



EMEA PUBLICATION UNDER THE INVESTMED PROJECT – POLICY PAPER: 08

PROPOSALS TO ALIGN EDUCATION POLICY WITH THE NEEDS OF GREEN AND CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS: THE CASE OF EGYPT, LEBANON AND TUNISIA

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November, 2023



1 INTRODUCTION

For the past decade, Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia, have faced difficult economic contexts, various social unrest and a severe impact of climate change on their environments and economies. Cultural, Creative and the green economies are being considered as key sectors for job creation and pillars to reach an inclusive and sustainable future. The green economy, characterised by its focus on environmental sustainability and social responsibility, offers innovative solutions and technologies that reduce carbon emissions, conserve resources and create green jobs (Ayadi & Forouheshfar, 2023b). Beyond their economic contribution to society, the cultural and creative sectors offer social development, social inclusion and social cohesion, whilst fostering innovation and creativity (Ayadi & Forouheshfar, 2023a). The development of a green and creative economy cannot be possible if adequate skills are not available in the labour market. Hence, the education system is a key player and has a central role in fulfilling the attainment of sustainability objectives. Higher education is, indeed, important in providing the appropriate skills to engineers, businessmen and researchers on sustainability issues and in enabling students in creative studies, such as architects, designers, digital content creators and artists to start their own businesses. But this is not exclusive to higher education. Technical schools, schools of arts and undergraduate schools are also involved, to support sustainability and creativity. Beyond these key educational actors, society should be involved in this process through greater awareness of the importance of preserving the environment, cultural heritage and supporting creativity.

In this paper, we investigate the role of education in providing essential skills that enable the green and creative economy in three countries: Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia (henceforth, the target countries).

We decompose the process of education into three types: Formal education, Informal education and Non-formal education (Dib, 1987). **Formal education** corresponds to a systematic, organised education model, structured and administered according to a given set of laws and norms, presenting a rather rigid curriculum as regards objectives, content and methodology. **Non-formal education** corresponds to education that is not presential most of the time, with decreasing needs for teacher/student interactions and most activities taking place outside the institution. It comprises “correspondence learning”, “distance learning” and “open systems”. Examples of such education are certificates provided by firms, academic institutions and professional institutions for attendance or participation in online courses or training. Finally, **indirect education**¹ aims to improve public

¹ In Dib (1987) this is referred to as informal education but, in order to avoid any confusion, we replace this term with indirect education.

awareness. It does not correspond to an organised and systematic view of education; it is aimed at students as much as the public at large and imposes no obligations, whatever their nature. It aims to supplement formal and non-formal education. In this paper, we associate indirect education with creating awareness for young people and the wider public on the relevant topics.

This paper is structured as follows: section one assesses the challenges of the educational sector in the target countries; section two explains policies and practices put in place to empower education in the green and cultural creative economy; and section three presents the key policy recommendations.

2 CHALLENGES OF THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR IN THE TARGET COUNTRIES

In a context of increasing income inequalities and difficult economic conditions, the educational sector faces similar challenges in the three countries, such as the disparities of access to education between urban and rural areas, the outdated skills of teachers and weak educational infrastructure. The political instability that the three countries face also delays reforms, updates to the school curricula and can sometimes lead to school closures. These challenges are significant barriers to including innovative tools for education in the green and creative economy. Also, with the difficult economic contexts in the three target countries, parents are having difficulties in enrolling their children in “extra-curricular” activities, giving priority to “classic” education over artistic and creative education.

The education sector, i.e., the formal sector, in the three target countries faces different challenges which are closely related to the economic contexts of the countries. The level, type of education and structure of the education system differs between the three countries.

On the level of education, over a third of the populations of the three countries are enrolled in universities. A much smaller percentage of the populations are oriented towards vocational training programmes (Table 1). This can lead to skills mismatches between the supply and demand for labour.

