



PROGRAMME

FOSTERING JOB CREATION THROUGH INCLUSIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

30th of May, 2024

Hotel Laico, Tunis, Tunisia

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship stands out as a key driver for economic development, offering a pathway to job creation and sustainable development. In the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries (SEMCs), where youth and women unemployment pose significant challenges, fostering entrepreneurship becomes not only an economic solution to unemployment but also a means of social empowerment. Entrepreneurs, especially young and women, play a vital role in diversifying economies, fostering innovation, digitalisation and creating new employment opportunities. This is particularly true in a time when the impacts of climate change are felt across the Mediterranean, making it essential to explore green and innovative solutions for advancing sustainable development.

This **FEMISE workshop**, co-organised by **the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)**, **BUSINESSMED (Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises)** and the **AECID (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation)**, is a pivotal event within the framework of the regional Team Europe Initiative “Jobs Through Trade and Investment in the Southern Neighbourhood” (TEI). This EU initiative is driven by a collective commitment to fostering economic development, job creation, and inclusive entrepreneurship in the SEMCs. The overarching objective of the TEI is to address the pressing challenges of unemployment, particularly among the youth and women in this region. As part of this initiative, the focus on “inclusive entrepreneurship” emerges as a crucial pillar for action.

According to research findings, including the recent FEMISE-CMI report on Trade and Jobs¹, SEMCs labour markets are characterised by persistent unemployment, particularly among the youth reaching 26%; low women participation rate reaching about 20%, high levels of informality reaching about 80% in Egypt and 70% in Jordan, and skills mismatch. At the same time, trade liberalization did not translate into job creation in these countries, as labour markets adaptation and flexibility were not assured. Many entrepreneurs found solutions to labour market challenges by establishing their own businesses in the SMECs.

¹ FEMISE-CMI 2022 report on “Trade liberalization and Jobs in the Mediterranean”
https://www.femise.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/trade_liberalization_and_jobs_web_final-1_compressed.pdf

Recognizing the potential of entrepreneurship in driving economic growth and social development, **this workshop aims** to shed light on practical strategies and policies that can empower entrepreneurs, **particularly youth and women**, highlighting some of the challenges they are facing and providing practical solutions towards alleviating unemployment. The workshop will offer a platform to share knowledge and experiences among researchers, entrepreneurs and relevant policy makers; it will also serve as a catalyst for formulating concrete policy recommendations.

With this workshop, FEMISE, the IEMed, BUSINESSMED and the AECID underscore their long-term commitment to generating actionable insights and fostering dialogue among key stakeholders to address the complex issue of unemployment in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region.



May 29, 2024

20.30 **Welcome Dinner (upon invitation only)**

Keynote speaker

Ambassador Javier Puig, Spanish Ambassador in Tunisia

May 30, 2024

09.30-10.00 **Welcome remarks and introduction**

Following the welcome remarks, this session will briefly introduce the Team Europe Initiative “Jobs through Trade and Investment in the Southern Neighbourhood”, its objectives and pillars for action, especially “Inclusive entrepreneurship, support in areas related to digital and green transitions and social economy development” and the general framework of the initiative, including the New Agenda for the Mediterranean by the European Commission and the MASAR programme of the AECID.

Ibrahim Elbadawi, President, FEMISE

Senén Florensa, Executive President, IEMed

Tarek Tawfik, President, BUSINESSMED

Luisa M. García, Head of Department for Cooperation with Arab World and Asia, AECID

Marco Stella, Head of Economic Development, EU Delegation, Tunisia

10.00-11.00 **Session 1 – Understanding the Landscape: Unemployment and Job Creation in the Southern Neighbourhood**

Based on conclusions from previous conferences and research, this session will feature presentations by FEMISE experts on the current state of the labour market and unemployment in SEMCs, especially regarding youth and women, and how can entrepreneurship deliver on promises of alleviating unemployment in the Southern Neighbourhood. It will provide up to date data to show the magnitude of the challenge and the potential to address this pressing issue for the countries of the region.

