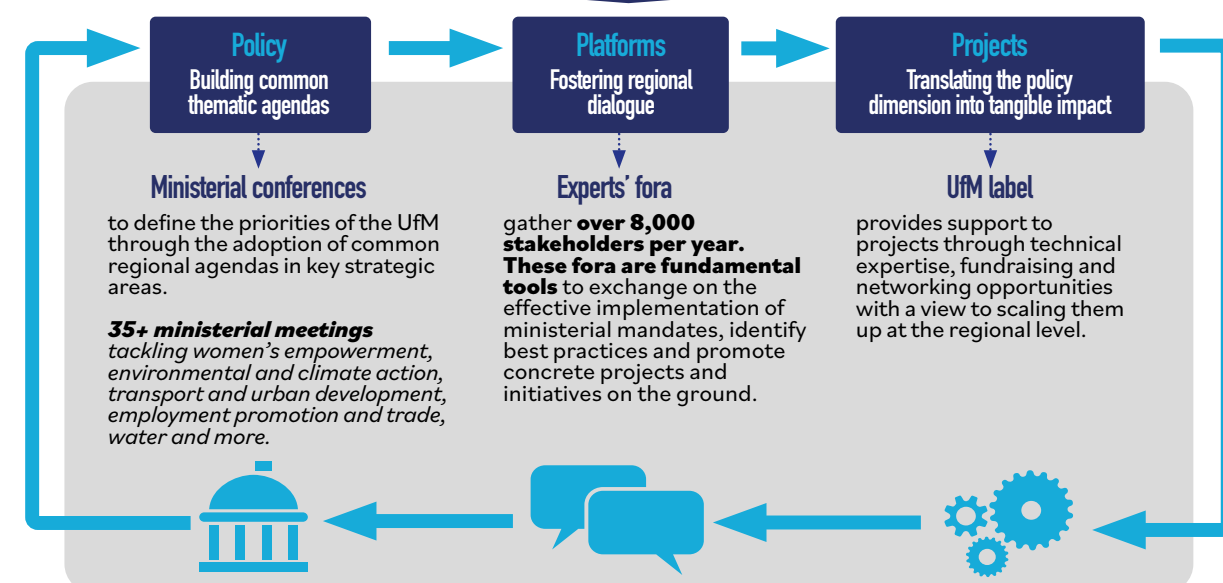
Established in 2010 in Barcelona, the UfM Secretariat is the first permanent structure dedicated to the implementation of this partnership.

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

## UfM Roadmap for Action:



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



## Stories of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation

Our stories of successful Euro-Mediterranean cooperation are centered on humans and humans only. Our inspiration comes from UfM projects and initiatives implemented on the ground: from partners collaborating daily with us to project promoters and beneficiaries, these stories of regional cooperation aim to **shine a well-deserved spotlight on all the actors working tirelessly to make the Mediterranean a better place for all.**

Click or scan the QR code to discover our uplifting cooperation stories.





# Upholding dialogue and cooperation in uncertain times



Joint statement of the UfM Co-Presidency:



The turmoil in the Middle East that unfolded in October 2023 intensified over the course of 2024. The resulting devastation and loss of life was immense and the conflict in Gaza spread to include Lebanon and involved other countries in the region and beyond.

Consequently, the 9<sup>th</sup> UfM Regional Forum centred on this alarming situation. Chaired by Josep Borrell, the

High Representative of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the EU and Vice President of the European Commission, and Ayman Safadi, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, the UfM Co-Presidency

issued a joint communiqué following the event, expressing grave concern over the protracted war in Gaza and the escalating situation in the West Bank. The Co-Presidency reaffirmed

the collective responsibility to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue based on the two-state solution and in accordance with international law, relevant UN resolutions and agreed terms of reference.

In addition to the UfM Regional Forum, the organisation participated in multi-lateral fora dealing with the situation in the Middle East. Addressing the participants in an Open Debate on the situation held by the UN Security Council in New York in April 2024, Secretary General Nasser Kamel reiterated the UfM's position that dialogue and co-operation are the only ways forward to resolve the conflicts and political tensions affecting its Member States.

Furthermore, Secretary General Kamel took part in the "Call for Action: Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza" conference held in Jordan in June 2024, where he stressed the Euro-Mediterranean intergovernmental organisation's readiness to play an active role as soon

**“ In my four decades of service, I have borne witness to countless crises and conflicts, yet never have I encountered a tragedy as profound as the one currently threatening the Mediterranean region. There are no shortcuts to peace; it is a journey that demands dialogue, political will, and fair solutions. In these trying times, the Union for the Mediterranean has strived to fulfil its mission, with the belief that advancing regional cooperation can offer glimmers of hope.**

**Nasser Kamel**  
*UfM Secretary General*

as recovery can start in Gaza/Palestine. The UfM has already begun supporting plans in this regard, such as the UNIMED and An-Najah National University's Technical Education Support for Higher Education Student Initiative—TESI that is set to allow some 50,000 Palestinian higher education students to finish their studies online. It has also explored other initiatives in areas such as employment, the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus, and urban development.

In December 2024, the UfM Secretary General took part in a meeting of the Middle East Consultation Group, under the auspices of the Munich Security Conference. At this meeting, several active and former high-level policymakers from the Mediterranean and beyond put forward practical proposals to support ongoing diplomatic efforts and enhanced regional cooperation in the broader Middle East region.

**The UfM Co-Presidency reaffirmed the collective responsibility to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue.**



# The power of culture: weaving stories, strengthening bonds

In 2024, the Mediterranean teetered between progress and adversity. Conflicts and disinformation divided societies, while unemployment, climate change, and deepening inequalities continued to threaten future generations. However, these challenges also carried opportunities to foster resilience, deepen cooperation, and build a shared future.

Under the theme “**The Next Wave: Building a Shared Tomorrow**”, the 2024 Day of the Mediterranean elevated the voices of local leaders, everyday heroes, and engaged citizens. It sparked solution-driven conversations and showcased the changemakers already shaping a brighter, more sustainable, and more prosperous Mediterranean for generations to come.

## Six everyday heroes

Read on to discover their stories and how they are shaping the Mediterranean of tomorrow.



**SARRA MESSAOUDI**  
Promoting youth as peacebuilders



**KHADIJA JALLOULI**  
Making mobility accessible to all



**MARIA SNOUSSI**  
Using science to fight climate change



**ASTRID DESJOBERT**  
Giving hope to youth without education and employment



**GUADALUPE CHAER**  
Revolutionising the herbicide industry



**SAJA MORTADA**  
Combating disinformation one fact at a time



Revisit the 2024 campaign:



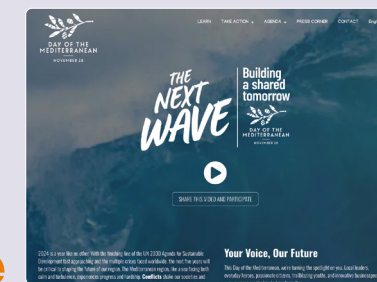
# The 2024 Day of the Mediterranean at a glance

A tailored website with

**+36k visits**

from all over the region!

## Website The Next Wave



Targeted outreach actions to

**200+ key Euro-Mediterranean stakeholders**

**50+ registered activities**

held under the framework of the Day of the Mediterranean in **22 countries** from the region

The campaign reached

**21M people**

and its videos were **viewed 2.5M times**



More highlights:



The Day of the Mediterranean was featured in more than

**208 media articles, radio and TV shows**

reaching a potential audience of more than **10M people**

**Social media** generated

**261k engagement actions**

by UfM audiences



# Bringing the Mediterranean's shores closer together

On the **Day of the Mediterranean - 28 November - Matera (Italy) and Tetouan (Morocco)** were officially announced as the **2026 Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue**, a title endorsed by all 43 UfM Member States during the **9<sup>th</sup> UfM Regional Forum**.

This yearlong distinction celebrates cultural diversity, strengthens Mediterranean ties, and fosters intercultural dialogue across the region. Throughout

2026, both cities will host a dynamic programme of events, engaging local communities and forging new partnerships.

With their rich histories and deep-rooted traditions, Matera and Tetouan embody the Mediterranean's shared heritage and commitment to dialogue. As cultural ambassadors, they will bring the region's shores closer together, showcasing the power of cooperation and exchange.

More about the 2026 capitals:





# Fair societies are smart societies

*In a rapidly evolving Mediterranean, building inclusive and fair societies is not just a goal—it is a necessity. By fostering social cohesion, empowering youth and women, and ensuring equal opportunities, we create a stronger, more resilient region. In this chapter, we explore how collective action is shaping a more just and united Mediterranean.*

**From challenges to change: advancing gender equality in the Mediterranean**  
The empowerment of women is not only a matter of social justice but also a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development and prosperity. The full participation of women in economic activities, decision-making processes, and leadership roles is essential for fostering peace, stability, and progress in the Mediterranean region.

The Union for the Mediterranean’s (UfM) biennial **High-Level Conference on Women for the Mediterranean** is

access to education and healthcare, and the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. The conference focused on the UfM’s gender equality policy framework, specifically:

- **Women’s economic empowerment;**
- **Gender and climate change;**
- **Violence against women and girls.**

Discussions underscored the need for comprehensive policy reforms and innovative solutions to close existing gaps and build more inclusive societies.

A key outcome of the conference was the launch of several initiatives aimed at promoting women’s entrepreneurship, increasing their participation in the workforce, and ensuring their representation in decision-making processes. These include:

**The Egyptian Gender Equity Seal**, designed to boost female participation in the labour market.



**WeFinanceCode**, a global framework to close gender financing gaps, set to launch in 26 countries.



“Gender equality and women’s rights is not a national issue. It is a global issue with national interest. Securing women’s rights and promoting equality between women and men is a one-way road. Addressing and meeting the needs of both women and men is the goal that will help societies and economies flourish. Gender equality is the solution.”  
**JOSIE CHRISTODOULOU**  
Commissioner for Gender Equality of Cyprus

Consult the **2022 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society**.



dedicated to promoting the empowerment of women. Its latest edition, held in 2024, was co-organised with the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality of Cyprus over two days in the Cypriot capital.  
Through panel discussions, keynote speeches, and interactive sessions, participants examined key challenges such as economic disparities, limited

The conference also served as a platform for sharing best practices and success stories from across the Mediterranean, showcasing the resilience and ingenuity of women in overcoming adversity. By fostering dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, the High-Level Conference on Women for the Mediterranean reaffirmed its commitment to advancing gender equality and ensuring that women are at the forefront of the region’s development agenda.



Go further with the joint European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)-UfM policy study “Towards More Inclusive Economies: Advancing Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Mediterranean Region”.



**Financing equality: advancing gender-lens investing for women entrepreneurs**  
Women entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continue to face significant barriers to securing funding, including gender bias, limited access to financial networks, and a lack of financial education. To address these challenges, the UfM hosted a webinar on **gender-lens investing**.

During the event, participants explored the unique obstacles women encounter in accessing finance and emphasised the critical role of gender-lens investing in closing these gaps. This approach—which intentionally integrates gender considerations into investment decisions—not only promotes gender equality but also drives economic growth and social impact.

The webinar also showcased inspiring success stories of women who have benefited from gender-lens investing, highlighting its transformative impact.

Explore a selection of these innovative initiatives:

**Happy Smala**  
Based in Rabat, Morocco, **Happy Smala** is an innovation lab



that focuses on collaborative approaches and new technologies to drive high-impact innovation.