Table 1: Level and type of education per country

Country	Share of all students enrolled in tertiary education (%)	Share of all students in secondary education enrolled in vocational programmes (%)
Lebanon	38.2	16.05
Egypt	38.9	22.02
Tunisia	32.8	9.07

Source: Own Elaboration based on latest World Bank data available per country

On the different specialties in tertiary education, Tunisia has the highest share of graduates from scientific schools (43%) as compared to Lebanon and Egypt, whilst in Egypt the percentage graduating in arts and humanities programmes is the highest among the three countries (see Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of the tertiary education specialties in target countries

Country	Percentage of graduates from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics programmes in tertiary education, both sexes (%)	Percentage of graduates from tertiary education graduating from Arts and Humanities programmes, both sexes (%)
Lebanon	23.42	12.62
Egypt	11.24	15.77
Tunisia	43.25	13.29

Source: Own Elaboration based on latest World Bank data available per country

Finally, the organisational structure of these institutions is different. The role of private educational institutions is historically dominant in Lebanon compared to Egypt and Tunisia. The numbers in Lebanon are prior to the 2019 crisis that has led to a large migration of students from private to public

education². In Egypt and Tunisia, however, a small part of the population is enrolled in private schools, whilst this proportion increases at the tertiary education level (see Table 3).

Table 3: Percentage of enrollment in private institutions

Country	Percentage of enrolment in primary education in private institutions (%)	Percentage of enrolment in upper secondary education in private institutions (%)	Percentage of enrolment in tertiary education in private institutions (%)
Lebanon	71.84	52.18	59.59
Egypt	9.35	10.15	19.90
Tunisia	6.58	9.78	12.52

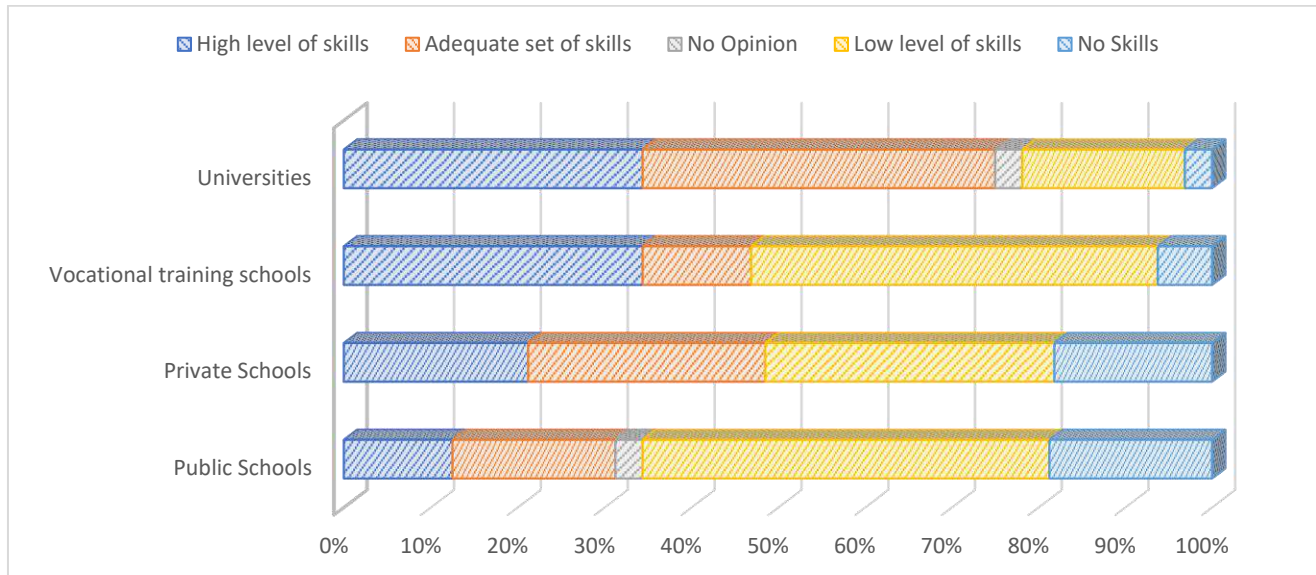
Source: Own Elaboration based on latest World Bank data available per country

Skills needed to promote and develop these economies sometimes need large investments, in terms of capacity building for teachers and material skills to be included in the school’s curriculum. These investments become of lower public and private priority in difficult economic contexts, especially because of and post the Covid-19 crisis.

In addition, we have conducted a survey with 33 representatives of 33 startups in the green and cultural creative economy in the three target countries, to better understand if the level of skills provided by the education sector is adequate to meet their needs (see Figure 1). The results clearly show that public schools provide the lowest level of skills, whilst universities provide the highest level of skills needed to develop green and cultural creative businesses. This shows there is a clear need to improve these skills, in order to match market labour needs and to develop these sectors in the economy.

² An estimation of the Lebanese ministry of education states that at least 10% of students enrolled in private institutions migrated to public institutions.

