



THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

EURO-MED COOPERATION IN THE SPOTLIGHT



EU NEIGHBOURS
south





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EURO-MED: THE FRUITS OF COOPERATION

In our interconnected world, the security, resilience, prosperity and stability of our neighbours directly affect our own. The EU has enjoyed a long and fruitful history of cooperation with the Southern Neighbourhood, covering a wide spectrum of policy areas: from climate change to security, and from economic development to support of human rights.

This region is facing numerous challenges – climate change, depleting resources, socio-economic difficulties, mass unemployment, conflict, violent extremism and radicalism – some of which are shared with the EU. By putting emphasis on the Southern neighbourhood's huge potential for success, prioritising socio-economic development, employment and employability, the EU aims to tackle these common challenges in a spirit of partnership and cooperation.

The ties with the Southern countries are forged bilaterally, through Association Agreements and other instruments. In addition, there is a regional plank, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which was launched in Barcelona in 1995.

Mediterranean partners export some €72 billion worth of goods to the EU annually and import about €106 billion from it. In addition, the EU is the largest donor to the region, providing over €1 billion a year in assistance.

A partnership of equals

The political framework of the EU partnership with its southern partners is guided by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which is founded on the values of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

In light of the wave of revolutions and uprisings which began to sweep through the region, the European Neighbourhood Policy was reviewed in 2011. In 2015, a second review followed, which resulted in the focus of the Euro-Med partnership shifting more towards stabilisation. It also allowed for a more reciprocal and jointly owned partnership, enabling a two-way flow of ideas and a joint, equal approach to policymaking. This has resulted in more efficient and tailored responses which respect the different needs and aspirations of the EU's Mediterranean partners.

The European Neighbourhood Policy promotes not only bilateral Euro-Med cooperation but also intra-regional collaboration between the states of the region (see pages 8 and 9). In addition to providing direct support to governments, the ENP focuses on strengthening civil society and bolstering its ability to engage with public authorities.





Ten countries, many priorities

The ENP's 10 southern partners are clustered around the Mediterranean region: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Under the ENP umbrella, the EU and its southern partners agree on priorities of mutual interest and importance, outlined in "Partnership Priorities" or other cooperation frameworks with each country.

The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) is the main financial instrument used by the EU to facilitate Euro-Med cooperation. The ENI for the Neighbourhood South had an allocated budget of more than €11 billion for the period from 2014 to 2020.

Bilateral aid is dispersed in line with a national multi-annual programme, known technically as the Single Support Framework (SSF). The SSF generally defines priority sectors per country for EU assistance, annually implemented according to Annual Action Plans.

Partner countries from the Mediterranean region will also benefit from the External Investment Plan, a new tool created in 2017 to help boost public and private investments in the European Neighbourhood and Africa. With an initial contribution of €4.1 billion from the European Commission and an expected leverage of more than €44 billion of investments by 2020, its objective is to improve inclusive, sustainable economic and social development, in particular decent job creation.

COMMON CHALLENGES, COMMON SOLUTION

In addition to the European Union collaborating bilaterally with each individual Mediterranean country, the European Neighbourhood Policy promotes inter-regional cooperation between the EU and its southern partners, as well as intra-regional cooperation within the Southern Mediterranean around issues of cross-border interest and importance.

These include socio-economic themes such as inclusive development and job creation; energy, transport and the environment; migration and mobility dialogue; political and security dialogue as well as cross-cutting themes, such as the media, civil society and culture.

One form of multilateral Euro-Med cooperation is known as Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC), which seeks to address common challenges and to promote sustainable development along the EU's external borders, thereby helping to narrow the gaps in living standards.

New frontiers in cooperation

Regional initiatives already in place include programmes focusing on higher education, interregional dialogue, and investment through the Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP).





Regional integration

Cooperation between the countries of the Southern Mediterranean can include all the countries of the region or a select few, given the occasion. In addition to helping to confront common challenges, these collaborations can also focus on shared resources for which common responsibility is required, such as the Mediterranean Sea.

Entrepreneurs are significant job creators in the Southern Mediterranean and entrepreneurship is a major ingredient for the region's future success. However, access to finance is a major stumbling block, especially for start-ups.

To help tackle this challenge, the €1.5 billion European Union Initiative for Financial Inclusion (EUIFI) is extending credit, in partnership with leading financial institutes, to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) across the region, including innovative start-ups and social enterprises.

