

Union for the Mediterranean commits to tackling employment challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region

The Ministers highlighted 4 priorities for action, stressed the need to measure the impact of policies and agreed to launch a “Community of Practice” to exchange best practices.

On 2 and 3 April, the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour was held under the title “Jobs, skills and opportunities for all”. Participants at the conference discussed the most pressing labour market needs in the Euro-Mediterranean region, in particular the persistent inequality in access to jobs, mostly for women and young people. Echoing this, the Ministers stressed that **economic progress and social cohesion should go hand in hand**. They reiterated their commitment to **creating the conditions to mainstream gender in employment and labour policies**.

Following the conference, EU Commissioner Thyssen stated: *“We need to encourage positive results on the ground in the Mediterranean region. Despite progress, too many women, young people and vulnerable persons still remain out of a decent job. At the same time, we need to equip people with digital skills, which are increasingly in demand. This is a joint responsibility at all levels; with employers, unions and civil society organisations. With new tools to exchange best practices and monitor progress, we aim to gear up our joint work on fair jobs and growth on both sides of the Mediterranean.”*

Jordanian Minister Said Murad emphasized the *“We need to further discuss the regional challenges affecting the labor market in our region in order to create job opportunities for young people, as well as to exchange knowledge and experience on the best practices to reduce poverty and unemployment. We should also focus on the subject of increasing women’s contribution to the economy. “*

UfM Secretary General Kamel said: *“The broad-ranging and multifaceted nature of the employment challenge calls not only for coordinated efforts and apt policy reforms, but also for integrated approaches that emphasize youth employability, women’s socio-economic empowerment, social dialogue promotion, transition from informal to formal economy, as well as skill and job matching, just to name a few of the domains in which the UfM Secretariat has already been engaging fully.”*

The Ministers emphasised **the importance of skills and talent development**, particularly for the digital sector, to face the emerging demands from the labour market. To curb the excessive share of the informal economy, they highlighted the potential of the **social and solidarity economy**. The Ministers also tasked the UfM Secretariat to work on the launch of a **“Community of Practice”** that would allow experts and concerned actors from public authorities, social partners and civil society organizations to collect,

assess and disseminate good practices. To foster a result-oriented approach, a UfM regional framework will be created to share information on labour market trends and promote a culture of monitoring and evaluation. The UfM Secretariat will coordinate the set-up of this framework to which countries will contribute on a voluntary basis.

The Ministers underlined the added value of ongoing UfM initiatives on employment and labour, in particular on employability, business-enabling infrastructure and job intermediation. They highlighted, for instance, the benefit of the [Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs \(Med4Jobs\)](#), which promotes region-wide cooperation projects in the areas of youth employability, small and medium enterprise (SME) development and inclusive growth. They also acknowledged the key role of the UfM Secretariat to accompany and ensure the coordination of UfM-endorsed projects. Finally, the Ministers agreed to convene the 5th Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour in 2022 to assess the progress made.

Background

In the Euro-Mediterranean region, youth unemployment is twice as high as adult unemployment. If we consider only the Southern Mediterranean shore, young people are even three times more likely than adults to be out of a job^[1]. Women continue to be underrepresented on the labour market due to persisting barriers and a remaining gap between legislative efforts and actual implementation.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation which brings together the European Union countries and the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. Its aim is to enhance regional cooperation, dialogue and the implementation of projects and initiatives with tangible impact on our citizens, with an emphasis on young people and women, in order to address the three strategic objectives of the region: stability, human development and integration.

This 4th edition of the Ministerial Conference was co-chaired by **Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner** for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, and **Samir Said Murad, Minister of Labour of Jordan**. It was hosted by **José António Vieira da Silva, Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal**, in the presence of **Nasser Kamel, UfM Secretary General**.

The Ministers agreed to focus actions **on four regional priorities**:

- supporting decent job creation and entrepreneurship;
- mobilizing public and private stakeholders to create partnerships and synergies;
- building inclusive labour markets to integrate potentially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; and
- investing in quality education systems and training, skills and employability in a changing world of work.

More information

[Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour](#)

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[1] Global employment trends for youth, 2017, ILO:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_600465.pdf