**Figure 1: Education sector and skills to develop the green and creative economy
in the three target countries**



3 POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO EMPOWER EDUCATION IN THE GREEN AND CREATIVE ECONOMY

3.1 National policies supporting education in the green economy

Quality education, being the 4th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), has been put forward in several governmental policies and national strategies. In Egypt, several ministries and entities are involved in the planning and implementation of green skills in the education system. Since 2011, government policy aimed to include the teaching of climate change as a topic in the environment, architecture, architectural design and urban planning, and civil engineering departments (Ministry of Environment Egypt, 2011). Furthermore, this target was highlighted within the country’s vision 2030 (Ministry of planning Egypt, 2014).

The Egyptian ministry of education has highlighted in its 5-year plan (Ministry of Education Egypt, 2023) the necessity to incorporate elements of climate change issues in the education system. It includes making schools green, safer and climate-proof and to ensure that the curriculum contributes to raising student awareness and skills, in order to support the development of sustainable solutions

to these problems. These plans were implemented through several actions: in primary education, to include climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development topics within the school curricula; for vocational training, an increased number of collaborations with the private sector have emerged aiming to improve skills on renewable energy, aligned with international standards. In addition, there is a plan to build 27 vocational training centres for renewable energy topics and skills; at the higher education level, alongside including climate change topics in course curricula, the ministry of education has launched an initiative of climate change champions, which is an initiative for students nationally to raise awareness, along with a nomination of the best university in respect of sustainability awards. In addition, special attention is put in place to include sustainability and SDG goals at the faculties of education.

In Lebanon, the ministry of education has put in place the national plan 2021-2025, targeting the SDG 4. This plan includes renewal of the curricula, putting the SDG topics at their core (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2021).

In Tunisia, a national strategy on communication on sustainable development was put in place in 2012 (Ministry of Environment Tunisia, 2012). This strategy targets several sectors to increase awareness and education on sustainable development topics³. The role of civil society is crucial in increasing indirect education on the importance of the green economy. In formal education, including sustainability in schools, curricula with educational environmental activities are at the core of this governmental policy.

3.2 National Policies supporting education on the cultural and creative economy

In the three target countries, there is no national definition of the cultural and creative economy; hence, no specific policies are directed to develop this sector. Nonetheless, this sector is associated with the ministries of culture, education and tourism. The three countries have a rich cultural heritage landscape and a diversity of creative propositions in the different creative sub-sectors, making the development potential of these sectors crucial within the target countries⁴.

³ This strategy targets several segments: 1- Populations, citizens and consumers, 2- Media and press, 3- Education sector, 4- Governmental sector, 5- Parliamentarians and local representatives, 6- Civil society and NGOs and 7- Private sector and tourism

⁴ For further information see: <https://creativemediterranean.org/mapping/>

Nonetheless, the cultural and creative industries face the key challenge of political instability and weak economic contexts. These sectors are very vulnerable to external shocks, increasing their risk premium. Private and public formal education institutions have prominent faculties of arts and cultural development is a key driver for these sectors. Several initiatives are also in place to encourage entrepreneurship in faculties, beyond business and engineering schools. For example, in Tunisia, the government has integrated entrepreneurial education into the university curricula for all faculties, as part of its entrepreneurship promotional strategy since the early 2000s (EMEA, 2021).

3.3 Private and international initiatives supporting the green and cultural creative economy

The private sector, civil society and international actors⁵ play a determinant role in promoting the green, cultural and creative economy in the three target countries. In this section, we will expose several initiatives and actions promoting the green and cultural creative economy.

A. Initiatives supporting green economy education

In formal education, several initiatives have been put in place by international actors to enhance the level of education on the green and creative economy. Several of them are highlighted through the inclusion of the SDGs in the student curriculum. At school level, UNESCO has put in place a roadmap and started implementing the ESD for 2030⁶ goal, to include the SDG in the educational system (UNESCO, 2020). The target areas for including the SDG are to transform the learning environments, to build capacities of educators, to empower and mobilise young people and to accelerate local level actions. The target countries have been involved with this initiative through the Arab states⁷, but the level of progress on these issues is very unequal between countries, depending on their intrinsic challenges.

Several higher education institutions are well-ranked in the Times 2023 Impact Ranking of universities regarding their SDG scores (See Table 4).