Given the fragmented and relatively modest sizes of the economies of the EU's Mediterranean partner states, greater regional and sub-regional economic integration is a central plank of intra-regional cooperation.

Regional platforms

As part of efforts to deepen Euro-Med cooperation, the EU and its Mediterranean partners have created the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), which was launched in 2008 and groups together the 28 EU Member States and 15 neighbouring countries from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean regions.

The UfM focuses on two main pillars: human development and sustainable development. As an expression of its commitment to find regional solutions to regional problems, the UfM includes over 300 ministerial and expert fora, which bring together over 25 000 stakeholders.

One important instrument in promoting common values is the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures (ALF), which was established in 2005. ALF brings together civil society from across Europe and the Mediterranean to collaborate on issues related to youth, education, culture, arts, peace, coexistence, migration, media, and more.



ALGERIA

With expansive lands qualifying it as the largest North African country, Algeria has been at the crossroads of numerous civilisations throughout history. This, coupled with having one of the youngest populations in the region, has painted the picture of Algeria being one of the most promising countries in the Maghreb.

However, the country has been struggling to tap into its human and economic potential and has remained highly dependent on its economic and political partners, such as the EU, which accounts for over 50% of the country's international trade.

Since 2011, the EU has allocated approximately €380 million in grants to Algeria. Given Algeria's heavy dependence on the petroleum and natural gas sector, which represents 98% of the country's exports and 60% of the state's revenues, roughly €160 million of this budget is dedicated to supporting the country's efforts to shift towards a diversified, post-hydrocarbon economy. The EU seeks to support Algeria with enhancing economic governance, promoting green economy and innovation, and boosting the business climate; creating better opportunities for young people.

To improve local development and to deepen democratic participation, the EU is calling on its long-standing experience in regional policy and social cohesion to support Algeria in its efforts to instate a more territorially balanced development model. The EU is also providing support with the roll out of renewable energy and the boosting of energy efficiency, with the objective to accompany Algeria in curbing its dependence on fossil fuels. Complementary assistance is also available for capacity building activities to Algerian public institutions and support to the civil society, based on mutual learning.

The EU further stands ready to support Algeria in the area of migration under the North of Africa window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The country also remains eligible to benefit from the European External Investment Plan.

EMPOWERING YOUNG ALGERIANS



Territorial development and participatory democracy



2017-2020



€220,000

The EU-backed Sharek programme was initiated by local association SIDRA to strengthen the participation of young Algerians in public life, and to make youth organisations effective and sustainable.

Sharek focuses on four main areas of intervention: bolstering the capacity of youth organisations, helping to amplify their voice in policy and decision-making, facilitating the networking of youth organisations and their utilisation of social media, and promoting collaboration between youth organisations, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

The programme provides the country's 81,000 youth associations with capacity building and training sessions to enhance their expertise and know-how in order to work effectively together and actively influence policymaking.





Amplifying young Algerians' voices

Director of Sharek Meriem Chikirou says she always saw the potential of her young Algerian fellowmen and women, but remained acutely aware of the limitations they faced in terms of political outreach and participation.

“There are a lot of youth organisations in Algeria; but they tend to work in isolation, sometimes without any concrete projects,” Meriem, who is also the secretary general of Sidra association notes, stressing however that, *“the young members of these organisations are skilled, full of good intentions, and want to participate in the life of their towns.”*

She says the Sharek programme was created to *“give these youth a hand by providing them with the necessary tools to become responsible and knowledgeable actors for community development.”* The success of this program can already be seen, with numerous project building and networking sessions having been held across the country, linking over 20 youth organisations together.

Salah-Eddine Abdelkhalek, a 26-year-old member of the association for the Rehabilitation of Tamentit’s Cultural Heritage (1,500 kilometres south of Algiers), believes his participation in the Sharek programme is an invaluable opportunity to *“work as part of a network”* and *“develop long-lasting relations with public authorities.”*

Empowering youth organisations to become reliable partners for government authorities is another key pillar of the programme. *“The government has shown that it has the political will to allow the youth to get involved in public life,”* states Meriem, pointing out that *“the new Algerian Constitution considers youth to be a vital force for the country. In order to establish the framework for a constructive partnership, we have to forge strong ties with government authorities and give the youth the tools they need.”*

EMPLOYMENT CREATION THROUGH CULTURAL CONSERVATION



Job creation / Youth



2012-ongoing



€23.5 million

The Youth Employment Support Programme (PAJE) was established to support the Algerian government's national youth policies, with a focus on boosting employment and training opportunities.