**Changelabs**  
**Changelabs** supports the MENA region’s innovation ecosystem through Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-aligned programmes for start-ups and entrepreneurs, focusing on impact investing and sustainable growth.



**Up-Fuse**  
Cairo-based **Up-Fuse** creates sustainable, eco-friendly bags from recycled materials, promoting ethical production and environmental responsibility through innovative design.



**Flow Accelerator**  
**Flow Accelerator** supports Palestinian start-ups through business development programmes and matchmaking with investors to help them overcome financial and technical challenges.





### Shaping safer public transport through gender equality

**Public transport is a lifeline for many, but for women, it often represents a source of harassment and insecurity.**

Transport safety and security are inherently gender-sensitive issues. Women's use of public transport across all modes is significantly influenced by safety concerns, which are generally more pronounced than those of men. Studies show that most women worldwide feel unsafe on public transport, with many reporting verbal or physical harassment when using it or navigating public spaces.

In this context, the **UfM Webinar on Advancing Gender Equality in Transport** brought together experts from academia, media, civil society, and international organisations to address the issue from various perspectives and propose actionable recommendations. The event featured distinguished speakers from leading international organisations, including the International Transport Forum, the International Union of Railways, POLIS, and the International Association of Public Transport. Their aim was to raise awareness about the challenges women face and share proven solutions for safer public transport, particularly in the Mediterranean region, while fostering collaboration and integrating global insights with local perspectives.

Key discussions centred on the role of infrastructure design, technology, and community engagement in creating safer transport environments. Experts shared insights on innovative solutions such as well-lit waiting areas, emergency response systems, and gender-responsive training for transport staff. The webinar also highlighted the importance of data collection and analysis to inform policy decisions and monitor progress towards gender equality in transport.

The event emphasised the necessity of collaboration among stakeholders—including transport authorities, urban planners, and civil society organisations—so that effective, gender-sensitive solutions can be implemented. It also reaffirmed the UfM's central role in providing a platform for sharing best practices, fostering collaboration among cities, regional authorities, national governments, and civil society, and accelerating the implementation of effective solutions.

### Advancing inclusion: empowering persons with disabilities in the Euro-Mediterranean

**People with disabilities are among the most marginalised groups in the Euro-Mediterranean region**, a situation exacerbated by factors such as unemployment, inadequate social protection, gender inequality, and the impacts of climate change.

The **2nd Euro-Mediterranean Conference on the Socioeconomic Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities**, organised by the UfM Secretariat in collaboration with Spain's ONCE Social Group and the Jordanian Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, brought together policymakers, advocates, and organisations of persons with disabilities to address the urgent need for inclusive policies and practices that enable full participation in society. The conference highlighted ongoing challenges, such as limited access to education, employment, and

healthcare, as well as social stigma and discrimination. It also marked the launch of the **Euro-Med Agenda on the Socioeconomic Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities**, a programme aimed at addressing the root causes of discrimination and paving the way for more inclusive policy responses.

**Up to 90% of people with disabilities in the Euro-Mediterranean region face unemployment, with women disproportionately affected.**



A series of panel discussions and interactive sessions allowed participants to explore innovative solutions and best practices for promoting the socioeconomic inclusion of persons with disabilities. Key topics included assistive technologies, accessible infrastructure, and inclusive education—all essential for improving quality of life. The conference also emphasised the importance of policy reforms and legislative frameworks to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and ensure their full participation in society.

Participants reviewed the findings of the **First Situational Assessment of the Social and Economic Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the Euro-Mediterranean Region**, conducted in October 2023. The assessment revealed that persons with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to full participation, especially when compounded by factors such as unemployment, weak social protection, gender inequality, and climate change. The report highlighted that between 50% and 90% of persons with disabilities in the region are unemployed, with women being particularly disadvantaged,

facing a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion compared to men.

The conference concluded with a renewed commitment to advancing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities, recognising their valuable contributions to society and emphasising the need to create an environment that supports their full empowerment and participation.

### Experts' corner

Dive deeper by checking out the **First Situational Assessment of the Social and Economic Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the Euro-Mediterranean Region**.



This assessment is intended to guide the UfM Secretariat and the Spanish ONCE Social Group in defining the guiding principles, priorities, objectives, and functioning of a potential future Euro-Mediterranean Platform for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to address the underlying causes of discriminations and set the preconditions for more inclusive policy and programme responses in the longer term.

### Highlighting refugee contributions to regional economic development

**Refugees in the Mediterranean region bring diverse skills and talents that can significantly contribute to local economies.** However, they often face barriers to employment and entrepreneurship, such as legal restrictions and limited access to financial services. In this context, the **UfM Seminar on Refugee Entrepreneurship: Addressing Economic Recovery Amidst Conflict**,

**55% of women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment on public transport, while 65% of women in the MENA region feel unsafe using it.**





Read the full takeaways from the seminar here:



organised with the support of German Development Cooperation, brought together experts, policymakers, and representatives from refugee communities to discuss the economic contributions of refugees and explore ways to support their integration into the workforce.

Key discussions focused on the challenges refugees face in accessing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, including legal barriers, language difficulties, and limited access to financial services. The seminar emphasised the need for inclusive policies and initia-

tives that support refugees' economic integration, and analysed national best practices such as:

- **Defining clear legal frameworks:** define groups of displaced people (e.g., refugees, climate refugees) to ensure legal rights and protections, aligned with international standards.
- **Broadening the target:** expand support to include all forcibly displaced groups, unlocking more funding opportunities, especially in the water-energy-food-ecosystem (WEFE) nexus.



Focus on partners

## Union of Arab Banks

The Union of Arab Banks (UAB) is an organisation committed to supporting and enhancing the Arab banking sector. It offers a range of comprehensive training programmes for bankers, focusing on advanced financial skills, regulatory compliance, digital transformation, and leadership. These programmes include workshops, expert sessions, and networking opportunities, culminating in recognised certifications.

In 2024, the UfM Secretariat and the UAB signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish bilateral cooperation in areas of shared interest, including climate change, women's empowerment, and financial literacy. Both institutions

agreed to promote official and expert visits, cooperative projects, consultations, seminars and workshops, as well as the exchange of best practices, until at least 2027, with annual meetings to oversee the collaborative work plan.

The first joint initiative under this agreement took place during the 2024 International Women's Day, when both organisations held a conference in Cairo, Egypt, on Closing Gender Gaps in the MENA Financial Sector: Towards Women-Led Business Development. See more on p.19.

More on the UAB's website:



اتحاد المصارف العربية  
Union of Arab Banks



Top left: UfM Seminar on Refugee Entrepreneurship.

Top right: 2<sup>nd</sup> Euro-Mediterranean Conference on the Socioeconomic Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

Bottom: UfM Med Youth Lab 2024

- **Addressing non-financial barriers:** address systemic challenges, including limited access to technology, healthcare, and restrictive legal frameworks, alongside financial obstacles.
- **Challenging negative perceptions:** tackle anti-refugee sentiment through political advocacy and address varying attitudes towards refugee entrepreneurs in host communities.
- **Partnering with major corporations:** encourage collaboration between corporations and refugee

entrepreneurs, as seen with IKEA's partnership with Syrian refugee women, to drive impact beyond corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The event underscored the importance of recognising refugees as valuable contributors to society and the economy, rather than viewing them as a burden. By promoting policies and practices that support refugees' economic participation, the seminar aimed to foster a more inclusive and prosperous society for all.



# Empowering the actors of change

## UfM Med Youth Lab: recognising young people as drivers of transformative actions

In a world marked by pressing environmental and societal challenges, **young people are emerging as the driving force behind innovative solutions and transformative actions.** Their involvement is crucial to achieving sustainable development goals and fostering positive change. In November 2024, the city of Fes, Morocco, became a hub for over 60 young leaders from 21 UfM Member States, as they gathered for the **UfM Med Youth Lab**. Organised with the financial support of German Development Cooperation (GIZ/BMZ), and in partnership with the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes (UEMF), the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF), and IEMed, this event provided a unique platform for youth aged 18–30 to gain practical project development knowledge and collaborate to draft project proposals responding to the region's most pressing challenges.

## The programme culminated in the UfM Med Youth Lab Final Pitch Event, where each team presented their project to a multidisciplinary jury.

Over the course of five days, participants were immersed in a series of workshops, expert-led sessions, and discussions, all aimed at fostering innovative ideas and tackling issues central to the future of the Mediterranean region. The event focused on three key themes: green skills, youth mobility for professional and educational exchange, and youth engagement in multi-stakeholder dialogue. At the heart of the programme was a hands-on approach,

with participants working in teams to develop project proposals that would turn their ideas into actionable plans.

The diversity of the group led to dynamic exchanges, allowing ideas to flourish and creating a rich environment for collaboration. In addition to developing technical expertise, participants honed essential soft skills, such as public speaking and teamwork—skills that are fundamental in transforming innovative ideas into real-world impact.

The event saw the launch of the UfM Youth Engagement Series Outcome Document: Increasing Youth Involvement in Multistakeholder Dialogue. This report will serve as a roadmap for ensuring that youth voices are embedded in policymaking processes across the Mediterranean, helping to create sustainable, youth-driven participation models that will shape the future of the region (see more on p.17).

The programme culminated in the UfM Med Youth Lab Final Pitch Event, where each team presented their project to a multidisciplinary jury. Projects ranged from solutions in the circular economy to inclusive exchange programmes, all aiming to address the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing the region. By the end of the UfM Med Youth Lab 2024, participants had gained invaluable skills, forged meaningful connections, and underscored the powerful role that young people can play in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable Euro-Mediterranean future. A second edition of the UfM Med Youth Lab is planned for September 2025 in Tirana, Albania.

## Shaping youth-led policy with the UfM Youth Engagement Series 2024

In 2024, the UfM organised the Youth Engagement series, a set of three online meetings within the UfM Youth Focal Points Network. Aligned with the UfM Youth Agenda's three main thematic priorities: **(i) Climate Action and Environment, (ii) Education and Employment, and (iii) Social Inclusion and Participation**, these meetings explored ways in which young people from the Mediterranean region could be actively and meaningfully engaged in multistakeholder dialogues and policymaking processes related to these themes.

The online meetings brought together UfM National Focal Points on Youth, alongside representatives from youth-led and youth-focused civil society organisations (CSOs), international organisations, and academia. The objectives of the series were threefold:

- 1. Facilitate dialogue** among Euro-Mediterranean stakeholders, building support for the calls to action and recommendations outlined in the UfM Youth Agenda.
- 2. Identify the current challenges** and needs related to youth engagement in multistakeholder dialogue, transforming these insights into actionable approaches for ensuring youth participation in decision-making.
- 3. Gather insights** to shape an outcome document that would guide the UfM and its stakeholders in effectively implementing the UfM Youth Agenda, adopting a transversal approach to ensure meaningful and impactful youth involvement in decision-making processes.

Following the 2024 meetings, a significant concern emerged: the need to ensure meaningful youth engagement across all thematic priorities. To address this, the promotion of multi-stakeholder intergenerational dialogue and tailored capacity-building initiatives were identified as essential to fostering inclusive youth participation throughout the UfM Youth Agenda. The outcome document that emerged from the consultations and dialogue process developed through the Youth Engagement Series 2024 focuses on two primary objectives:

- To outline clear pathways for embedding youth engagement in multistakeholder dialogue processes, ensuring that proposed actions are aligned with the current challenges facing the Euro-Mediterranean region.
- To establish cross-cutting, inclusive, and sustainable participation models that ensure shared responsibility and active involvement of both youth and other stakeholders, with the aim of applying these models to the implementation of the UfM Youth Agenda.