⁵ Key players in the region on green and cultural creative economy are UNESCO, UNIDO, US-AID and the EU

⁶ Education for Sustainable Development: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/toolbox>

⁷ For further information about the Arab Regional Technical Meeting on ESD for 2030 see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3oNb-KilKs>

Table 4: Number of ranked institutions in the Times Impact Rankings 2023⁸

Country	Number of ranked institutions	Top 200	Top 400
Egypt	37	1	4
Lebanon	7	0	2
Tunisia	7	0	1

Source: Own elaboration using the Times Impact Rankings⁹

For management schools, several have voluntarily adhered to “The Principles for Responsible Management Education”¹⁰ (PRME). This initiative is supported by the UN “to raise the profile of sustainability in the classrooms of business and management schools” with the aim of providing future leaders with skills to include sustainability issues in their future leadership roles. This initiative can be signed by institutions that engage in putting forward SDGs in their curricula. By voluntarily adhering to the PRME, universities are signalling their willingness to engage in these principles and their importance in their curricula (see Table 5).

Table 5: PRME signatories in the target countries

Country	Institution	Date of first signing
Lebanon	Université Saint Joseph de Beyrouth	11/2022
Lebanon	Holy Spirit University	01/2011
Lebanon	American University of Beirut	10/2013
Lebanon	Lebanese International University	11/2012
Lebanon	Phoenicia University	03/2019
Egypt	Université Senghor	07/2023
Egypt	Future University in Egypt	03/2023
Egypt	ESLCA University Egypt	02/2023
Egypt	The American University in Cairo	02/2011
Egypt	German University in Cairo	09/2011
Egypt	The British University in Egypt	10/2011

⁸ The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings assess universities against the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The overall ranking includes 1,705 universities from 115 countries and regions

⁹ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/impactrankings#>

¹⁰ <https://www.unprme.org/about/>

Tunisia	North American Private University	06/2022
Tunisia	ESPRIT	11/2021
Tunisia	University of Manouba	10/2019

Source: <https://www.unprme.org/search/?title=&country=206578>

Non-formal education on the green economy is supported by business support organisations (BSOs) that are engaged in sustainability projects. By providing capacity building and training for young entrepreneurs, they are shaping the start-up scene to invest in green technologies. The BSOs in the target countries are largely supported by international organisations, such as US-AID, the EU and AUF etc. Other initiatives are provided through training in rural areas, helping agricultural workers and farmers transition into organic farming and assisting with the transformation of their products into higher economic added value products.

In indirect education, the role of COP-27, held in Egypt in 2022, was essential in raising the awareness of the importance of climate change and making the public more knowledgeable about the importance of this topic at both national and international levels. In addition to the participation of schools, universities and education institutions in different activities during this global event, it also had a significant impact in promoting the relevance of climate change and the green economy in the education landscape. In Lebanon, public awareness on recycling and waste management rose after the 2015 garbage crisis, when waste mismanagement was at the forefront of the political agenda. In addition, as result of the energy crisis in Lebanon, caused by the failure of the public sector to provide electricity for citizens, the development of solar energy solutions increased significantly in the country over the past two years - hence, green awareness and transition was driven by the need for solutions. In Tunisia, the water crisis and the consequent heatwaves have also put the question of climate change and sustainable development to the fore.

B. Existing Initiatives supporting the education on the cultural creative economy

In formal education, private undergraduate schools have the means to include music, theatre and artistic classes and activities in their curricula. This encourages young people to develop their skills and creativity. In cultural activities, the coupling of history and geography classes with field trips and interactive activities increases awareness and recognition of national identity. Private universities of

arts support early career stage artists to expose their work through festivals, awards and competitions. In addition, having conferences for students at all levels with historians (on cultural heritage), artists and sector achievers can be influential for career orientation.

In non-formal education, several initiatives emerged supporting the cultural creative industry by providing training and certificates for participants on key skills. We highlight a successful training initiative on how to develop guest houses in rural areas, whilst preserving the cultural heritage in Lebanon and the development of hiking trails, which has led to an explosion in the number of guesthouse beds in rural areas whilst promoting sustainable tourism¹¹. Training in digital skills is also very relevant for the development of creative businesses (podcast creation, social media training etc.) and compliance standards (labeling and marketing, exporting workshops etc.). The role of BSOs is also very important to support artists in gaining the tools and knowledge for business creation. They have also supported some initiatives which have combined the green and creative economies by training artisans in the use of sustainable and circular products in their production¹².

