

 <p>PA-UfM AP-UpM</p>	<p>PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY– UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE – UNION POUR LA MEDITERRANEE الجمعية البرلمانية للاتحاد من اجل المتوسط</p>
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Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education

RECOMMENDATION

Innovation and Higher Education in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

Job Creation – Policy and joint Projects in the PA-UfM countries

The Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education of the Parliamentary Assembly - Union for the Mediterranean:

1. Confirms the principles and the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, as expressed in the Barcelona Process, the aim of which is to foster peace, stability and economic development in the Mediterranean region, promote a political dialogue and cooperation between the European Union and third Mediterranean countries in respect of common values such as democracy, the rule of law and the human rights. One of the objectives of this partnership is also to encourage sustainable development, conflict prevention and resolution, the creation of a common area of peace and stability, including through the creation of a free trade area and the development of inter-regional cooperation.
2. Is concerned by the refugee situation in the Mediterranean over the course of the last year; according to the latest UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) report, the Mediterranean globally produces the most refugees (4.9 million in Syria alone) - which, due to continued instability caused by war and persecution, is translated by the offshoring and the displacement of millions of people in never before seen numbers, making the Euro-Mediterranean region a scene of desperate humanitarian tragedy.

3. Believes that Member States must urgently strengthen their political support for all actions which aim to promote peace, stability and economic development within the Region, in order to improve the security and quality of life of its inhabitants.

4. Calls European Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean to make all possible efforts to enhance humanitarian aid in countries touched by war conflicts in the Mediterranean region and to bring reinforced assistance to countries neighbouring with war zones in organizing the reception of refugees. Encourages European Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean to welcome and effectively organise the reception of refugees on their soil, asks host countries to provide accommodation as quickly as possible, ensuring dignity and privacy and increasing social integration. Strongly encourages the Southern Mediterranean countries to combat human traffickers and smugglers by strengthening their cooperation with the national authorities of the Member States of the European Union and the European Agency, Frontex.

5. Encourages the States that host refugees, including Member States of the European Union to draw up plans for the integration of refugees, including, in particular, language lessons, citizenship lessons (how the host state functions institutionally, the status of women, the principle of equal treatment etc.), and professional training.

6. Emphasises the crucial role which NGOs or international organizations such as the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, Caritas, etc. play with regards refugees in the host countries as well as in the countries of origin and transit.

7. Bearing in mind the high levels of unemployment throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region, in particular among vulnerable groups such as young people, women, refugees and migrants, the Committee recognises the crucial importance of initiatives concerning job creation, education and training, on the part of the Member States and the main international actors.

7.1. Stresses the importance of the economic inclusion of SMEs as the engines of economic growth in the Mediterranean region by facilitating their internationalisation efforts; encourages the networking of enterprises through the creation of multilateral Chambers of Commerce; and reaffirms that economic opportunity and human development largely depend on the security and safety around the Mediterranean, especially in the sector of agriculture, tourism and services.

7.2 Calls upon UfM and the Member states to identify specific domains where to focus the political and cooperative efforts and to implement projects for growth of Euro-Mediterranean region and for an effective employment creation.

7.3. Stresses the central role of agriculture for the economic and social growth of Euro-Mediterranean region, in this regard calls on the Secretariat and Member states to engage and develop projects on the exchange of good practice, farming techniques and entrepreneurship for rural areas development.

8. Welcomes the results of the third Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour of the UfM, held in Jordan on 26 and 27 September 2016, particularly the definition of policy orientations for improving employment and labour, for promoting social dialogue and to foster UfM cooperation on employment and labour.

9. Commends the UfM for its initiative Med4Jobs, which contributes to creating job opportunities and promotes inclusive growth by increasing the employability of youth and women, closing the gap between labour demand and supply, and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and private sector development. Having been informed in detail on the objectives, scope and state-of-play of the Med4Jobs initiative, the Committee calls on the UfM Secretariat to continue its active contribution to improving the employment situation in the region by continuing to promote projects further in line with employment, employability and decent work priorities and to enhance, in cooperation with relevant actors, visibility, ownership and access to finance. On this regard, calls on Member States of the UfM, the European Commission and other relevant institutions to consider further financing for the implementation, reinforcement or replication of these projects.