The integrated approach proposed in this outcome document will lay the foundation for a structured multistakeholder dialogue mechanism, which in turn will ensure the meaningful inclusion of youth voices across the definition, implementation, and follow-up of relevant initiatives within the UfM Youth Agenda.

## Investing in decent work and career guidance for youth

**The Mediterranean region is rich in human capital, yet persistently high**

Increasing Youth Involvement in Multistakeholder Dialogue: Youth-Responsive implementation of the UfM Youth Agenda

Read the Youth Engagement Series Outcome Document here:



More about the **UfM policy framework on employment and labour**.



**youth unemployment and informality continue to hinder economic growth and social stability.** Addressing these pressing issues requires a coordinated and strategic response, ensuring that youth employment remains a priority in regional policymaking. As part of its commitment to fostering economic inclusion, the UfM Secretariat, with the support of German Development Cooperation, launched a dedicated **Community of Practice (CoP) on Youth Employment in the Southern Mediterranean**, with two meetings taking place in 2024 in Barcelona, Spain (March 5–6), and in Aswan, Egypt (December 16–17). These meetings, aligned with the UfM Roadmap for Action 2022–2025 and the 2022 Marrakech Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour, provided a platform for experts, policymakers, and practitioners to exchange knowledge and advance innovative employment solutions.

Discussions centred on career guidance, decent work, and data collection, with a particular emphasis on gender equality and youth employability. The CoP also refined the **Charter on Youth Employment**, a key document set to be presented at the 6th UfM Ministerial

on Employment and Labour in 2025. Through capacity-building efforts and knowledge exchange, participants engaged in field visits to leading initiatives, including the Agencia Catalana de Joventut (Catalan Youth Agency) and Al-Nour Women-Led Association for Community Development, gaining first-hand insights into successful employment and entrepreneurship models. Case studies from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco highlighted successful national policies and innovative approaches to youth employment, serving as inspiration for broader regional adoption.

During the Aswan meeting, participants visited Eco-Nubia, **an award-winning eco-tourism project on Bija Island that has successfully created jobs for Nubian communities while preserving local heritage, providing a practical model for linking sustainable tourism with employment generation.** As the region moves forward, sustained collaboration among UfM Member States, civil society, and international partners will be crucial in turning commitments into action, ensuring that young people can thrive in a more inclusive and dynamic labour market.



**Zoom on Mediterranean innovators**

## myTindy: preserving tradition through technology

**In 2024, the ARLEM Award for “Young Local Entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean” was awarded to Aïda Kandil, CEO and co-founder of myTindy, whose e-commerce model contributes to supporting local artisans and preserving Morocco’s rich craft heritage.**

myTindy, an ethical online marketplace, has transformed the landscape for over 2,000 Moroccan artisans by leveraging AI-powered e-commerce solutions to provide them with

global market access. Now in its sixth edition, the ARLEM Award, supported by the UfM as part of the Day of the Mediterranean celebrations, continues to spotlight young entrepreneurs whose work creates lasting economic and social impact. By honouring myTindy, this year’s award highlights the importance of innovation-driven solutions in fostering inclusive growth across the region.

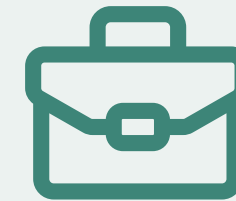
Watch **Aïda Kandil’s story** in video:



## Breaking down gendered barriers to finance

The UfM Secretariat and the UAB marked International Women’s Day 2024 with an impactful two-day conference in Cairo, **Closing Gender Gaps in the MENA Financial Sector: Towards Women-Led Business Development**, aimed at breaking down the gendered barriers to finance and business opportunities in the MENA region.

**Under 5% of businesses in the MENA region are led by women, compared to 20% globally.**



With under 5% of businesses in the MENA region led by women, compared to a global average of around 20%, the conference highlighted the urgent need for change.

**The conference also spotlighted two new EU-funded projects aimed at enhancing financial and digital inclusion for women entrepreneurs, with a €2.5 million programme led by the OECD and a gender-sensitive financial tools initiative implemented by COSPE.**

**The event was a significant step towards addressing the gender gap in the financial sector, where the lack of female participation is costing the region an estimated \$575 billion annually.** Bringing together over 100

public and private sector stakeholders, the gathering provided a platform for exploring best practices, innovative solutions, and the critical role of financial institutions in supporting women entrepreneurs. Six panel discussions and roundtable talks covered topics such as improving access to finance, the role of fintech in bridging gender gaps, and empowering women in international trade. The conference also spotlighted two new EU-funded projects aimed at enhancing financial and digital inclusion for women entrepreneurs, with a €2.5 million programme led by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and a gender-sensitive financial tools initiative implemented by the Italian non-profit Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries (COSPE).

A key highlight was the **launch of the Gender Lens in Fintech Award**, a new initiative by UfM and UAB to recognise and support gender-sensitive practices in the fintech sector. In addition, a **startup pitching contest** showcased innovative women-led businesses, with Mona Fattouh from Conyworld (Egypt) securing the \$1,000 first-place award. Guadaluna Chaer (LUXEED Robotics, Lebanon) and Fella Bouti (Ecotashira, Algeria) also received recognition and financial support to further develop their businesses. The event concluded with a matchmaking session, providing women-led startups with invaluable opportunities to connect with investors and partners, furthering their journey toward financial independence and business growth.

*Closing Gender Gaps in the MENA Financial Sector: Towards Women-Led Business Development.*





Zoom on  
Mediterranean  
innovators

To achieve gender equality in the economic and financial sector, it is crucial to change the mindset of both women entrepreneurs and key stakeholders—such as development banks, financial institutions and private sector companies—to create a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem for women in the region. In this context, the UfM

Secretariat aligned with the 2024 International Women’s Day theme **Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress** to dive deeper into the success stories of some of the Mediterranean women working tirelessly for positive and lasting change:



Catalysing  
Economic  
Empowerment:  
ABEER MUSTAFA  
HARIDI’s SME  
Leadership

**Abeer Mustafa Haridi** has led projects advancing youth and women’s economic empowerment, specialising in small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development, business planning, and marketing. As a national expert in business

planning, she has provided business development training, optimised supply chains, and organised networking events, strengthening Palestinian women entrepreneurs through her leadership at **Businesswomen Forum Palestine**.

Sustainable  
Entrepreneurship:  
AÏCHA ARABI’s  
Impact in Moroccan  
Biocosmetics

**Aïcha Arabi**, CEO of **A2R BIONOOR**, leads a social enterprise in Morocco producing sustainable bio-cosmetics. Committed to women’s empowerment, she supports female entrepreneurs in brand

development and market access. Through training and coaching, she fosters rural socioeconomic development while actively promoting women’s inclusion, environmental protection, and disability integration.

Empowering  
Women in Tech:  
GUADALUNA  
CHAE’R’s Agro-Tech  
Innovation

**Guadaluna Chaer**, co-founder and CEO of **LUXEED Robotics**, leads an agro-tech startup revolutionising the herbicide industry with AI-driven, chemical-free weeding robots. A mechanical engineer

and project manager, she secures funding for R&D and market expansion. Passionate about women in tech, she mentors startups and advocates for female leadership.

Youth Activism:  
NAJET BEN  
MABROUK’s Climate  
Leadership

**Najet Ben Mabrouk** is a climate activist and SDG advocate dedicated to sustainability and youth empowerment. A **Youth4Climate Academy** alumna, she promotes green business

solutions and policy engagement. As a project coordinator at the Tunisian Association of Energy, Water and Environment, she drives initiatives for a greener, more circular society.

Bridging Blue  
Economy and  
Gender Equality:  
HEND AOUINI’s  
Algaplast

**Hend Aouini** is a social entrepreneur pioneering sustainable packaging with **Algaplast**, a startup producing biodegradable alternatives from red algae. Committed to gender equality, she empowers fisherwomen in Tunisia and

promotes women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Her innovation and advocacy have been recognised through international initiatives, including the UfM-UNIDO Women Business Forum.



Empowerment  
through Green  
Innovation:  
HAJER SAOUDI and  
Actifs Précieux

**Hajer Saoudi**, a chemical engineer and entrepreneur, founded **Actifs Précieux** to produce plant-based, eco-friendly ingredients. Committed to sustainability, she promotes circular economy practices and

supports local farmers. Through green technologies, her startup transforms waste into valuable resources, driving sustainable innovation and environmental impact in Africa.

Tech-Driven Impact  
Investing:  
JENNY ATOUT  
AHLZEN’s Vision at  
Amam Ventures

**Jenny Atout Ahlzen**, Chief Investment Officer at **Amam Ventures**, drives impact investing in tech-enabled companies promoting diversity in MENA. Passionate about innovation and equal opportunities,

she champions sustainable financing tools to advance women’s economic participation and social impact. Through Amam Ventures, she supports SMEs and startups fostering inclusive growth.

Inspiring Dreams:  
LEILA BENYUCEF’s  
Entrepreneurial  
Impact with Kiddy  
Sorties

**Leila Benyoucef** is an entrepreneur and advocate for women’s empowerment, innovation, and child protection. Founder of **Kiddy Sorties**, she is revolutionising family life in

Algeria through e-commerce. A winner of She Wins Arabia 2023, she inspires women in tech and business, encouraging ambition, fearlessness, and professional growth across MENA.

Empowering  
Women in Business:  
SOHA EL BAKLAWY’s  
Vision

**Soha El Baklawy**, International Partnerships & Communication Director at the **MENA Women Business Club**, fosters women’s participation in business through international alliances. A board member of the Alliance

for Women, she founded **Businessita** to empower female entrepreneurs with the skills and resources needed to drive social entrepreneurship and sustainable innovation.

# A sea of opportunities

## Unleashing the power of creative industries

**Cultural and creative industries (CCIs) are a vital driver of economic growth, social cohesion, and sustainable development across the Mediterranean.** Recognising their transformative potential, the UfM Secretariat co-organised the Conference on Creative Economy in Tirana, Albania, in November 2024, in partnership with Albania's Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation, the Municipality of Tirana, and the Young Professionals Network of Albania. This high-level event laid the groundwork for the designation of Alexandria and Tirana as the first Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue in 2025 (see p.8-9), underscoring the region's commitment to fostering cultural exchange and economic opportunities.

**Creative and cultural industries contribute up to 10% of the MENA region's GDP, and employ 8 million people in the EU.**



The conference convened experts, creative entrepreneurs, and policymakers to explore strategies for expanding the creative economy, with a strong focus on policy frameworks, financial access, and public-private collaboration. Discussions centred on the dual economic and social impact of

*Economic stability and integration are the cornerstones of a thriving Mediterranean. By strengthening regional cooperation, fostering innovation, and unlocking opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs, we seek to build a more prosperous and interconnected future. In this chapter we highlight key initiatives driving sustainable growth, resilience, and shared prosperity across the region.*

CCIs, from GDP growth and employment opportunities to their contributions to well-being and environmental sustainability. Special attention was given to **the role of creative industries in the green transition, showcasing initiatives in sustainable fashion, eco-tourism, and environmental awareness.** Participants also explored avenues for strengthening the sector, including regulatory support, digital transformation, and education and training initiatives.

The event concluded with a site visit to the Agimi Art Centre, one of Tirana's oldest cinemas, recently revitalised as a cultural hub. This transformation illustrates the power of CCIs to regenerate urban spaces and drive inclusive economic development. Looking ahead, the UfM Secretariat remains committed to supporting the creative economy through regional cooperation, policy dialogue, and targeted initiatives that empower cultural entrepreneurs across the Mediterranean.

