



INVESTMED

Subgrant Programme

Mid-term Regional Event
10th and 11th July 2023, Barcelona

Co-organised by Project Partners the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA) and the European Institute for the Mediterranean (IEMED)

To support the development of sustainable entrepreneurship and business initiatives, by creating a backing environment and facilitating access to new markets with the final goal of generating increased economic opportunities and jobs for young people and women in Egypt, Tunisia, and Lebanon.

Introduction

The INVESTMED Regional Mid-term Event took place on the 10th and 11th July 2023, at Sant Pau Recinte Modernista, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Barcelona, gathering the 41 beneficiaries of the project's subgranting programme from Egypt, Tunisia, and Lebanon, along with experts in sustainable entrepreneurship.

The INVESTMED project, co-funded by the European Union under the ENI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme 2014-2020, launched a call in 2022 for sub-grants to provide support for new, sustainable business opportunities for young people and women in three countries: Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia. The call looked for innovative MSMEs, startups, and recently established enterprises implicated in the following sectors: Green economy, Blue economy, and Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI). 12 MSMEs were awarded the grant in Lebanon, 12 in Egypt, and 14 in Tunisia.

The selected entrepreneurs and business support organisations are now halfway through the implementation of their projects and have benefitted from a range of activities and support programmes under the project. This second regional event, gathered the project beneficiaries in Barcelona and provided the participants the chance to network, exchange best practices, and engage in discussions on policy options that foster an enabling environment for entrepreneurs.

This report summarises the key sessions and activities of the Mid-term event and highlights the experiences of the entrepreneurs and business support organisations. To discover more about the event and the INVESTMED project in general, head to the [INVESTMED website](#). There, you can watch the event video summary and hear some key testimonials from the beneficiaries.

Summary of the Event

On the 10th and 11th July 2023, the INVESTMED project held its second regional event in Barcelona, inviting the project beneficiaries and experts in sustainable entrepreneurship to take part in sessions on access to sustainable finance, policy recommendations to strengthen sustainable entrepreneurship, and interactive workshops to brainstorm strategies to make MSMEs in the region more resilient. The event was co-organised by INVESTMED project partners, the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA) and the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMED), in Sant Pau Recinte Modernista, Barcelona.

Prof. Rym Ayadi, President and Founder of EMEA, Roger Albinyana, Managing Director at IEMED, co-organisers of the event, and Jihen Boutiba, General Secretary at BUSINESSMED, lead partner of the INVESTMED project opened the event welcoming all the participants to Barcelona. They encouraged the entrepreneurs and BSOs to make the most of the event by networking, sharing experiences, and taking advantage of the various experts and start-ups in the panel sessions. In the opening remarks, Prof. Ayadi said that “empowering Mediterranean MSMEs is like sowing seeds of growth on fertile ground; it begins with nourishing the roots with improved access to finance. When we foster financial inclusion, understand how to access credit, and simplify financial processes, we enable these seeds to flourish into a vibrant, sustainable and inclusive economy.”





To kick off the interactive sessions, the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA) led the second Advocacy Session to take place under the project, titled: Policy Recommendations to Contribute to an Enabling Environment for MSMEs in the Southern Mediterranean.

This Advocacy Session had the aim of engaging with the INVESTMED project beneficiaries on the research done by EMEA and generating a lively discussion on policy recommendations for the region. Prior to the event, EMEA published 5 policy papers covering the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in the target countries, the Blue, Green and Cultural and Creative Economies, and Social Protection Schemes. To read the policy papers, head to our [website](#).

In the Advocacy Session, moderated by Kirsty Fairhurst, Communication Officer of the INVESTMED project and Assistant Project Officer at EMEA, the experts gave an overview of their papers and recommendations to the participants followed by a Q&A session. Dr. Yeganeh Forouheshfar, Researcher at EMEA, presented her findings on the papers discussing the specific target sectors of the INVESTMED project. Dr. Sandra Challita, Associate Professor at Emlyon Business School, discussed the entrepreneurial ecosystem across the target countries, and Prof. Najat El Mekkaoui, Associate Professor at Université Paris Dauphine PSL, delved into social protection schemes, both formal and informal, and discussed how this can influence entrepreneurship and sustainability.

Finally, Carlo Sessa, Senior Researcher at EMEA, presented his work on the novel concept of the regenerative economy and discussed with the entrepreneurs how to integrate these principles into their own business models.