Indirect education in the cultural and creative economy is important to raise awareness of their job creation potential in the three target countries, as well as the promotion of national identity and the provision of common bonds between the different socio-economic categories. The listing of cultural heritage sites/food in international rankings improves knowledge of the potential job opportunities that can be created around them. The traditional media plays a crucial role in educating about pollution via arts and culture through musical and talent shows, documentaries, talk shows, educational shows etc. and in disseminating events and festivals, such as movie festivals or book fairs. The role of social media in providing this indirect education is also extremely important and is the future for establishing new models of cultural education and new space for creativity. Finally, the role of local authorities in promoting local artists and festivals are levers for job creation and a way of anchoring artists in their local communities.

International organisations, such as US-AID, the EU, Goethe institute, the French Institute¹³ etc., play a key role in promoting the cultural creative sector through funds, capacity building, festivals, local competitions, projects etc. The crucial role of UNESCO should be highlighted in supporting the cultural creative industry, by preserving cultural heritage sites and providing access to funds and programmes that support formal and indirect education.

¹¹ For more information see: <https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/lebanon/sustainable-rural-and-ecological-tourism>

¹² Examples of such projects Stand Up project and Switchmed project: <https://berytch.org/programs/standup/> and <https://switchmed.eu/>

¹³ <https://www.institutfrancais.com/fr>

4 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON BEST PRACTICES

Based on our research into the challenges and key policies in the target countries, along the lines of best practices being undertaken in different countries, in this section we provide a list of non-exhaustive key policy recommendations about improving education in the green and cultural creative economy, based on their typologies: Formal, Non-formal and Indirect (Summarised in Table 6).

A. Policy recommendations to improve education on the green economy

In formal education, in addition to including climate change, and green and circular economy topics in the school curricula, having an elected student in each class as eco-representative can improve the awareness and the motivation of students to be engaged in green topics and actions. Capacity building training for educators should be implemented on different levels, especially in public sector schools. At the university level, research grants could be directed towards research on green and sustainability issues and would significantly and positively impact green topics in the classrooms. In addition, universities can collaborate with the private sector on projects to solve pollution issues, either through research or through in-class collaboration. Several European and global universities have also included part of their integration activities in the “Climate Fresk” workshop¹⁴. This activity is designed to raise awareness and reflection of students, from their first days of their higher education degrees on the challenges and solutions for climate change. This workshop can also be put in place at any organisation, free of charge and can be trained in just three hours. This has been proven to be an interactive activity that opens up discussion on climate issues with a participatory approach. Finally, for vocational training, including circular economy topics and skills in the curricula, can be highly beneficial in shaping the future labour market.

In non-formal education, an important way of teaching sustainability is by action. By being a green institution, school, university or business, the organisation can drive the green transition, whilst leading by example: it can start with small actions, such as recycling bins, reducing the use of paper, water fountains, reusable supplies etc. Supporting BSOs in training circular and green businesses is proven to be an effective and best practice. Another way of providing non-formal education is by

¹⁴ <https://climatefresk.org/>

developing green certifications in collaboration between universities and the private sector. These certifications are geared towards professionals that want to have knowledge of innovation in the green economy, new ways of doing things and adopting greener skills. Vocational schools can develop green certification programmes, compliant with ISO norms for safe green innovative jobs. Finally, educating local representatives and policy makers on the green transition and green solutions can be key to a sustainable future. Hence, mandatory certifications can be put in place when local representatives are elected, as part of their induction process.

In indirect education, the rapid increase in the number of heatwaves in the past few years and the environmental challenges that have directly impacted the populations of the three target countries, has brought environmental and sustainability issues into public debates - on television, across social media and in public spaces. Hence, including environmental issues in political debates can be key in educating the population and driving the green transition. Another policy recommendation that has proved to be one of the most popular and highly effective is the restriction of plastic bags or other single use plastic products in supermarkets. This policy targets all socio-economic categories of the population and has a direct impact on their daily behaviour. It can educate and promote the importance of recycling and the negative impact of single use plastics without any significant government spending.

B. Policy recommendations to improve education in the cultural and creative economy

In formal education, at school level, especially public schools, we suggest having one day of the week dedicated to cultural and creative activities, in collaboration with local stakeholders, such as local artists, theatres and clubs. It is a win-win policy that allows access to cultural activities to kids and provides publicity and impact for the stakeholders in their local economy. At higher education level, we suggest setting up management courses in arts schools and collaborations with local incubators. In addition, interdisciplinary programmes between arts and management are becoming more and more successful in Europe, hence providing such programmes can be beneficial for increasing collaboration between these two different but complementary fields. The creation and development of Erasmus programmes between Europe and the Mediterranean, which target students in arts schools, can also help improve collaboration and encourage the exchange of best practices.