The programme involves young people who reside in the four pilot provinces (Annaba, Bechar, Khenchela and Oran) who are given opportunities to participate in civil society initiatives and collective activities that boost their employability.

Since 2015, PAJE has created 130 companies which have recruited more than 500 young people.





Rehabilitation troubled youth and local heritage

The Sidi El Houari district in northern Algeria has long been the beating heart of Oran, where Berbers, Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Abbassids and Ottomans settled and thrived. However, the suburb has been falling into disrepair in recent decades.

“The renovation of this district all began by chance when I was responsible for the Oran medical and public health council,” remembers Dr Kamel Bereksi, who chairs the local association Santé Sidi El Houari (SDH).

“The entire building was squalid, and we quickly discovered that this was an architectural treasure being used as a dumping ground,” Kamel recalls. He paired up with a small group of people to clean up and renovate the place and turn it into a training and rehabilitation centre for troubled youth.

Stone cutting, woodworking, electricity, iron-working, plastering, sewing, frame and parquet renovation are all examples of training programmes offered by the school, each of which embody the desire to preserve the local architectural heritage.

Fatma-Zohra Benabed, 16, is one of the youth enrolled at the centre. After quitting school at an early age, she took up sewing classes at SDH.

Now a master of stitches and embroidering, her next dream is to become a plasterer.

“ I like to watch boys do that work. I asked the people in charge of the association to let me train in plastering. I hope to take the course next year,

says the young girl.





EGYPT

The European Union is firmly committed to supporting Egypt to address the increasingly complex economic, social, political and security environment the country is currently facing. Since the 2011 uprising, Egypt has faced problems of low and non-inclusive growth, high fiscal deficits and vulnerability to external shocks. The economy is now recovering and recorded in 2019 an official growth rate of 5.5%, the highest in a decade, along with a positive outlook for the future. Still, the country is facing many pressing challenges, including a steady population growth, resource shortages, an increasing demand for energy, rising youth unemployment, increased poverty, and inadequate educational opportunities which the EU is addressing together with its' Egyptian partners through an ongoing grant portfolio of €1.4 billion.

In addition, the country has been able to access loans worth €6.6 billion in the sectors of Energy, Transport, Water and to support SMEs thanks to the use of EU grants to increase the concessional nature of loans from international financial institutions by absorbing political and economic risks.

The EU, as Egypt's main trading partner, has supported efforts to enhance Egypt's competitiveness and boost its trade and investment potential. It also seeks to protect the country's environment, while making sure its' energy supplies are sustainable.

With almost one third of Egypt's population defined as living below the poverty line, social development, including health and education, and social protection are important areas of intervention for the EU in Egypt.

Attention is also paid to improving governance and contributing to the implementation of provisions on human rights and fundamental freedoms in Egypt's 2014 constitution, and supporting capacity development of Egyptian public authorities and civil society.

EU assistance has played a vital role in supporting the Egyptian reform process across all these sectors and in line with the country's Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS – Egypt 2030).

The EU also supports Egypt on migration management through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF for Africa). Skills development, creating job opportunities for young people and supporting the construction of labour-intensive infrastructure in cities hosting migrants are among the types of activities supported.

NURTURING MINDS



Social development



2014-2017 (extended)



€60 million

‘Enhancing Access of Children to Education and Fighting Child Labour’ is an EU-funded project implemented in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP). It targets more than 480,000 children in community schools and their family members in Egypt’s 16 governorates, in addition to 1.5 million children in Egyptian public schools in 5 governorates.

The project provides incentives to children and families of children who were previously engaged in child labour, or are at risk of engaging in child labour, with a special focus on girls, encouraging enrolment and retention in schools using the community schools structure. Incentives provided include monthly food rations to the families of children who attend school regularly, school meals to children attending schools, and support to families with business development, including the provision of micro-loans.

The project trained more than 51,000 mothers on income-generating activities and raised their awareness on how to enhance their capabilities for livelihood enhancement, and facilitated the access of 10,359 mothers to revolving micro-loans through participating partner NGOs.