Following that, experts on access to finance participated in a panel session discussing financial schemes for MSMEs. The session was moderated by Dr. Basma Majerbi, Professor of Finance at the University of Victoria, Canada, and included the following panellists:

- Taryn Andersen, CEO and Co-founder, Impulse4Women
- Natalia Olson, Director of Government and Institutional Partnerships, Plug and Play Tech Centre
- Prof. Rym Ayadi, President and Founder, EMEA
- Kwame Sarpong Barnieh, Partner, KPMG Ghana

The session discussed venture capital for MSMEs and tips for how to look for appropriate investors at various stages of business development. Particular focus was given to how to support women in accessing finance and capital. In the question-and-answer session, the beneficiaries were interested to know about the challenges and opportunities in the context of the green transition and the fair cost of financing.

The project beneficiaries then participated in a feedback session centred on the subgrant process. The session was led by the project coordinator, BUSINESSMED. The subgrantees were able to share their progress and actions implemented with the support of the subgrant, and suggest ideas for how to streamline the process.

“It was super beneficial because we actually had the time to meet with the other beneficiaries.”
Yosser Belghith, CEO of OurGhema, Tunisia, INVESTMED Subgrantee

The second day consisted of an interactive B2B workshop where Spanish start-ups were invited to participate and network with the INVESTMED subgrantees. The participants were split into groups according to sector and were presented with a common challenge encountered by entrepreneurs in the Southern Mediterranean.

“During this event, we benefited from sharing our experiences with other BSOs”

Margaret Jabara, Director of Projects and Programmes, Fondation Diane, Lebanon, INVESTMED Subgrantee

“Today, we have engaged in various workshops alongside other project beneficiaries and we aspire to sign agreements with fellow beneficiaries to collaborate on future projects in the green sector.”

Taieb Nmissi, CEO of Algaepool, Tunisia, INVESTMED Subgrantee

The workshops were led by the INVESTMED Business Support Organisations, Fondation Diane, ICEALEX, and Westerwelle Haus Tunis, and expert entities in the fields of sustainable entrepreneurship based in Barcelona.

These were MedWaves, the UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production bringing a wealth of expertise in green entrepreneurship; Acció, Catalonia Trade & Investment providing key insights on internationalization and certification procedures for entrepreneurs; and BlueNetCat, the innovation and transfer instrument of the Maritime Agenda of Catalonia, providing expertise in the field of the blue economy.

The topics for the workshop were:

- Group 1: Unlocking Local Potential: Business Strategies for Agriculture and Food Security in Local Markets.
- Group 2: Business Development in Tourism & Video Production: Tackling Market Access and Distribution Challenges.
- Group 3: Market Expansion and branding: Exploring Synergies between Arts, Culture, Handicrafts, and Self-care Products.
- Group 4: Certification and Export Strategies for Expanding Markets Abroad.
- Group 5: Innovation Harvest: Exploring Cutting-Edge Technologies in Agriculture and Water Management.
- Group 6: Circular Economy & Impactful Synergies in Recycling and Sustainable Construction



Each group then presented their response to the case study. The session allowed the entrepreneurs to network with the Spanish entrepreneurial ecosystem whilst working collaboratively on a common challenge and increasing their resilience and strategic planning.



In closing the event, María Ruiz de Cossío, Senior Project Manager at the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association, Cristina Valero, Senior Project Manager at the European Institute of the Mediterranean, and Rim Maamouri, Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning Officer at BUSINESSMED and INVESTMED Project Manager, thanked all participants for taking part in the event and actively contributing to the sessions.

Overall, the event connected over 60 players in the Mediterranean region in discussions on how to boost sustainable entrepreneurship in the region. The INVESTMED beneficiaries will use this experience to inspire their activities through to the end of the project.



To cement the creative entrepreneurship spirit of the event, Sara Fascetti, Freelance Artist, showcased her depiction of the event:





She based her concept on the sowing of entrepreneurial seeds planted by the efforts of the INVESTMED project leading to the growth of a flourished green, blue and CCI ecosystem in the Southern Mediterranean.

The event ended with a field visit to two sites of interest in Barcelona. The cultural and creative industries participants attended a guided tour of the former Casaramona textile factory whilst the green and blue economy entrepreneurs visited the Cosmo Caixa Science and Innovation Museum.



The INVESTMED Mid-Term event was co-organised by project partners, the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA), and the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMED). The next time the entrepreneurs will gather will be in Tunisia at the Final Event of the INVESTMED project.



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