In non-formal education, gaming, digital and open-source tools can provide key skills, at cheap cost, to develop creativity and innovation in the creative sector. Developing and disseminating these

educational tools can improve the product quality and innovation of creators. This is in addition to supporting BSOs in training artists and cultural heritage entrepreneurs in business skills. Also, the three target countries are known for the economic importance of their tourism sectors. By shifting to sustainable tourism, whilst relying on local products, artisanal creation, the promotion of cultural heritage and respect for the environment, tourist services can improve their quality and economic impact. This can be done through providing sustainable tourism labels from ministries of tourism, whilst respecting various criteria surrounding cultural preservation, promotion of local artists and hosting of artistic events.

In indirect education, policies dedicating public spaces for creativity and innovation, such as through public fairs for artists, public theatres and open-air situations for local young artists, are very relevant in developing a favourable environment for them to express their creativity, without extra costs. TV shows and competitions at local and regional level can also promote artists (other than singers) in different creative sectors, to encourage young people to develop their skills through various artistic activities.

Table 6: Summary of the key policy recommendations

	Policy Recommendations	
Education type	Green Economy	Cultural creative economy
Formal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At schools: Elected Eco-representatives - Capacity building for educators on different levels, especially public sector - Provide grants and support research on this topic - Business collaboration with universities to solve pollution problems - Include the “Climate Fresk” in the integration days for students in all universities - Vocational training on green jobs, especially on circular economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At school level, make mandatory music and arts classes: Dedicate half a day per week for such activities - Local theatre collaborations providing access to public schools for their services during low season - Include management courses in arts schools - Creation of dual programmes of Arts/management at universities - Cultural and creative Erasmus programmes
Non-Formal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning by doing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Greening schools and universities (zero paper policies and recycling policies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaming and digital innovation tools for creativity at lower costs - Support of BSOs in providing management training for artists and for cultural heritage businesses

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Universities: Development of green certifications in collaboration with businesses, online teaching merging academic and practical - Support of BSOs in providing training on circular and green economy - Development of green certification programmes, in collaboration with ISO norms for safe green innovative jobs. - Mandatory training of policy makers and elected representatives on climate change issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable tourism certificates
Indirect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include environmental issues in public debates, especially in a context of increasing Mediterranean heatwaves Restrict plastic bag use in supermarkets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dedicate public spaces for creativity and innovation: Public theatres and open-air situations - Media role in promotion of different arts

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ABOUT INVESTMED

Mediterranean MSMEs face important challenges in terms of competitiveness, sustainability, internationalization and capacity to innovate while urgent measures are needed to tackle common environmental challenges and untap the potential of both natural and cultural heritage to contribute to sustainable growth and economic development. Against this backdrop, the INVESTMED project aims at addressing both economic and environmental challenges, by supporting new, sustainable business opportunities for young people and women in three Mediterranean Partner Countries: Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia.

The INVESTMED Project (InNoVative Sustainable sTart-ups for the MEDiterranean) is co-funded by the European Union under the ENI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme 2014-2020. INVESTMED has a duration of 30 months, with a total budget of €3.8 Million, of which €3.4 Million (90%) is funded by ENI CBC MED. It has 8 partners from Tunisia, Spain, Lebanon, Greece, Egypt, and Italy:

- Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises, BUSINESSMED (TU)
- Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association, EMEA (ES)
- European Institute of the Mediterranean, IEMed (ES)
- Beyond Group / Irada Group S.A.L, BRD (LE)
- Institute of Entrepreneurship Development, IED (GR)
- Libera Università Maria SS. Assunta, LUMSA (IT)
- Confederation of Egyptian European Business Associations, CEEBA (EG)
- Spanish Chamber of Commerce, CCE (ES)

INVESTMED will have an impact on MSMEs, start-ups and recently established enterprises where staff will be trained and coached to become more sustainable and competitive and financially supported via an open competition. Specific business incubation services will also be established for sustainable start-ups as well while relevant public authorities will benefit from capacity building and exchange of best practices to facilitate access and protect IPR for MSMEs.

The **Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association – EMEA** is a Barcelona-based regional think-tank that serves as a leading independent and innovative policy research institution; a forum for debate on the political and socio-economic reforms in Mediterranean and Africa; and promoter of actions and initiatives that fulfil objectives of sustainability, inclusiveness, regional integration and prosperity.

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Published by the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association - EMEA under the INVESTMED project

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