## Enabling youth-led innovation to tackle global challenges

Youth entrepreneurship can drive innovation by introducing fresh ideas, new technologies, and creative solutions to social and economic challenges. **Young entrepreneurs often leverage digital tools, sustainable practices, and modern business models to create startups that address pressing issues such as unemployment, climate change, and social inclusion.** In September 2024, the UfM Secretariat hosted the Mediterranean Youth Forum: Building Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, in Helsinki, Finland, to explore strate-

gies and best practices for creating enabling environments that allow young entrepreneurs to grow and thrive.

Co-organised with the European Commission and other key regional partners, the event provided a dynamic platform for over 140 young entrepreneurs, policymakers, and private sector representatives to bring youth-driven solutions to economic and environmental challenges. Through interactive discussions, participants explored strategies for supporting youth entrepreneurship, including mentorship, skills development, and financial access.

**The event provided a dynamic platform for over 140 young entrepreneurs, policymakers, and private sector representatives to bring youth-driven solutions to economic and environmental challenges.**

Key sessions addressed the role of young entrepreneurs in the green transition, digital innovation, and cross-regional employment. Particular emphasis was placed on the necessity of robust policy fra-

meworks and investment in education to break down barriers to youth-led business creation. Experiences from across the Mediterranean and beyond—including Albania, Jordan, Finland, and Switzerland—were shared to highlight best practices in engaging young entrepreneurs. **A dedicated C-ROADS Climate Workshop**

**allowed participants to collaborate on climate-focused business solutions, reinforcing the role of youth in addressing global environmental challenges.** Looking ahead, the forum's key recommendations will shape initiatives such as the UfM Ministerial on Employment and Labour, anticipated in 2025.

## The UfM convening power in support of regional cooperation

The UfM Secretariat has reinforced its role as a key platform for fostering regional collaboration by strengthening partnerships with leading development agencies. **Through its convening power, the organisation is bringing together key actors to maximise the impact of development efforts and deliver concrete benefits to the region's citizens.** In April 2024, the UfM Secretariat hosted the first-ever meeting of UfM development actors in Barcelona, aiming at exploring how deeper collaboration among development actors can generate greater impact on the ground. Discussions highlighted common regional priorities and the potential to create a Euro-Mediterranean initiative, inspired by the EU's Team Europe approach, to facilitate knowledge-sharing and resource mobilisation among agencies. A field visit to a 'Second Chance' school, part of the UfM-labelled Mediterranean New Chance (MedNC) project, showcased the tangible impact of regional cooperation in fostering socio-professional integration for young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEETs). Further cementing its strategic role, the UfM Secretariat marked the sixth year of its partnership with German Development Cooperation through a series of high-level meetings in Berlin in May 2024. UfM Secretary General Nasser Kamel met with key officials, including Mr Christoph Rauh from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ) and Mr. Carsten Schmitz-Hoffmann from



## C-ROADS

C-ROADS is an interactive online tool designed to simulate and illustrate the long-term effects of various climate policies across different regions. Users can quickly evaluate whether national pledges and collective efforts are sufficient to keep global temperature rise below 2°C. The tool is freely available, making insights into effective climate action more widely accessible.



**Explore C-ROADS here:**





## Focus on partners

### Expanding impact through strategic partnerships

The UfM Secretariat's partnerships with donors and development cooperation agencies are key to expanding its reach and driving progress in priority areas across

the region. These collaborations provide crucial support for initiatives that promote economic integration, sustainability, and social inclusion.



**GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (BMZ), IMPLEMENTED BY DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR ZUSAMMENARBEIT (GIZ)**

**Priority areas:** Jobs, trade and investment | Employment and entrepreneurship | Green and digital transitions

**Success story:** The **UfM Grant Schemes** are strengthening employment opportunities in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, particularly for groups with restricted mobility that are vulnerable to economic shocks. Launched in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative initially focused on employment promotion. In 2023, a new scheme supported jobs in the green economy. In 2024, the UfM introduced the Grant Scheme for Inclusive Digital Trade to help SMEs, cooperatives, and entrepreneurs



navigate e-commerce challenges, reinforcing the region's economic resilience.

**More information:**



**SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY (Sida)**

**Priority areas:** Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming | Water, environment, and blue economy | Energy and climate action  
**Success story:** The **UfM Women Business Forum** provides a vital platform for women entrepreneurs across UfM MENA Member States, offering networking and access to finance opportunities. To date, **over 250 women-led enterprises have benefitted from UfM support**, gaining improved access to funding and business development resources.

More on the **11<sup>th</sup> UfM Trade Ministerial Conference:**



### Building a more inclusive and sustainable investment landscape

**Investment is a key driver of sustainable development, yet many international investment agreements (IIAs) remain outdated and ill-equipped to address today's economic, environmental, and social challenges.** In 2024, the UfM Secretariat joined forces for the first time with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to advance dialogue and capacity-building on investment policymaking in the Euro-Mediterranean region. As a first step in this structured engagement, the UfM Secretariat and UNCTAD co-organised an online workshop bringing together government officials from UfM Member States responsible for investment policy and promotion. The gathering provided a

platform to examine key challenges in the existing IIA regime, explore international investment trends, and present policy tools developed by UNCTAD to help countries modernise their investment frameworks. Discussions also highlighted the UNCTAD IIA Reform Accelerator, which assists policymakers in integrating sustainability provisions into investment agreements.

The collaboration aligns with the UfM Secretariat's commitment, reaffirmed in the 11th UfM Trade Ministerial Conference, to support multilateral efforts in investment facilitation. In this context, the workshop also addressed ongoing global initiatives, including work within the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) framework, currently backed by over 120 WTO members.

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**The pivotal role of banks in promoting inclusive development and sustainability**  
**In today's interconnected world, banks and central banks play a crucial**

**role that extends far beyond traditional financial services.** They are central to shaping economic policies, fostering financial inclusion, and driving sustainability. As key players in the financial ecosystem, banks and central banks wield substantial influence over economic policies, monetary frameworks, and financial regulations, all of which directly impact societal development. Through partnerships with governments, civil society organisations, academia, and the private sector, they can contribute to the design and implementation of policies and programmes that promote financial inclusion, support SMEs, foster job creation, and address socio-economic disparities.

In this context, the UfM Secretariat co-organised the **8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Mediterranean Central Banks** in Split, Croatia, in collaboration with the Croatian National Bank, Banco de España, the OECD, and IEMed. The discussions covered a broad range of topics, beginning with in-depth analyses of how the prevailing inflationary landscape affects the credibility and policymaking strategies of central banks. These deliberations not only examined the immediate local impact but also explored the global ramifications of the current inflationary environment, offering a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by central banks worldwide. The agenda also addressed groundbreaking initiatives aimed at fostering women's economic participation and ensuring meaningful financial inclusion, highlighting innovative approaches and best practices that create an enabling environment for women to access finance and engage actively in economic activities.

Additionally, the conference turned its attention to the critical theme of climate change and its complex implications for the financial sector. Participants engaged in thorough discussions on various aspects, including the assessment and supervision of climate risks by



## Focus on partners

### SPANISH AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (AECID)

**Priority areas:** Ecological transition and climate | Employment and opportunity creation | Gender and food security

**Success story:** AECID has made a dedicated contribution to the **UfM Grant Scheme for the Promotion of Inclusive Digital Trade**, launched in 2024. These grants support

SMEs, cooperatives, entrepreneurs, and social enterprises in the e-commerce sector, with a strong focus on women-led business organisations, ensuring greater inclusivity in the digital economy.



**More information:**



central banks and financial regulators. The conversation also explored **the potential roles of these institutions in formulating effective climate change mitigation strategies for the financial system**. Attention was also devoted to the essential topic of mobilising green funding to support adaptation efforts in the face of climate change challenges.

### Advancing employment and labour policies to build the future of work

In preparation for the 2025 UfM Ministerial on Employment and Labour, the UfM Secretariat has intensified efforts to address key employment

challenges across the region. Through a series of high-level meetings and workshops held in Zagreb, Rome, and Sarajevo, **UfM Member States and social partners worked together to advance youth employability, women's economic empowerment, and the transition towards a green and digital economy**.

The UfM Regional Platform on Employment and Labour met twice in 2024—first in Zagreb (April) and then in Rome (November)—bringing together representatives from employment ministries, international organisations, and social partners. Discussions focused on preparing for the upcoming Ministerial in

2025, with Member States showcasing best practices in job creation, labour market integration, and economic reforms. Field visits to employment centres and educational institutions in Croatia and Italy provided hands-on insights into successful labour market strategies. Complementing these discussions, the UfM Secretariat, in partnership with German Development Cooperation and the European Commission, organised the second Future of Work Workshop in Sarajevo—marking the first time a UfM event was held in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Gathering over 70 participants from 22 Member States, the event focused on employment opportunities and challenges in the context of green and digital transitions. Policymakers, youth representatives, and private sector actors explored strategies such as flexible work models, public-private partnerships, and integrating career guidance into education.

Through these strategic engagements, the UfM is reinforcing regional cooperation in employment and labour policies, ensuring that future generations have access to sustainable and inclusive economic opportunities. The outcomes of these meetings will feed into the 2025 UfM Ministerial on Employment and Labour, shaping policy priorities for a more resilient and dynamic labour market in the Mediterranean.

**Field visits to employment centres and educational institutions in Croatia and Italy provided hands-on insights into successful labour market strategies.**

# Better together: regional integration as the way forward

## Advancing green trade and investment for a sustainable Mediterranean

As global trade and investment become increasingly linked to carbon emissions, the Mediterranean region is working to transform environmental challenges into opportunities for sustainable growth. Within this framework, the **6<sup>th</sup> UfM Trade and Investment Forum** convened in Rabat, Morocco, in November 2024, bringing together over 100 participants, including policymakers, experts, and private sector represen-

tatives. The Forum provided a platform to discuss how trade can support the green transition, create green jobs, and build resilient supply chains.

Key discussions focused on the urgent need to address the

region's green and blue skill gaps to facilitate a smooth transition towards sustainability. Participants highlighted the importance of regulatory reforms to ensure the effective implementation of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), stressing the necessity of financial and technical support for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to adapt to new

requirements. Investing in decarbonisation efforts, technical and vocational education (TVET), and fostering a socio-cultural shift towards sustainability were also identified as essential steps.

**The Forum emphasised the role of bilateral agreements in driving green investments and job creation across the Mediterranean.** With the European Union accounting for only 24% of all foreign direct investment (FDI) in Southern Mediterranean countries, discussions underscored the potential for scaling sustainable private sector investment through initiatives such as the EU's Global Gateway Strategy and the Team Europe Initiative on Jobs through Trade and Investment in the Southern Neighbourhood. Participants also stressed the importance of inclusive policymaking that incorporates rural communities, women's associations, and underrepresented groups to ensure a just transition.

**A key challenge remains the lack of standardised definitions and data on green jobs and activities, which hampers effective policy planning.** Strengthening data collection and coordination across sectors and institutions was identified as a priority to enable evidence-based decision-making.