The project also provides technical assistance to the child labour policy dialogue on activities directed towards training labour inspectors and establishing local Child Protection Committees (CPCs), and issues related to working conditions, employment and social policies.





Fuelling life in homes with the 'EU biscuit'

With some of the highest rates of school dropouts and illiteracy across the country, the village of Sanhour al Qibliya, 88 km from Cairo, suffers a myriad of economic and human development challenges.

In the local community school, many students aged between 7 and 13 years old had been unable to enrol in school for years, or were subject to child labour.

Thanks to the EU-funded project 'Enhancing Access of Children to Education and Fighting Child Labour', the fate of many of these children has now been altered.

As a mother of two boys and a girl, Nimat Ibrahim cannot contain her excitement for the project which, she says, "changed her life". She is especially proud of her daughter, who enrolled in school and has successfully reached primary grade six.

"I hope that she completes her education as long as I'm alive," Nimat exclaims, noting that she's the one who *"reads the names of medicines and treatments"*.

"Her brothers are scared for her but I insist that she won't meet my fate." Her daughter, who is dreaming of becoming a doctor, is also delighted to see her mother's happiness and improved situation.

Since her daughter enrolled in school, Nimat has been able to participate in the training provided by the project for schoolchildren's parents, especially mothers.

“ ***And on top of that, I got a loan to help me sustain my fish selling business,***

Nimat adds.

”

THE WINDS OF CHANGE IN EGYPT'S ENERGY SECTOR



Economic modernisation, energy sustainability and environment



2010-2018



€30 million (out of overall €340 million)

The European Union is partnering with several European donors to support the Gabal El-Zayat wind farm project in southern Egypt, which aims to generate clean energy and accelerate Egypt's transition to renewable energy.

This project seeks to support Egypt's reduction of its fossil fuel dependence by promoting the use of renewable resources such as solar and wind power. In doing so, the project will assist the country in meeting its' increasing energy needs, improve air quality by reducing CO2 emissions and support the protection of the environment.

The project involves studies, design, construction, commissioning and operation of a large-scale (up to 200 MW) onshore wind farm consisting of 200 installed turbines located on the West banks of the Gulf of Suez (at the Western coast of the Red Sea), 400 km South of Cairo. The location, that stretches about 36 km², is characterised by very favourable wind resource conditions (expected capacity factor of around 45%) of mainly north-north-westerly direction.





Turning winds into energy

In the Gabal El-Zayt area, around 350 km from Cairo in the direction of Hurghada, wind is being turned into energy. The project has made a drastic impact on the country's ability to harness its wind energy production capabilities with an increase of nearly 40% (from 540 MW installed prior to the project implementation to 780 after completion in 2015). Located between the Gulf of Suez and the Red Sea mountains, the site experiences winds blowing at an average of 10.5 meters per second, which is one of the highest wind speeds worldwide.

Engineer Akmal Mohamed, who has overseen the site's operation since 2014, voices his pride in the project and the collaboration between all the parties involved. *"The Bedouins and locals help us keep the site safe and the rest of the workforce comes from all over Egypt,"* he explains. The windfarm is currently supplying a population of 300,000 citizens with clean energy.

In addition to contributing to cleaner energy production and social cohesion, the project also seeks to protect the local environment's fauna and flora. Located on a major migratory route for several avian species, the windfarm was equipped with a special radar system that allows the shutdown of the wind farm during the migratory seasons, thus avoiding birds fatalities.

"If the lives of the birds are in danger, the radar detects this and provides us with a warning," says Mahmoud Hamed Abdel-Hamid, the engineer who managed the extension of the project. He adds that the birds have also become a hobby for his team, who regularly liaise with the Environment Ministry's ornithologists on site.



LIBYA

Despite the presence of an internationally recognised government in Libya, the country is still divided between rival factions. This has resulted in instability and conflict and has delayed their transition to a functioning State and democracy. The ongoing fragmentation, exemplified by the recent deterioration of the situation following a military escalation of the conflict on the ground, undermines the prospects of a political settlement under UN auspices and restricts the opportunity for European Union (EU) and international cooperation.

Unlike its neighbours, Libya has no official framework for its relations with the EU. Nevertheless, the EU is determined to support Libya to navigate a path to stability and democracy. Strengthening the governance of institutions and improving the ability of national institutions to respond to citizen's needs are at the core of the EU assistance to the country. Since 2014, the EU has allocated over €98 million to Libya in bilateral assistance to support this mission.

