



Hybrid workshop Economic recovery in the South Med region post-Covid19

October 11th 2021

Four Seasons Hotel (Tunis) & Online

Program

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Experts' Workshop Economic recovery in the South Med region post-Covid19

October 11, 2021 | Hybrid seminar | 09.00 AM Tunis Time

While restoring global health remains the top priority, it cannot be denied that the strict measures enforced have caused massive economic shocks. With the prolongation of lockdown, quarantine, physical distancing and other isolation measures to suppress the transmission of the virus, the global economy has been sliding into a recession (ILO, 2020). As for 2022, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development -ERBD economists expects a growth of 4.6 per cent, provided the region's economies are supported by structural reforms, a recovery in foreign investment and stronger trade flows.

Southern Mediterranean countries, which already have high levels of poverty and weak or absent social infrastructure and services, face uniquely pressing economic challenges, including a massive drop in oil prices and rampant unemployment. The sanitary crises added a layer of challenges to the pre-existing issues to be addressed in the region, which has prompted governments to adopt emergency financial measures and develop aggressive stimulus packages to avoid an economic collapse.

The mitigation of Covid-19 restrictions coupled with the vaccine rollout had a positive impact on MENA economies, according to IMF's projections (World Economic Outlook – 2021). However, the economic recovery remains uncertain and low-income and developing economies keep on struggling (World Bank, 2021).

In this respect, multilateral actions coupled with national-level policies, tailored to the stage of the crisis, are crucial in order to catalyze a sustainable, inclusive recovery. It is within this framework that several international organisations and regional business development platforms spared no effort to support the governmental response to the crisis and to engage economic recovery in the MENA region.

Main objectives of the Workshop

In the strive towards an economic recovery in the Southern Mediterranean region in a post-pandemic context, the Regional Programme Political Dialogue South Mediterranean of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS PolDiMed) and the Union of the Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises (BUSINESSMED) joined forces by hosting an Experts' Workshop that intends to provide:

- An overview on the current economic and geopolitical situation in the South Med region;
- An Insight on the latest recovery reforms as well as the ongoing efforts deployed by the international and regional business agencies since the pandemic outbreak;
- Broadening the understanding of the expectations and the perspectives of the regional integration and the renewed EU-neighbourhood partnership including the opportunities offered within the Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument (NDICI);
- A glimpse on crisis resilience from a sectoral perspective and implications for businesses.

The recommendations arising from the Workshop's key speakers and experts will be further developed under a policy paper for an effective economic recovery in the MENA region, with a specific focus on the current and possible reforms and regional relevant collaboration frameworks.

October 11, 2021 | 09.00 AM Tunis Time

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9.00 AM Welcome Address & Opening Remarks

Mr. Thomas VOLK

Director, Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung – KAS
PolDiMed

Mrs. Jihen BOUTIBA

Secretary General, Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises - BUSINESSMED

9.15 AM Outlook of the current economic & geopolitical scenario in the MENA region in the aftermath of the covid19 pandemic.

After experiencing a decline in GDP of 3.4% in 2020, the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region will grow by 4% this year, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which recently revised its October projection of 3.2% upwards as countries begin the path to recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. However, these positive projections mask enormous variance across the region, and with several downside risks affecting Mena's overall trade and investments outlook, 2021, potentially provoking a series of disparities across this extremely heterogeneous region.

Dr. Blanca MORENO-DODSON, Manager of the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) – UNOPS

Mr. Mohammed EL RAZZAZ, Economic Development and Employment Division –UfM

Ms. Lilia NAAS, Chief Office for Arab States of the International Trade Center (ITC)

Dr. Alexa TIEMANN, Lead regional economist for the MENA region, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

Moderator: Dr. Katarzyna SIDLO, Director of the Middle East & North Africa Department – Center for Social & Economic Research (CASE)

10.15 AM Break

10.30 AM Regional integration platforms' contribution to regional and sub-regional economic recovery

The session will guide participants to the plentitude of platforms for exchange and cooperation in the region supported by new or existing financial instruments made available to the regional business community, particularly those provided by the European Commission, to contribute to a more prosperous regional and sub-regional integration.

Dr. Alaa EZZ, Secretary General, Confederation of Egyptian European Business Associations – CEEBA & Board Member of BUSINESSMED

Mrs Ingrid SCHWAIGER, Deputy Head of Unit, NEAR.B2 Regional Cooperation Neighbourhood, South Economic Investment Plan, European Commission

Dr. Youssef TRIFA, Executive Director of Agadir Technical Unit (ATU)

Mr. Johannes LAEPPL, Head of Project GIZ/ Support to the UfM on Employment and Trade

Moderator: Dr. Constantin TSAKAS, Senior Programme Officer - Sustainable Development Policies, Center for Mediterranean Integration - UNOPS

11.30 AM Break

11.45 AM Is a green, blue and digital COVID-19 economic recovery possible?

Policies dealing with the pandemic must be innovative, sustainable, inclusive and human-centred. The immediate focus on preserving existing jobs and firms needs to be complemented with more long-term approaches of creating more sustained growth and better jobs. The session will shed light on green, blue, and digital approaches to Covid19 recovery and their implications for businesses in the MENA region.

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Mrs. Khadija Dorra ESSGHAIRI, Regional Expert on Education and R&D on Energy Technologies
Mrs. Sana AFOUAIZ, Founder & Director, Womenpreneur Initiative, Expert on Innovation and Gender issues
Dr. Mounir GHRIBI, Director, Internazionalizzazione, Comunicazione, Alta formazione e Promozione della ricerca – ICAP, Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e di Geofisica Sperimentale – OGS

Moderator: Mr Giorgio MOSANGINI, Team Leader - Green Entrepreneurship & Civil Society, Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC), UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan –Barcelona Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea

12.45 PM Main conclusions presentation

Workshop's rapporteur: Mrs. Bouthaina LASSADI, Expert on workforce development, youth development initiatives in North Africa and Middle East

1.00 PM Closing remarks

Mrs. Jihen BOUTIBA, Secretary General, Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises – BUSINESSMED
Mr. Thomas VOLK, Director, Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung – KAS PolDiMed

1.15 PM Networking Lunch

Working language: Simultaneous **English** –**Arabic** interpretation will be provided

This event is on-invitation only

Zoom registration for virtual participation:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_KJrubhRfS6KWzVd9C15pbQ

Conception & organization:

BUSINESSMED

Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises

<http://www.businessmed-umce.org/>

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)

Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean (PolDiMed)

<https://www.kas.de/poldimed>