The Forum also explored the intersection between climate change, supply chains, and global trade policies. While regulatory restrictions on supply chain monitoring aim to enhance sustainability, concerns were raised about their potential to divert resources and create hurdles for the private sector. Discussions highlighted **the role of**

**A key challenge remains the lack of standardised definitions and data on green jobs and activities, which hampers effective policy planning.**

**Only 24% of foreign direct investment in Southern Mediterranean countries come from the EU.**





Read the complete outcome report of the 6<sup>th</sup> UfM Trade and Investment Forum:



**smart logistics and technology-driven solutions in optimising supply chains across key sectors such as textiles, energy, food and beverages, and car manufacturing.** However, challenges such as limited civic awareness, misinformation, and restricted access to technology were identified as barriers to achieving supply chain sustainability. Participants agreed that for sustainable solutions to be widely adopted, they must make business sense and demonstrate clear financial benefits. Additionally, while geographical proximity in supply chains can be advantageous, it is not a guarantee of sustainability—other factors, including regulatory frameworks and technological capabilities, must also be considered.



What is it?

## Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is a tool introduced by the EU, designed to place a carbon price on imports of certain goods, ensuring they reflect the carbon emissions produced during their manufacturing. This mechanism aims to prevent “carbon leakage,” where companies might relocate production to countries with less stringent climate policies, thereby maintaining a level playing field for EU industries and encouraging global emissions reductions.

Source: European Commission

### Towards sustainable supply chains in the Mediterranean

In a rapidly evolving regulatory landscape, the sustainability of supply chains is becoming a key driver of economic resilience and environmental responsibility. The **UfM Workshop on Sustainable Supply Chains** addressed this much-needed transition in July 2024. The event, organised with the support of German Development Cooperation, Climate & Company, and the Egyptian Commercial Service (ECS),

provided a platform for over 80 participants—including government representatives, private sector leaders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), think tanks, and academia—to engage in discussions on how Mediterranean supply chains can align with global sustainability efforts.

The workshop focused on key European policies that are shaping international trade and investment. These include the European Green Deal, the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), which restricts imports linked to deforestation, and the CBAM, a tool that ensures imported goods meet EU climate standards. **These policies are shaping international trade and investment flows, prompting Mediterranean partner countries to explore strategies for compliance and long-term competitiveness.**

Over two days, discussions covered regional trade realities and the implications of EU sustainability measures for businesses across the Mediterranean. The matter of corporate sustainability regulations was also addressed, with a particular focus on the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and its requirements for businesses to integrate human rights and environmental considerations throughout their supply chains. Another important discussion centred on transparency in finance, looking at how rules like the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the EU Taxonomy Regulation are pushing businesses to disclose their sustainability efforts more clearly. By addressing these challenges and opportunities, the workshop strove to help Mediterranean countries navigate the transition towards greener, more responsible trade.

### Charting a sustainable course towards green ports and the blue economy

With the support of the UfM Secretariat, the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the Inter-

national Maritime Transport and Logistics Conference (MARLOG 13) took place in Alexandria, Egypt, in March 2024. With a growing emphasis on green ports and the blue economy, MARLOG 13 served as a platform to explore strategies for enhancing sustainability in maritime transport and logistics. A key highlight of the conference was the discussion surrounding the Blue Mediterranean Partnership (BMP), supported by the UfM Secretariat. **Aiming to mobilise over €1 billion in investments, this multi-donor and multi-institutional financing mechanism will support a sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean region** by fostering cross-border collaboration and driving sustainable development in maritime industries (more on p.41).

The conference also addressed the transformative role of artificial inte-



### Focus on partners

## International Road Federation (IRF)

The strategic partnership between the UfM Secretariat and the International Road Federation (IRF) aims to promote sustainable transport solutions, reduce carbon emissions in the mobility sector, and advance smart infrastructure planning across the Mediterranean region. Signed at the International Transport Forum Summit in May 2024 in Leipzig, Germany, this agreement seeks to address challenges in road safety, decarbonisation, digitalisation, and innovation while promoting sustainable mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Over the next three years, the IRF and UfM will collaborate on training, conferences, projects, and data analysis to enhance regional integration.

More on the IRF:



lligence in maritime transport and logistics. AI is expected to revolutionise port operations by improving efficiency, safety, and sustainability. From predictive analytics for cargo management to real-time monitoring of maritime routes, AI-driven solutions are paving the way for smarter, more connected ports. However, to fully harness AI's potential, stakeholders underscored the need for robust digital infrastructure, including advanced communication networks that enable seamless data exchange between different maritime and logistics entities. This digital transformation is set to enhance supply chain efficiency, reduce carbon footprints, and streamline operations across global shipping networks.

### Joining forces to advance science diplomacy in the Mediterranean

Across the centuries, the Mediterranean has been a hub for the exchange of knowledge, ideas and innovation. Long before the concept of science diplomacy emerged as a recognised element of foreign policy, it was already being practised in this region. **The deep-rooted tradition of intertwining science and diplomacy in the Mediterranean has never been more relevant,** especially in a world marked by division and conflict, alongside rapid scientific and technological advancements that are shaping international relations.

In October 2024, representatives from governments, international organisations, academia, and civil society gathered in Cairo, Egypt, to explore how science, technology, and innovation can foster cooperation and dialogue in the Mediterranean. Organised by the UfM Secretariat, the League of Arab States (LAS), and the European Commission, the **High-level Meeting on Science Diplomacy** underscored the region's long history of scientific exchange and its potential to address shared challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, food security, and migration.





*UfM Conference on Creative Economy.*

*UfM High-Level Meeting on Science Diplomacy.*

Participants highlighted how science diplomacy, including the use of scientific collaboration to build international partnerships, can help strengthen ties between nations, even in times of political tension. Discussions focused on:

- **The link between science and cultural diplomacy:** science and culture are universal languages that can bring people together, promote mutual understanding, and support peaceful cooperation.
- **The role of SESAME:** the Synchro-

tron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME) in Jordan was recognised as a key regional hub for scientific research. However, participants stressed the need for sustainable funding to ensure its long-term success.

- **Strengthening research collaboration through PRIMA:** the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) was highlighted as a successful example of regional

Read the full outcome report of the **High-Level Meeting on Science Diplomacy** here:



The deep-rooted tradition of intertwining science and diplomacy in the Mediterranean has never been more relevant, especially in a world marked by division and conflict, alongside rapid scientific and technological advancements that shape international relations.

scientific cooperation, particularly in tackling the WEFE nexus.

- **A ‘Blue Diplomacy’ approach for the Mediterranean:** the meeting explored how scientific collaboration can support the sustainable management of marine resources, enhancing cooperation between countries on ocean conservation.
- **Establishing a Euro-Mediterranean Science Diplomacy Hub:** participants proposed creating a neutral platform for scientists and diplomats to collaborate, exchange

from across the region. The Summer School, held in June 2024 in Kolašin and Podgorica, saw record participation from young diplomats from 46 countries, including UfM Member States and beyond. Co-organised with the Government of Montenegro and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the event provided a platform for future diplomats to engage in high-level discussions on global and regional challenges.

The workshop, titled “Advancing Common Interests on the Global Stage,” tackled key questions shaping economic diplomacy in the Mediterranean. Discussions explored how economic diplomacy can drive job creation, mitigate geopolitical disruptions, and strengthen regional economic cooperation. **Participants also examined the impact of global economic shifts, particularly the US-China economic polarisation, on the UfM region and the lessons that could be drawn from other sub-regions.** Additionally, the workshop identified skill gaps among young diplomats, emphasising the need

knowledge, and train future leaders in science diplomacy.

- **Supporting researchers affected by conflict:** the meeting addressed the urgent need to help students and scientists impacted by war, particularly in Gaza and Lebanon.

The conference concluded with a call for stronger international commitment to science diplomacy as a tool for trust-building and regional cooperation, reaffirming the Mediterranean’s role as a historic centre of knowledge and innovation.

#### Leveraging economic diplomacy amidst global geopolitical shifts

Within the framework of the 2024 Summer School for Young Diplomats held in Montenegro, the UfM Secretariat hosted a Workshop on Economic Diplomacy, bringing together high-profile keynote speakers and participants

**Discussions explored how economic diplomacy can drive job creation, mitigate geopolitical disruptions, and strengthen regional economic cooperation.**

for enhanced economic training, negotiation capabilities, and multilateral coordination. Best practices from the Maghreb region were also highlighted, offering insights into replicable models for other UfM countries. Other topics addressed ranged from Democracy in



the Age of Cyber Threats and Negotiation and Mediation Strategies, to Digital Interconnectivity and Bridging the Gender Gap in Diplomatic Work. A special session also explored the implications of an election year in the US on global diplomacy and economic relations.

The programme was complemented by study visits to cultural and historical landmarks in Cetinje, Kotor, and Podgorica, as well as natural heritage sites such as Vranjak Village and Biogradsko Lake. **These visits provided an opportunity for participants to gain a deeper understanding of the region's cultural and geopolitical dynamics, fostering informal exchanges and reinforcing the role of cultural diplomacy in international relations.** By equipping

## The workshop identified skill gaps among young diplomats, emphasising the need for enhanced economic training, negotiation capabilities, and multilateral coordination.

young diplomats with the necessary tools to navigate economic diplomacy, the UfM continues to support regional integration efforts and enhance cooperation among Mediterranean partners.

### **Harnessing international mobility as a tool to boost youth employability**

As youth employability remains a cornerstone of the UfM's mission, the HOMERe Conference held in Marseille in December 2024 became a much-needed platform for advancing academic mobility and creating career opportunities for young people across the Medi-

terranean. The programme, supported and labelled by the UfM, illustrates how internships and cross-border mobility are transforming young professionals' futures in the region.

Through workshops, including using the innovative World Cafe method, Conference participants explored strategies to overcome barriers to mobility and enhance the impact of the HOMERe programme. **One key takeaway was the integration of mobility initiatives into broader local employability frameworks, which can strengthen collaboration between universities, companies, and governments.** The UfM Secretariat's role in facilitating this dialogue helped promote best practices for creating lasting, scalable mobility opportunities. Impact was evident in the new partnerships forged during the event, including the potential expansion of the HOMERe programme into Spain and Italy. One significant development was the formation of initial contacts between the MedNC, another UfM-supported project, and HOMERe national associations. Such a collaboration could result in greater opportunities for students and young professionals across the Mediterranean.

Notably, a public conference, organised in partnership with the UfM Secretariat, explored the intersection of international mobility and career development in socially and environmentally responsible sectors. Expert speakers shared insights on how these mobility programmes provide young people with the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving job market. The conference also featured success stories from students who had benefited from mobility programmes, such as internships that led to long-term employment opportunities. These personal accounts highlighted the tangible impact of the Secretariat's commitment to youth empowerment and employability.

## UfM Grant Scheme to Promote Employment and Entrepreneurship in the Green Economy

Through the **Grant Scheme to Promote Employment and Entrepreneurship in the Green Economy**, the UfM supports not-for-profit organisations fostering inclusive green transitions in the Southern Mediterranean. With the financial support of GIZ, on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ) and the AECID, the UfM Secretariat aims to strengthen the green transformation of the region's economies.

Six projects have been awarded grants, benefiting 1,300 individuals and supporting MSMEs, startups, training centres, and local organisations across **eight Southern Mediterranean countries**: Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, and Algeria.

### Discover the six awarded projects:

**Get into Green** will improve green economy training for 400 young people across eight Southern Mediterranean countries, upskilling them in green digital jobs and empowering women to start green enterprises.



**GREEN&FAIR** will enhance employability and entrepreneurship for 120 women and young people in agriculture across Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine, focusing on sustainability and access to funding.



**GREENSTEP** will provide training for 150 young people and 110 MSMEs in Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia, boosting skills for green economy sectors.



**Women on the Green Path (WGP)** will support 60 women entrepreneurs in Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia, enhancing their skills in green and circular economy through acceleration and mentoring programmes, while training 45 enablers to offer better support.