Although rich in natural resources such as oil, Libya is lagging in their long-term agenda to diversify the economy. The EU has therefore consolidated its effort to strengthen Libya's economic diversification by supporting local Small and Medium Enterprises, fostering the dialogue between the private and public sector, and promoting youth employment.

Health is another key sector in EU assistance to Libya. In light of deteriorating domestic security since 2014, and renewed tensions in 2019, the EU is stepping up its efforts to improve primary health care services and psychological support in the country. To accomplish this, the EU works with stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health, the Libyan Red Crescent, the Libyan National Blood Transfusion System as well as local volunteers.

Since the 2015 migration crisis, the EU's support for migration management and assistance to vulnerable persons, migrants and the internally displaced in Libya, has become increasingly important. With financial assistance of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF for Africa) (€408 million) more than 185,000 refugees and vulnerable migrants have been assisted through the distribution of basic items and hygiene kits; more than 60,000 medical consultations have been provided to vulnerable people. Over 70,000 young children received formal and informal education, protection services and psycho-social support. Over 1.7 million people have improved access to basic services and 2,500 young entrepreneurs were assisted with job training programmes to develop economic income-generating activities.

The EUTF for Africa also supports Libyan municipalities and vulnerable populations by investing in the rehabilitation of critical infrastructures and the delivery of essential equipment and services. It also creates socio-economic opportunities and invests in the economic empowerment of youth and women.

HEALING THE CRACKS OF WAR



Health services delivery



2017-ongoing



€90 million

‘Managing mixed migration flows in Libya through expanding protection space and supporting local socioeconomic development’ was initiated in 2017 with the financial support of the North of Africa Window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF for Africa).

The two-folded programme aims to reinforce the protection and resilience of migrants, refugees and host communities in Libya, while supporting improved migration management in the country.

On one hand, the protection pillar focuses on improving living conditions in detention centres, supporting alternatives to detention, and providing voluntary humanitarian return and reintegration assistance.

On the other hand, the programme supports socio-economic development at the municipal level and with local governance by assisting local authorities to restore security, essential services delivery and livelihood opportunities. This entails the rehabilitation of key social, water and sanitation infrastructures, the provision of equipment and the bolstering of job creation activities.





Putting local healthcare back on its feet

In the district of Garyounis in southern Libya, Ali Alrayani remains a hopeful local figure, despite the traumas this 92-year-old man has witnessed since the civil war that broke out in recent years.

The old man, who has also lived through the Second World War, poses proudly for the pictures in front of a local clinic, sharing his memories of ‘the old days’ with construction workers rehabilitating the small health centre.

“I have lived close to Garyounis Clinic for more than 50 years. It is great to see how it is coming back to life. Having access to healthcare is crucial for people in our town,” asserts Ali, who every day goes to see how the works are progressing.

In recent years, the southern district saw most of its vital infrastructure, especially hospitals, damaged by war; depriving the local population of 15,000 basic healthcare services.

“When the clinic was operational, we could take our family members there on foot,” remembers Ali, deploring that, *“now, we have to go to the city centre or to a private clinic which is more expensive and at time unsafe due to the security situation.”*

With the financial support of the EU, the UN’s Development Fund (UNDP) is currently renovating the Garyounis clinic, aiming to restore crucial healthcare services for the 15,000 locals. *“Once the clinic opens again, we won’t have to go that far and spend so much money. It will be particularly helpful for people who cannot afford to go to private clinics and hospitals,”* the old man underlines.

Dr Mohamed Alzawi, manager of the clinic, agrees:

“Opening the clinic again will bring more stability in Garyounis and its surrounding areas. I am eager to see the clinic come back to life.”



DYNAMISING LIBYAN'S YOUTH AND WOMEN WORKFORCE



Youth socioeconomic integration



2014-2018



€7.6 million

Support to Libya for Economic Integration, Diversification and Sustainable Employment (SLEIDSE) aims to promote the development of dynamic and diversified Micro, Small and Medium enterprises (MSMEs) across Libya, capable of creating employment and livelihoods for Libyans.

Implemented by Expertise France, the project supports young and female entrepreneurs who seek to develop their own initiatives but lack in resources, knowledge and support. It does so by providing online training sessions in partnership with the International Trade Centre. It also improves access to finance through credit lines and guarantees funds in cooperation with the Libyan authorities and financial institutions. It also develops mentoring programmes for businesses.