Moderator

Maryse Louis, General Manager, FEMISE

Speakers

Moundir Lassassi, Research Director, Centre de Recherche en Economie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD), Algeria and FEMISE

Mohamed Ali Marouani, ResRep of the Institute of Research for Development (IRD) in Tunisia, and FEMISE

Adel Manaa, President, National Electricity Federation (FEDELEC)



Dolores Sammut Bonnici, BUSINESSMED Board Member, Senior Vice President, MEA, Malta

– Questions & Answers –

11.00 **Coffee Break**

11.30-13.00 **Session 2 - Sharing Experiences and Lessons Learned from Entrepreneurs**

This session will give the floor to young and women entrepreneurs from different countries of the Southern Neighbourhood to share insights on their journey into entrepreneurship, the main challenges they face, their needs in terms of external support, and what is needed to create and maintain decent and quality jobs in sectors with high future potential such as the green, digital and social economies. They will be invited to highlight what works in terms of policies and external support, hence constituting good practices.

Moderator

Consuelo Tomé, Head of Office AECID in Tunisia

Speakers

Alia Belkhdja, Founder & CEO, Moline, Tunisia

Rosabelle Chedid, Co-founder, C Green, Lebanon

Moustapha Bekheet, Founder and CEO, ShopX, Egypt

Abdelhamid Harizi, Technical Development Manager, Quizzito, Algeria

Yusra Beraich, CEO, Biodome, Morocco

Manar Younis, Project Manager, Jeeda, Palestine

– Questions & Answers –

13.00 **Lunch Break**

14.00-15.30 **Session 3 - Providing support to Empower Entrepreneurs**

Entrepreneurs are faced with numerous challenges from putting their ideas into implementation, to funding and marketing challenges. Supporting entrepreneurs in their journey can provide a higher rate of success and relevance. This session will give the floor to a number of Business support organisations (BSO) in SEMCs where they share their knowledge on the challenges facing the entrepreneurs and provide suitable solutions from their experience.

Moderator

Lilia Hachem Naas, Chief of the Office for MENA region, International trade Center



Speakers

Joelle Yazbeck, Regional Coordinator, ICC-ESCWA Centre of Entrepreneurship Network for the Arab region, Lebanon

Ghaleb M. Hijazi, General Manager, Business Development Center (BDC), Jordan

Leila Belkhiria Jaber, President, Chambre Nationale des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprise, Tunisia

Majdi Hassen, Executive Director, The Arab Institute of Business Leaders (IACE), Tunisia

Hany Ayaad, Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship, Logistics, and Supply Chain Management, Arab Academy for Science Technology and Maritime Transport, Egypt

– Questions & Answers –

15.30 **Coffee Break**

15.45 -17.15 **Session 4 - Policy Roundtable: Enabling Inclusive Entrepreneurship**

This roundtable will include policy makers as well as national and international organisation/initiatives that are concerned with entrepreneurship in SMCs to reflect on concrete and effective solutions and actions that can be (or are already) implemented to tackle youth and women unemployment through inclusive entrepreneurship in sectors with high future potential. Policies and initiatives will be proposed based on an approach aiming at systematizing the good practices highlighted during the workshop and other meetings. Special emphasis will be given on ways to improve access to finance as one of the major issues to be addressed to develop entrepreneurship in the region, hearing from financial institutions on the good practices and innovative products to enhance financial inclusion.

Moderator

Roger Albinyana, Managing Director, IEMed

Speakers

Mohamed El Biesi, Economist, Investment and entrepreneurship Expert, General Authority for Investment and Free Zones (GAFI), Egypt

Abdelkader El Khissassi, Deputy Secretary General in charge of Economic Development and Employment

Shada El-Sharif, Founder & Senior Advisor, SustainMena, Jordan

Roy Doumit, Economist, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Aida Zouari, Senior Entrepreneurship Advisor, National Agency for Employment and Self-Employment (ANETI), Tunisia

Lilia Magdoud, Investment Officer, European Investment Bank (EIB)

– Questions & Answers –



- 17.15-17.45 **Wrap-up, formulation of recommendations and closing remarks**
Summary of key insights and outcomes, and way forward to implement recommendations.