**The Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship Booster (YEEB)** in Egypt will train 100 young people, primarily women, on green entrepreneurship, supporting green enterprise development, job creation, and gender equality in Assiut's green sectors.



**The Women and Youth Driving Sustainable Transformation** project will empower 270 women and youth in Jordan, Palestine, and Tunisia with green entrepreneurship skills, helping 90 MSMEs adopt sustainable practices.



**6 awarded projects**

**+1.6 million euros contributed**

**8 beneficiary countries**

# Facing today's challenges

## Unifying the Mediterranean's voice to tackle the detrimental effects of climate change

At the **2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29)** in Baku, Azerbaijan, the UfM Secretariat hosted the **Mediterranean Pavilion**, providing a dynamic platform to amplify the region's voice in global climate governance. Bringing together 10 key regional partners, including UNEP-MAP and CIHEAM, the Pavilion highlighted the power of **collective action** in ad-

unlock private sector investments. Discussions highlighted **nature-based solutions**, including **wetland restoration, marine protected areas, and blue carbon strategies**, as essential for strengthening regional resilience. The WEFE nexus was also presented as an effective model for cross-border cooperation, optimising resource management while minimising sectoral trade-offs.

The **energy transition** remained a central theme, with the UfM Secretariat showcasing the **TeraMed Initiative, which aims to deliver 1 Terawatt of renewable energy capacity in the Mediterranean by 2030**. The Mediterranean Pavilion also highlighted the EU's **Trans-Mediterranean Energy and Clean Tech Cooperation Initiative**, which promotes renewable energy collaboration between the Southern Mediterranean and the EU27 through targeted investment, infrastructure development, and regulatory support. Participants explored pathways to scale up solar and wind energy, which currently account for only 20% of the region's energy mix. Discussions also underscored the ambitious goal of doubling the Mediterranean's installed renewable capacity by 2030, with green hydrogen projects in Morocco, Egypt, and Spain positioned as game-changers for both domestic and export markets.

Ensuring a **just transition** was a critical topic—**balancing decarbonisation with affordability, job creation, and economic development**. Experts also tackled regulatory challenges, advocating for harmonised policies across Mediter-

By 2100, up to 20 million people—equivalent to Romania's population today—could face permanent displacement due to rising sea levels.

addressing the Mediterranean's most pressing environmental challenges. Over **seven thematic days**, it hosted **40 high-impact events**, featuring **almost 200 speakers**.

A key focus of the Pavilion was securing **equitable climate finance** for **Southern Mediterranean countries**, ensuring that financial mechanisms such as the PAMEx Local Investment Finance Facility (PLIFF) and guarantee schemes

More about the TeraMed initiative:



Mediterranean Pavilion at the COP29.

anean borders to facilitate energy trade and large-scale investments.

Beyond finance and energy, the Pavilion advanced discussions on **climate resilience**, exploring innovative funding strategies such as **leveraging carbon markets** and guarantees under the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG).

## Solar and wind energy account for only 20% of the Mediterranean region's energy mix.

Mediterranean-specific projects aimed at securing inclusive access to climate finance were examined with key financial institutions, including the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), Interreg/NEXTMED, and the NDC Partnership.

**Gender equality also took centre stage** with sessions on women's leadership in the energy transition and climate

action, addressing **structural, cultural, and educational barriers** limiting women's participation in these sectors. By showcasing successful gender inclusivity models and emphasising the importance of regional cooperation, the sessions called for stronger gender-responsive policies and cross-sector collaboration to create a more inclusive and sustainable future. Meanwhile, the **Mediterranean Youth Gathering** centred on empowering Mediterranean youth to take leadership roles in shaping regional climate strategies, with a focus on inclusivity, innovation, and cross-regional collaboration.

Within the broader COP29 framework, the UfM Secretariat also presented its vision for **"Maritime Decarbonisation in the Mediterranean"** at the International Forum on Recent Innovations in Green Port Development, hosted at the League of Arab States Pavilion. This session tackled environmental, energy, transport, and technological challenges, showcasing best practices for sustainable maritime transport and seaports in the region.





## Experts' corner

# Closing the gap between science and policy

A third of the Mediterranean region's population lives in close proximity to the sea, an area with one of the highest global risks of compound flooding, and faces growing exposure to climate-related hazards and environmental degradation. Without urgent action, these effects will only intensify in the years to come. **Achieving the SDGs will require cross-border policies that drive innovative solutions—including renewable energy—while also encouraging less energy-intensive behavioural shifts, such as the widespread re-adoption of the Mediterranean diet.**

These insights, among others, come from the latest scientific reports by the **Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC)**, an independent network of over **600 scientists from 35 Euro-Mediterranean countries**. Just under three weeks after devastating floods swept through Spain's

Valencia region, MedECC and the UfM Secretariat presented the network's latest scientific findings at the **Mediterranean Pavilion at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan**.

**Marine heatwaves have increased in frequency by 40% and duration by 15%** over the past two decades. The Mediterranean also experiences notable summer water demand peaks, a trend expected to escalate due to climate change, unsustainable agricultural practices, and rising coastal populations driven by urbanisation and tourism.

A combination of legal, policy, and economic instruments is essential to promote a sustainable blue economy and decouple energy consumption from economic growth. Because climate change exacerbates existing socioeconomic and environmental challenges, the most effective solutions will integrate **technological, societal, and ecosystem-based approaches**, taking into account all four interrelated elements of the WEFEnexus.

Check out the **Special Report on Climate and Environmental Coastal Risks in the Mediterranean**



First Scientific Report on **Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean:**



Check out the **Special Report Interlinking climate change with the WEFEnexus in the Mediterranean Basin**



## Marine heatwaves have increased in frequency by 40% and duration by 15%.

### Leveraging traditional building skills to build climate-resilient urban heritage

Urban heritage and traditional building skills play a crucial role in mitigating the impacts of climate change. **By incorporating sustainable materials and climate-adaptive designs in buildings and cities, these practices enhance environmental resilience while fostering cultural identity and community cohesion.** The use of traditional techniques for renovation and retrofitting reduces carbon emissions, stimulates local economies, and encourages adaptive reuse and smart growth. By lowering energy consumption and promoting a circular economy, traditional building skills support more sustainable and resilient cities.

## The use of traditional techniques for renovation and retrofitting reduces carbon emissions, stimulates local economies, and encourages adaptive reuse and smart growth.

In this context, the UfM Secretariat has worked closely with public officials of Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia and other stakeholders to enhance the resilience of local heritage and promote sustainable building practices in the face of climate challenges and natural disasters. Together with the UNESCO Regional Office for Maghreb countries, and with the support of German Development Cooperation and the AECID, the UfM Secretariat launched a series of workshops as part of the programme **“Traditional Building Skills in the Southern Mediterranean Region: Know-How in the South Mediterranean.”**

Held in Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, these workshops aimed to:

- Identify and promote best practices for raising awareness, preserving,

and revitalising **vernacular architecture** and traditional construction techniques.

- Strengthen the cultural embeddedness of traditional solutions and their capacity to **adapt to the climate**.
- Support a **sustainable local economy** by fostering employment opportunities linked to traditional materials and techniques, and sustainable tourism.
- Protect urban heritage and reinforce its role in **sustainable development**.

In June 2024, a final programme meeting in Spain consolidated the outcomes of the four national workshops. Participants discussed the implementation of officially certified training programmes in traditional building techniques, as well as broader cultural and economic opportunities, **including the role of oases in driving economic development in North Africa's inland regions and the historical Salt Caravan Route as a potential sustainable tourism destination**. One of the key takeaways from the final meeting was the need to **establish nationally certified training programmes in traditional construction skills**, integrating them into formal education systems. Countries such as France, Germany, and Switzerland provide successful models that could be adapted to national contexts in the Maghreb.

To build on these discussions, a first field visit was organised in Marseille, France, in November 2024. The French city was chosen for its exemplary institutions on cultural preservation, vocational training, and social inclusion. The visit provided participants with an in-depth understanding of the **institutional, legal, educational, logistical, and financial frameworks required to establish nationally certified schools of traditional building skills**. Following this successful initiative, additional field visits to other best practice program-

Report on the **Green Circular Economy at the Mediterranean Level including Green Skills and Jobs:**



mes are planned for 2025, aiming to further enhance employability opportunities for vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth, in urban and rural areas across the UfM Maghreb countries.

### Advancing regional climate action with the first-ever Mediterranean Green Week

The Mediterranean Sea is warming 20% faster than the global average, exposing the region to severe environmental challenges such as ecological degradation, extreme weather events, and energy crises. In response to these threats, the **Mediterranean Green Week** took place in Istanbul, Türkiye, in May 2024.

Co-organised by the UfM Secretariat and the OECD, the event provided a platform for discussions on the collective management of climate, energy, and environmental crises. Participants engaged in

20 parallel thematic working groups, addressing:

- The **WEFE nexus**, a holistic approach to sustainable resource management.
- Developments in **hydrogen and other renewable energy transitions**.
- **Green financing mechanisms**, including the **Blue Mediterranean Partnership**, supported by the UfM Secretariat.

A major outcome of the event was the expansion of the **UfM Working Group on Gas to include Emissions Abatement and Hydrogen**. It will aim to develop common positions on natural gas, renewable and low-carbon gases, clean technologies, and emissions reduction. The conference also marked the **launch of the Mediterranean Alliance of Think Tanks on Climate Change (MATTCC)**, bringing together research organisations focused on climate issues in the

region. Coordinated by the IMAL Initiative for Climate and Development (Morocco), ECCO (Italy), and Sefia (Türkiye), the alliance aims to promote a whole-of-society approach to sustainability by engaging local authorities, enhancing youth and women's participation in decision-making, and ensuring policies align with real-world needs. In addition, the event allowed progress on the **UfM 2030GreenerMed agenda**, addressing shared environmental and climate adaptation challenges through workshops focused on marine litter, sustainable food systems, Mediterranean forests, and spatial planning across land and sea.

Lastly, the event featured the presentation of the **report on the Green Circular Economy in the Mediterranean**, which highlights the importance of green skills and jobs, provides scientific



Focus on partners

### European University Cyprus

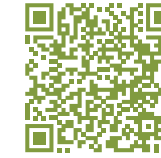
The UfM Secretariat and the European University Cyprus (EUC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation in civil protection and disaster risk management. The agreement, signed during the Nicosia Risk Forum 2025 in Larnaca, aims to foster collaboration through joint projects, expert exchanges, and knowledge sharing. Recognising the importance of regional cooperation in addressing shared challenges, this partnership underscores both institutions' commitment to building resilience and advancing safety and well-being across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

More on the European University Cyprus:



## The Mediterranean Sea is warming 20% faster than the global average.

**UfM Water Finance Series #5** - Applying a WEFE nexus approach to water finance and investments:



evidence to inform decision-making, and underscores the need for stronger partnerships and greater awareness of climate action.

### Strengthening Mediterranean water cooperation: advancing policies for a sustainable future

Water scarcity and climate change are among the most pressing challenges facing the Mediterranean region. In response, the UfM Secretariat has been at the forefront of unifying stakeholders and driving action to ensure equitable and sustainable water management. In 2024, the institution co-organised two pivotal events—the **5<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Water Forum** in Tunis and the **5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Water Finance and Investment** in Cairo—which collectively laid the groundwork

for advancing water policies and financial investments critical to the region's future resilience.

to fostering cooperation on regional water management, emphasising equitable access and the need for private-sector involvement in financing sustainable projects. In tandem, the event featured the 2nd Regional Roundtable on the WEFE nexus, focusing on the interconnected challenges of water use and gender inclusion in sustainable resource management.