Cracking the code for female entrepreneurship

The crisis in Libya has taken its toll on the country's second-most populous city, Benghazi. However, rather than acting as a deterrent, the situation has spurred Najla Al Missalati to leverage her entrepreneurial skills to serve her city, namely its women and children.

With support of the SLEiDSE programme, she established She Codes, an intensive bootcamp to teach Libyan women how to code and programme.

"If we don't make the change, then who will?" asks Najla, asserting that, *"if all the good people leave Libya and flee with their lives, we are selling out a beautiful country and we are letting down our grandchildren."*

Despite the difficulties of introducing women to a male dominated sector, Najla insists that the challenge was "worth it." *"No matter how conservative their families are, or how terrible the conditions in their city, women trainees are able to work from home using only their laptops which can support them to feel more confident and to earn a living."*

And her determination bore fruit, as She Codes plans to empower over 700 women by the end of 2019.

One of the participants in the bootcamp, Salma Alhasimi, shares her great appreciation for the opportunity, rejoicing that, *"not only did this give me the chance to acquire new skills, but it also helped me to meet amazing people, tap into my hidden potential, and experience something new."*

Over the next five years, She Codes intends to reach more than 2,600 women, creating more than a thousand sustainable jobs along the way.





MOROCCO

As the EU's main trading partner in the Southern Mediterranean, Morocco holds a special role in regards to political and economic development cooperation between the two regions. What's more, both entities have engaged in close political and security cooperation for the past two decades.

Since 2011, the EU has allocated €1.9 billion in grants in support of the sustainable development and institutional modernisation of Morocco. From this, a total of €800 million was devoted to the development of social policies and good public administration. The EU also invests in the enhancement of democratic governance, territorial cohesion, and the rule of law. It supports Morocco's efforts to implement the state modernisation, as enshrined in the constitutional reforms of 2011. In addition, since 2011 the country has been able to access loans worth €6 billion in the sectors of sustainable energy, water management, transport, skills and private sector development, thanks to EU grants used to increase the concessional nature of loans from European financial institutions and/or to absorb political and economic risks.

The EU extensively supports Morocco on migration management under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF for Africa), including fight against trafficking of migrants, the strengthening of border management, and socio-economic integration of migrants. A total of €342 million was allocated on migration from both the bilateral and the EUTF for Africa envelopes.

Finally, the EU helps Morocco to translate its long period of continuous economic growth into decent jobs and sustainable business opportunities by enhancing the competitiveness of Moroccan enterprises, particularly SMEs, and by equipping Moroccans with the skills they need in a modernising economy.

BOOSTING INNOVATIVE START-UPS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH



Sustainable and inclusive growth



2017-2020



€7.8 million

The Next Society is an open community that brings together entrepreneurs, investors, public and private innovation hubs from the two shores of the Mediterranean, with the aim of encouraging innovative solutions for leveraging social and development challenges.

Managed by StartUp Maroc in Morocco, the regional programme works on fostering start-up success, promoting clusters and innovation ecosystems and accelerating technology transfer.

It is strong of a network of over 300 business and innovation, research and investment organisations, 2,500 SMEs and entrepreneurs from 30 countries.





Technological innovations for agricultural growth

Daughter of a small farmer from southern Morocco, Meryam El Ouafi always knew there was more to agriculture than what meets the eye.

“While I initially chose to develop my career in a totally different environment (tourism), I ended up being caught up both by the serious water problems affecting the region, and the increasing scarcity of resources”, explains Meryam, who co-founded the company GEMS (Green Engineering Mission SARL) in 2018, pointing at the vulnerability of the entire sector.

Based in Agadir, in southern Morocco, GEMS uses nanoscience – a technology that works on a scale of less than 40 nanometres – to develop innovative techniques of agricultural irrigation.

“Nowadays, the conventional irrigation systems used in Morocco, such as the drip system, present clear limitations. A new generation of nano-irrigation could save water most effectively,

Meryam explains.

With her team, she developed a technological innovation that *“offers a solution for small and large farmers. It assures a superior yield compared to rival products and reduces water consumption fuel use, costs and maintenance.”*

“I had the chance to receive support from Diafriinvest, a project mostly funded by the EU. I recently entered the StartUp Maroc Booster 2018 acceleration programme which will help me with financing issues, marketing, and access to international programmes,” Meryam rejoices, voicing her confidence in the innovation’s relevance to agriculture, water management and plant production, particularly in a country like Morocco.