9.1. Urges the Secretariat of UfM to include agricultural and rural development projects.

10. Welcomes the decision of the Secretariat of the UfM for associating the Committee to the Med4Jobs initiative by granting the Chair of the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education permanent member status on the Advisory Board of Med4Jobs. This participation will allow the Committee to have an active role and contribute to the development of the initiative.

11. Recognises the need to give a clear answer to the aspirations of migrant communities, in particular refugees who have been forced to abandon their home countries due to political and military conflicts. In this regard, calls on the UfM to support initiatives like the “Global Platform for Syrian Students”, whose presentation at a Committee meeting demonstrated the necessity of a coordinated answer for the

problems that refugees face when entering the academic and employment cycles in third countries. It is vital to prepare a new generation of leaders: when a person has been educated, that person will create a community and that community will create a country.

12. Welcomes the Ministerial Conference on Strengthening Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation through Research and Innovation, held in Malta on 3 and 4 May 2017, focusing on research and innovation as tools to strengthen cooperation within the Euro-Mediterranean region. Key initiatives such as the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) and the Initiative for Research and Innovation for Blue Jobs and Growth in the Mediterranean (BLUEMED) was discussed as well as the role of research and innovation in understanding and addressing the root causes of migration.

13. Warmly welcomes the opening of the first courses of the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez, which constitutes a milestone for the promotion of a Euro-Mediterranean culture. The establishment of the UEMF is a joint responsibility of all Member States of the UfM, which should involve themselves more actively in the scaling-up of the project, either by direct financing or by contributing to the pedagogic teams or students, namely through the attribution of scholarships. The Committee invites the UEMF to consolidate partnerships with existing networks of universities, especially with the Euro-Mediterranean University, but also with networks such as UNICA, UNIMED and Tethys, to build on synergies and stimulate the mobility of students in the region.

13.1. Urges the UfM to go further the academic education cooperation, also undertaken professional training courses in strategic sectors, such as agriculture, handicraft, tourism, services, etc. addressed to the wider part of the population.

14. Stresses the importance of exchange and mobility of students and teachers of various nationalities at the UEMF (Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez) and other institutions in order to create bonds within the Euro-Mediterranean region. The mobility of peers requires foreign language skills, internationalisation of academic courses and the integration of the various curricula. In this regard, the Member States must support initiatives which aim to build bridges between curricula in different countries and universities and make study plans more flexible in order to allow mobility. Calls also for incentives and implementation of paths of mobility and exchange of good practises among entrepreneurs of small and medium-sized enterprises.

15. Commends the UfM Secretariat for choosing the theme “Youth for stability and development and strongly backs the idea of focusing on youth-driven projects, notably in the fields of education, vocational training, employability, job intermediation, job creation and business promotion.

Activities report 2016/2017

During the years of 2016/2017, the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education drafted a plan, proposing an analysis of job creation and innovation and higher education, for the purpose of fulfilling two main objectives: deepening knowledge between PA-UfM Member States and strengthening cooperation among the parliaments of PA-UfM Member States.

In this regard, the Committee members visited the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez on 6 March 2017 and attended three meetings: the first, in Coimbra, on 27 March 2017, the second, in Barcelona, on 21 April 2017, and the third in Rome, on 12 May 2017. The following points were discussed:

- The Global Platform for Syrian Students, discussed by the Secretary General of the Global Platform for Syrian Students, Helena Barroco, and the Vice-Rector of the University of Coimbra, Joaquim Ramos de Carvalho.
- The Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez (UEMF), a project of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), discussed by the UfM Diplomatic Advisor, Mário Gomes, and the UEFM Rector, Mostapha Bousmina.
- The Mediterranean Initiative for Employment - Med4Jobs, discussed by Sherif Younis, Senior Financial and Trade Advisor of Med4Jobs, and Nickolas Neibauer, Chief Development Officer of the "Generation Entrepreneur" initiative developed under Med4Jobs.
- Recommendations on “Innovation and Higher Education in the Euro-Mediterranean Region”
- Recommendations on “Job Creation – Policy and joint Projects in the PA-UfM countries”