Later in the year, in October 2024, the UfM Secretariat co-organised the **5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Water Finance and Investment** in Cairo, drawing over 100 policymakers and stakeholders. This conference addressed the critical need for investment in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, with particular emphasis on the Mediterranean and African regions, where water insecurity is exacerbated by climate change. Participants underscored **the importance of partnerships between governments, international organisations, and the private sec-**

The Mediterranean region is home to 60% of the world's water-poor population. Climate change is exacerbating this trend.



In February 2024, the UfM Secretariat, alongside the Institut Méditerranéen de l'Eau (IME) and the World Water Council, convened the **5<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Water Forum**

in Tunis, bringing together 400 participants from across the Mediterranean. **The event's primary goal was to align regional voices ahead of the 10th World Water Forum, emphasising the connection between water, climate change, and human rights.** The forum produced the Tunis Declaration, which underlined the necessity of water as a fundamental human right and crucial element for climate adaptation, while also stressing the role of digital transformation in enhancing water management practices.

During the three-day event, the UfM Secretariat reiterated its commitment



What is it?

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Services

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services are crucial for public health and well-being, encompassing access to clean water, adequate sanitation facilities, and hygiene practices. These services prevent waterborne diseases, improve community health, and support sustainable development. Safe WASH services contribute to better livelihoods, increased school attendance, and dignity, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Source: World Health Organization



UfM Workshop on  
Traditional Building  
Skills in Algeria.



**tor in securing financial resources to meet Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) of ensuring universal access to clean water and sanitation.** The conference further advanced the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Water, advocating for tailored finance strategies that meet the specific needs of each country while promoting regional and global cooperation.

**Advancing a business-centric approach to gender equality in resource management** Gender equality is integral to achieving sustainable development, yet it remains a challenge in many regions. In the Mediterranean, the intersection of gender dynamics and resource management presents both opportunities and obstacles. To address these, the UfM Secretariat, in partnership with key organisations such as the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), AECID, GWP-Med, and PRIMA, hosted an event focused on “**Gender Dynamics**

**and the WEFE Nexus**”, exploring how integrating gender considerations into the WEFE nexus can empower women and drive sustainable development across the region.

Held under the theme “Focusing on Economic Empowerment through a Business-Centric Approach,” and building on momentum from the 5<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Water Forum held earlier in Tunis, the event served as a platform to **highlight the transformative power of women’s empowerment in enhancing**

**resource efficiency and advancing sustainable development.**

Participants identified four key priorities for integrating gender equality within the WEFE nexus:

1. **Establishing targeted mechanisms:** the need for specific mechanisms that address gender equality within the WEFE sectors was emphasised. This includes business-focused approaches to overcome the unique challenges faced by women in these industries.
2. **Empowering women in resource management:** recognising women as pivotal players in resource management, the event highlighted how empowering women in these roles can enhance business operations, resilience, and sustainability within the nexus.
3. **Prioritising gender in business strategies:** it was agreed that gender equality should be a central consideration in business strategies, as it drives equitable resource distribution, promotes social justice, and ultimately boosts productivity in the WEFE sectors.
4. **Translating ideas into action:** the event underscored the need to translate these priorities into actionable policies that will have tangible, inclusive outcomes across the Mediterranean region.

The business-centric approach discussed at the event offers a promising model for integrating gender into sustainable practices, ensuring that the region’s development is both inclusive and resilient for future generations.

**The intersection of gender dynamics and resource management presents both opportunities and obstacles.**

# Transitioning to the future

## Driving sustainable blue economy investments in the Mediterranean

Against the backdrop of the Mediterranean’s warming waters and mounting environmental challenges, the **Blue Mediterranean Partnership (BMP)** gathered for the first time at the **UfM Secretariat’s headquarters in Barcelona**.

The meeting brought together donors, implementing partners, and beneficiary countries to lay the groundwork for a series of ambitious sustainable blue economy investments in Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan, with additional countries expected to join in due cour-

## The Blue Mediterranean Partnership aims to mobilise €1 billion in investments for blue economy projects.

se. The stakes are high. **The Mediterranean Sea is not only a vital economic engine, generating over \$450 billion annually, but also a lifeline for 480 million people across 22 countries.** However, it is warming 20% faster than the global average, putting its delicate ecosystems, coastal communities, and economic activities at risk. **Faced with these challenges, the BMP is stepping up efforts to mobilise funding, coor-**

**dinate investment, and drive action where it is needed most.**

At the heart of the partnership lies the BMP Fund, a multi-donor financial instrument managed by the EBRD. Designed to unlock additional funding from sovereign donors, the fund will support project preparation and blended finance solutions, ensuring that sustainable initiatives can move from concept to reality. **The initial financial commitments of more than €20 million are promising**, with contributions from Germany, Sweden, European Commission, the Agence Française de Développement (France), and Spain.

The BMP’s journey began at COP27 in November 2022, when the UfM Secretariat, the EBRD and the European Investment Bank—the main driving partners—voiced their support for a collaborative approach to address environmental challenges in the Mediterranean. A year later, at COP28, these commitments were reaffirmed through statements of intent, paving the way for the EBRD Board of Directors to establish the BMP Cooperation Fund in November 2023. Since then, momentum has continued to build. The BMP Implementing Partners, which include leading multilateral development banks, development financial institutions, and international organisations, are now working together to turn vision into action. These partners will leverage grants from the BMP Fund, alongside existing financial resources from the European Commission’s Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP) and EFSD+, to drive forward impactful investments.

With funding mechanisms in place, **the focus now shifts to identifying and implementing strategic blue economy projects.** Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt will take the lead in selecting key initiatives in their territories, supported by the UfM Secretariat’s role as facilitator of political and regulatory dialogue.

### The Mediterranean's roadmap to a sustainable blue future

The Mediterranean's economic and environmental well-being hinges on the sustainable use of its marine and coastal resources. To fast-track progress, over 350 key stakeholders gathered in Athens in February 2024 for the **2nd UfM Stakeholder Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy**. This gathering provided an opportunity not only to assess the strides made since the adoption of the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, but also to chart out the next steps for its implementation.

Co-organised by the UfM Secretariat, its EU and Jordanian Co-Presidency, and the Greek Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Island Policy, the conference served as a platform to bring together policymakers, businesses, researchers, and civil society. Over the course of the event, participants discussed progress

into key challenges and opportunities across the region. These interactive sessions encouraged knowledge exchange, built capacities, and reinforced the UfM's commitment to promoting regional cooperation and sustainable investment in the blue economy.

As part of its ongoing efforts to implement the Sustainable Blue Economy Roadmap, the UfM Secretariat organised throughout 2024 a series of thematic webinars to address specific areas of interest:

- **Blue Transformation, Strategies and Actions for More Sustainable Agrifood Systems in the Mediterranean:** organised with the SFS-MED Platform, this webinar explored the pathways towards more sustainable agrifood systems, showcasing best practices from across the region.
- **Scaling Up Synergies and Partnerships for Sustainable Maritime & Coastal Tourism:** building on the outcomes and main messages of the 2<sup>nd</sup> UfM Stakeholder Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy, the webinar highlighted the ongoing coordination efforts among regional programmes, sharing knowledge on best practices and future opportunities in the tourism sector.
- **Marine Renewable Energies Through Effective Licensing and Maritime Spatial Planning:** organised with Med OCEaN and supported by German Development Cooperation, stakeholders discussed the development of marine renewable energy in the Mediterranean, linking it to broader maritime spatial planning discussions.

In addition, the UfM Secretariat played an active role in the **WestMED Hackathon 2024** and co-facilitated the track on green shipping. This biennial event, organised in Faro, Portugal, in October 2024, brought together innovators,

in the 10 priority cooperation areas outlined in the 2021 Declaration, covering topics like **marine innovation, blue finance, sustainable tourism, and climate-neutral maritime transport**. The conference also featured **11 thematic workshops** designed to delve

Consult the **2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy**:

industry leaders, and experts to boost access to funding for sustainable blue economy projects.

### Seeking innovative financing and collaborative models to meet energy and climate goals

Serving as a key platform for advancing regional cooperation in the sustainable energy sector, the **4<sup>th</sup> UfM Energy and Climate Business Forum** was held in Cairo in October 2024. Bringing together senior national and intergovernmental officials, international financial institutions, and private sector leaders, the Forum **focused on unlocking innovative financing solutions to accelerate the Mediterranean's energy transition and climate resilience**.

With a dynamic programme covering essential themes such as green finan-

ce, climate adaptation and mitigation funding, corporate responsibility, and innovation, the forum underscored the importance of cross-sector collaboration in addressing regional energy challenges. Discussions included:

- **Green finance and investment:** strategies for aligning policies, engaging the private sector, and fostering public-private partnerships to enhance access to sustainable funding.
- **Climate mitigation and adaptation funding:** securing and scaling climate finance for adaptation and mitigation, with a focus on project feasibility and risk management.
- **Financial institutions and carbon markets:** exploring innovative financing models led by regional and international development banks



What is it?

## Sustainable blue economy

The sustainable blue economy is an approach that balances economic growth from ocean resources with environmental sustainability and social equity. It aims to preserve marine ecosystems while providing benefits for current and future generations, focusing on clean technologies and renewable energy.

Source: UN Environment Programme



## Zoom on Mediterranean innovators

During the WestMED Hackathon 2024, **six successful projects** were selected to showcase their

best practices and lessons learned. We invite you to explore them:

### CallmeBLUE

Aims to strengthen existing cluster alliances in the Mediterranean area.



### WeMed Natour

Focus on West Mediterranean natural marine sites and maritime and coastal destinations for sustainable tourism.



### WIN-BIG

Works towards a gender-balanced blue economy sector.



### Green Marine Med

Links ports, industries, investment, and green innovation.



### BlueAquaEdu

A blue career centre for aquaculture education.



### Blue Skills Project

Offers multidisciplinary training on sustainable blue economy. The project was labelled by the UfM in 2019.





- to support the energy transition.
- **Corporate responsibility and sustainable development:** examining the role of businesses, chambers of commerce, and foundations in promoting a just energy transition through environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards, corporate social responsibility, and impact investing.
  - **Innovation and start-ups:** showcasing youth-led solutions in energy storage, waste-to-energy conversion, solar-powered irrigation, green finance platforms, and smart grids.

The forum reinforced the crucial role of innovative financing mechanisms and private-sector leadership in accelerating the region’s clean energy

shift. Takeaways will shape next year’s Business Forum and the 2025 Mediterranean Green Week agenda, ensuring sustained engagement and progress in the Mediterranean’s energy transition.

**UfM Student Competition on Urban Design awards future-proof solutions to climate change**

As Mediterranean cities face the growing threats of climate change—including rising sea levels, droughts, and high temperatures—urban planning, design and architecture must evolve to foster resilience and sustainability. In this context, the **UfM Student Competition on Urban Design: Urban Solutions to Climate Change in the Mediterranean** invited students from across the region to propose innovative,



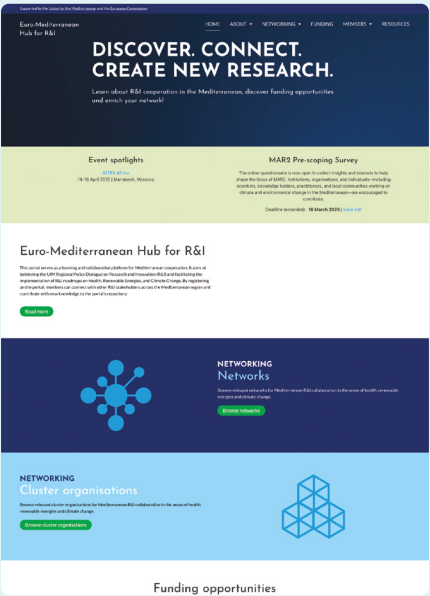
# Zoom on Mediterranean innovators

The **Euro-Mediterranean Hub for Research and Innovation (R&I)** serves as a one-stop shop for accessing research findings, best practices, policy papers, and other key publications. It also provides a portfolio of opportunities for R&I collaboration, including funding schemes, networks, and cluster organisations. Its primary objective is to foster the exchange and circulation of knowledge and data among R&I stakeholders across the Mediterranean region, with a focus on **health, renewable energies, and climate change**.