She already has plans to break into the Moroccan market and into markets throughout the African continent, hoping to make *“the African continent a place that is productive and better for future generations”*.

PROTECTING TROUBLED MINORS IN MOROCCO



Equitable access to social services



2016-2019



€2.8 million (out of total €3.5 million budget)

Funded by the EU's Support to Justice Reform Programme, the Himaya (Protection) project aims at ensuring the rights and protection of over 2,000 migrant children in Morocco, 35% of whom are girls.

The project provides training to a variety of professionals involved in the justice and state care systems, including social workers, health professionals, teachers, security officers and civil society actors, among others.

Conducted in collaboration with UNICEF, Moroccan ministries and civil society organisations, the project ultimately seeks to ensure all migrant children equitable access to education, healthcare, social and judicial care as well as favourable housing conditions.





Fostering a new generation

Hanene, an Economics student at the International University of Agadir, has a bright future ahead of her; already working as an educational assistant at the local youth centre in spite of her young age.

The odds were not always in her favour though, and Hanene had to overcome numerous challenges to get where she is now. Placed in care at a young age, she was one of the 100,000 children brought into contact with the civil justice system every year in Morocco.

“When I was placed in care, I had dropped out of school, so I took the first year of informal education,” Hanene remembers, adding that *“the following year, I was able to join year three of primary education and I continued my studies until I passed my baccalaureate.”*

Her journey back into education was possible thanks to the Child Protection Centre of Agadir, which is supported by the Himaya project. The centre provides a safe environment for young girls from difficult backgrounds, offers informal and vocational courses and advocates admission of its beneficiaries into local universities.

Hanene still remembers the day she was able to enter secondary education. *“I was so surprised when I learned that the International University of Agadir had accepted the application for a student grant submitted by the Centre!”* She says that the centre staff and the University’s attitude made her believe she had a chance in life again; *“They helped make my dream a reality.”*



TUNISIA

At a time when democracy and freedom are under threat across the globe, Tunisia presents a rare ray of hope. In the few short years since the so-called Jasmine Revolution (known locally as the Dignity Revolution), the country has made immense progress towards a vibrant democracy. However, the sluggish performance of its economy, which is not developing rapidly enough to create sufficient levels of employment, maintain living standards, or address a number of security challenges, places this progress at risk.

This prompted the European Union to significantly bolster its already close and long-standing ties with Tunisia (since 1976), which resulted in a 'Privileged Partnership' that came with increased financial support and intensified EU-Tunisian trade relations (2/3 of Tunisia's international commerce). Since 2011, the EU has allocated over €1.8 billion in grants to Tunisia in bilateral assistance.

More than €650 million of these funds is used to promote strong governance - the rule of law and the respect for human rights. The EU assists the Tunisian administration to become more modern and less centralized. At the same time, it supports a more participatory society where all citizens – including young people – can express themselves.

The EU is also investing in Tunisia's future, stimulating sustainable economic growth and generating jobs, with a special emphasis on public and private investment to provide new opportunities for Tunisians. The country has, in addition, been able to access loans worth €150 million in the sectors of energy, transport, environment, water, agriculture and social development thanks to EU grants used to increase the concessional nature of loans from international financial institutions or to absorb political and economic risks.

Strengthening social cohesion between generations and regions is another important objective of the EU-Tunisian cooperation. Key factors in the 2011 revolution were social and regional disparities, so the EU has made it a priority to help alleviate these.

The EU is also supporting the Government's efforts to improve governance and promote better management of migration, in particular through the implementation of a national strategy for actions worth €60.5 million under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF for Africa).

THE CREATIVE PATH TO SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT



Social cohesion



2016-2021



€2.4 million

Tfanen – Tunisie Créative is an EU-financed fund to promote cultural engagement, freedom of expression and access to culture at the local level, with a special focus on deprived communities, women and youth.

By strengthening collaboration within civil society and between themselves and the public and private sectors, Tfanen seeks to promote cultural diversity, citizen participation and socio-cultural integration of minorities.

It does so by supporting cultural organisations and helping them to network, it provides development opportunities for artists and cultural practitioners, and it promotes local public infrastructure through the integration of decentralised cultural public institutions.