**Learn about R&I cooperation in the Mediterranean, discover funding opportunities, and enrich your network at [euromedhub-ri.org](https://euromedhub-ri.org)!**



*The Hub is an initiative supported by the UfM Secretariat and the European Commission. It was launched within the framework of UNIMED Week held in April 2024.*



Learn more about the awarded projects here:



multi-scalar solutions to these pressing challenges. **The competition aimed to bridge academia and real-world urban sustainability efforts, encouraging young talent to contribute to the transformation of the built environment.**

The award ceremony, held in January 2024 in Barcelona, Spain, celebrated the most outstanding student projects, with **Özyeğin University students from Türkiye securing first place and a €5,000 prize for their project *Symbiosis with Lake Amik***. Their design sought to restore harmony between Lake Amik’s waters and its surrounding ecosystem, ensuring the preservation of its memory while enhancing its adaptive capacity to climate change.

**The second-place award of €3,000 went to ENSA Marseille student Viktoryia Baravikova for *ALTEO: Transformation of the Post-Industrial Area of Alteo into a Sustainable Development Park***, a project aimed at restoring water quality and ecological permeability in

Yıldız Technical University, Gebze Technical University, and Istanbul Technical University, and The Inhabited Lagoon of Camargue by ENSA Marseille students.

With support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Özyeğin University, the Fundació Mies van der Rohe, and Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği (TMMOB), the competition attracted over 80 proposals from 37 universities across 12 countries. A jury of Euro-Mediterranean professors in urban design and architecture assessed the projects based on their contributions to the SDGs and their cultural, social, economic, and environmental sustainability impact.

By highlighting the next generation of urban innovators, this initiative reaffirms the UfM Secretariat’s commitment to shaping a more sustainable and climate-resilient Mediterranean region.

**Driving sustainable investment in the Mediterranean: strengthening policies for a greener future**

As the Mediterranean region faces increasing environmental and socioeconomic challenges, sustainable finance is becoming a key driver of economic growth and resilience. Green finance was central to the **UfM Workshop on Sustainable Investment**, held in May 2024 in Madrid, Spain, and organised with the support of German Development Cooperation and in collaboration with Climate & Company. The event brought together experts and stakeholders to explore how green taxonomies and ESG disclosure regulations can enhance investment sustainability across UfM countries.

The workshop featured in-depth discussions and interactive sessions focusing on:

- **Green taxonomies and ESG disclosures:** experts examined the impact of clear and accessible information in sustainable finance, highlighting

# The Mediterranean cities face the growing threats of climate change—including rising sea levels, droughts, and high temperatures.

southern France’s Luynes River area. Meanwhile, **Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya students Elena del Cura Berzal and Clara Domínguez Gallardo secured third place and a €2,000 prize for *PR-R1 Camí del Riel***, a project that reimagined northeastern Spain’s Tordera River delta as a water retention landscape to support eco-friendly tourism.

**Two additional projects received honourable mentions**, each awarded €500: *Camp with Us* by a team from

how green taxonomies and ESG disclosure regulations can drive investments, trade, and green job creation.

- **Global taxonomy developments:** participants explored the latest advancements in sustainability frameworks and their implications for the Mediterranean region, particularly in fostering economic growth while ensuring environmental responsibility.
- **Sustainability reporting standards:** the workshop reviewed the evolution of both voluntary and mandatory sustainability disclosure standards, offering insights into best practices for policy implementation.

The workshop also provided a practical perspective on ESG data usage, showcasing technological solutions for integrating sustainability into bu-



## Green taxonomies

Green taxonomies are classification systems that define which economic activities are environmentally sustainable. They guide investments towards activities that meet specific environmental criteria, helping to prevent greenwashing and promote sustainable development. These taxonomies provide clear standards for labeling financial products as “green” and support global efforts to mitigate climate change and protect biodiversity.

Source: Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis

siness operations. Sygris, a leading technology provider, demonstrated **how digital tools can facilitate ESG reporting and compliance, enabling companies to streamline their non-financial data management.** An interactive session allowed participants to address the challenges and opportunities of implementing ESG disclosure

and sustainable finance taxonomies in the Mediterranean context, providing valuable insights that will shape future UfM Secretariat initiatives in the sector.

### Bridging the green skills gap to build a sustainable future

As the Mediterranean region faces mounting environmental and socio-economic challenges, the need for a skilled workforce capable of driving sustainable development has become increasingly urgent. High unemployment rates—particularly among youth and women—are compounded by a widening gap between the skills taught in academic institutions and those demanded by employers. At the same time, **the transition towards a green economy requires specialised expertise in areas such as sustainable food systems, renewable energy, and policy innovation.** To address this gap, the UfM Secretariat, in collaboration with regional and international partners, has launched a series of workshops focused on integrating green skills into education and professional development.

The “**Workshop on Green Skills in the Mediterranean: Education and Research for Sustainable Food Systems**”, held in February 2024 in Zaragoza, Spain, brought together participants from 15 Euro-Mediterranean countries. Co-organised by the UfM Secretariat and CIHEAM Zaragoza, with support from the European Training Foundation (ETF), German Development Cooperation, and the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the event focused on **embedding sustainability into curricula and professional practices.** Discussions revolved around the role of technical green skills in food production and agriculture, as well as policy-level strategies for fostering sustainability.

Building on this momentum, the second workshop, “**Green Skills in the Mediterranean for Education and Research in Renewable Energy**”, took place in

Go further with the UfM report on **Reinforcing the Innovation-Employability Nexus in the Mediterranean:**



June 2024 in Algiers, Algeria. Co-organised with the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, this session highlighted the growing need for a skilled workforce in the renewable energy sector. **With electricity demand in the region expected to surge, participants explored how education and research can drive sustainable energy solutions.** Both workshops underscored the impor-

tance of transversal green skills—such as sustainable thinking and climate resilience—alongside technical expertise. By bringing together academia, policymakers, industry, and civil society, these initiatives reinforce the UfM Secretariat’s commitment to enhancing employability and supporting the Sustainable Development Goals through education and innovation.



The **CIHEAM Youth Innovation Award**, organised with the support of the UfM Secretariat, recognises outstanding projects for their innovative approaches and potential to drive sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

### Meet the 2024 young innovators:

**HASAN JAAFR**

Secured first place with **YY ReGen-R8**, a project focused on renewable energy solutions, sustainable agriculture models, and water management.



**GUADALUNA CHAER**

Earned second place for **LUXEED Robotics**, an AI-driven system that eliminates weeds with high precision, removing the need for herbicides.



**MARILU SUC**

Placed third with **NOWA** (Network of Women in Aquaculture), an initiative dedicated to promoting gender equality and inclusivity in the global aquaculture industry.





# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>AECID:</b> Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (Spanish Agency for Cooperation)	<b>EUC:</b> European University Cyprus	<b>PLIFF:</b> PAMEx Local Investment Finance Facility
<b>AI:</b> Artificial Intelligence	<b>EU DR:</b> EU Deforestation Regulation	<b>PRIMA:</b> Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area
<b>ALF:</b> Anna Lindh Foundation	<b>FDI:</b> Foreign direct investment	<b>R&amp;I:</b> Research & Innovation
<b>BMP:</b> Blue Mediterranean Partnership	<b>GDP:</b> Gross domestic product	<b>SDG:</b> Sustainable Development Goal
<b>BMZ:</b> Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)	<b>GIZ:</b> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	<b>SESAME:</b> Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East
<b>CAWTAR:</b> Center of Arab Women for Training and Research	<b>GWP-Med:</b> Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean	<b>SFS-MED:</b> Sustainable Food Systems in the Mediterranean
<b>CBAM:</b> Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism	<b>IEMed:</b> European Institute of the Mediterranean	<b>Sida:</b> Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
<b>CCIs:</b> Cultural and creative industries	<b>IFD:</b> Investment facilitation for development	<b>SME:</b> Small and medium-sized enterprise
<b>CIHEAM:</b> International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies	<b>IIA:</b> International investment agreements	<b>STEM:</b> Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
<b>CoP:</b> Community of Practice	<b>IME:</b> Institut Méditerranéen de l'Eau (Mediterranean Water Institute)	<b>TMMOB:</b> Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects)
<b>COP:</b> Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	<b>IRF:</b> International Road Federation	<b>TVET:</b> Technical and vocational education
<b>COSPE:</b> Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries	<b>IsDB:</b> Islamic Development Bank	<b>UAB:</b> Union of Arab Banks
<b>CSDDD:</b> Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive	<b>LAS:</b> League of Arab States	<b>UEMF:</b> Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes
<b>CSO:</b> Civil society organisations	<b>MAR1:</b> First Mediterranean Assessment Report	<b>UfM:</b> Union for the Mediterranean
<b>CSR:</b> Corporate social responsibility	<b>MATTCC:</b> Mediterranean Alliance of Think Tanks on Climate Change	<b>UITP:</b> International Association of Public Transport
<b>CSRD:</b> Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive	<b>MedECC:</b> Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change	<b>UNCDF:</b> United Nations Capital Development Fund
<b>EBRD:</b> European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	<b>MedNC:</b> Mediterranean Network of Second Chance Schools	<b>UNCTAD:</b> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>ECCO:</b> Energy and Climate Change Observatory	<b>MENA:</b> Middle East and North Africa	<b>UNDP:</b> United Nations Development Programme
<b>ECS:</b> Egyptian Commercial Service	<b>MSMEs:</b> Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises	<b>UN:</b> United Nations
<b>EFSD:</b> European Fund for Sustainable Development	<b>Med OCEaN:</b> Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature – Mediterranean Sea	<b>UNEP MAP:</b> United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan
<b>EIB:</b> European Investment Bank	<b>MoU:</b> Memorandum of Understanding	<b>UNESCO:</b> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>ENSA:</b> École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture	<b>NCQG:</b> New collective quantified goal	<b>UNIDO:</b> United Nations Industrial Development Organization
<b>ESG:</b> Environmental, Social, and Governance	<b>NDC:</b> Nationally determined contribution	<b>UNIMED:</b> Mediterranean Universities Union
<b>ETF:</b> European Training Foundation	<b>NEET:</b> Not in education, employment, or training	<b>WASH:</b> Water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>EU:</b> European Union	<b>NGO:</b> Non-governmental organisation	<b>WEFE:</b> Water-energy-food-ecosystems
	<b>NIP:</b> Neighbourhood Investment Platform	
	<b>OECD:</b> Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development	
	<b>PAMEx:</b> Plan of Action for a Model Mediterranean Sea	



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The UfM Secretariat  
is co-funded by the  
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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 16 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 impacts on our citizens, with an emphasis on young people and women, in order to address the three strategic objectives of the region: stability, human development and integration.

# Building an inclusive and resilient Mediterranean



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