Social concerns take the stage

A graduate in product design currently working as a mason, Walid Ben Tahar does not have the 'typical' profile of a theatre performer. Yet, this young Tunisian man from Nefta, southern Tunisia, is now nurturing the dream of becoming a professional actor.

"My dream is to perform theatre plays by taking centre stage, a position coveted by many young artists," Walid asserts with confidence, acknowledging that it all stems from his participation in the Tfanen al –Houdoud programme.

"Taking part in Tfanen was a unique opportunity for me and my young peers; it enabled us to express our opinions and experience a new type of performance. Now, we can engage in dialogue and voice our problems in a very civilised and refined manner," Walid explains.

His claim is corroborated by Oussama Hanoun, a graduate in industrial maintenance, who says that theatre helped him cope with the frustration of unemployment. *"This taught me how to air a problem before an audience and, at the same time, involve them in searching for the solution."*

"It was a wonderful experience; a new adventure which taught me a lot. I wish that all people in Nefta appreciated theatre so we could take part in international festivals and make the public aware that the youth of Nefta truly respect and love theatre,

Oussama concludes.



FOR THE GOOD OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



Strengthen social cohesion and local infrastructure



2013-2019



€96.69 million

With support from the European Union and the French development agency (AFD), the Proville programme has been enabling Tunisia's Urban Rehabilitation and Renewal Agency (ARRU) to improve the living conditions of inhabitants of deprived urban areas and support the reform of city policy.

The programme seeks to uphold basic urban infrastructure and public services, as well as to develop social, community and economic facilities in underprivileged neighbourhoods. It involves the building of 59 new schools and the renovation of more than 310 other schools across Tunisia.

Proville encompasses 155 neighbourhoods, reaching more than 800,000 people.





Snapshots of success

Tunisia is the most urbanised country in the Middle East and North Africa, with some two-thirds of its population living in towns and cities. Much of this rapid urbanisation has been haphazard, which has resulted in a situation where many urban inhabitants live in deprived neighbourhoods.

However, since the implementation of Proville, which has worked to improve basic infrastructure such as roads, housing, street lighting, sewage networks and the supply of drinking water, Tunisians feel the difference.

“Taxis can now reach us here,” rejoices one resident of the El Bokri district of Ariana in reference to a new road that has resulted in the revitalisation of her community. *“Before, if a pregnant woman needed to give birth, it was hard to find a way to move her.”*

The activities financed by Proville also brought a change to young students who now benefit from renovated schools and collective community facilities, such as sports complexes and multidisciplinary social spaces.

“I love photography but couldn’t find a photography course to improve my skills... I used to rent a camera from a local photographer and would go up into the hills to take photos,” remembers Skander Elarifi, who signed up for the photography club at a new community centre provided by Proville.

For Skander, the course he followed was just the beginning. Now, he is dreaming bigger:

“This made me realise that I would like to emulate my role models, those famous photographers who appear in National Geographic. I dream of becoming like them.



THE HUMANE APPROACH TO MIGRATION

Conflict, climate change, environmental degradation and extreme poverty have pushed millions of sub-Saharan Africans to leave their home countries. Much of this migration is irregular and undocumented, which leaves the individual migrant or refugee vulnerable to immense hardship and abuse. Many African migrants undertake long and perilous journeys through harsh or dangerous environments, such as deserts or conflict zones.

While the majority stay within sub-Saharan Africa, many end up in North Africa, which is both a major destination and transit point for migrants from elsewhere and a source of migrants. North African and African migrants often embark on dangerous sea voyages across the Mediterranean to pursue their dream of safety, prosperity and wider opportunities that they believe awaits them in Europe. Along the way, many fall prey to human traffickers.

Tackling the root causes

As part of its long-standing partnership with Africa, the European Union is committed to assisting its African partners to tackle the causes of irregular migration. The EU's Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing Root causes of Irregular Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa) was created to address what is at the core of the instability, forced displacement and irregular migration and to contribute to better migration management. It was established at the Valletta Summit on Migration in November 2015, where European and African Heads of State and Government gathered to strengthen cooperation and address the current challenges being faced around the continent. This is what put the spotlight on migration, and lead the group to think through ways to uncover the opportunities that may arise within the topic.

With over €4.6 billion and 224 programmes, the EUTF for Africa targets three main regions of Africa: the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa.

In the North Africa region, the EUTF for Africa has allocated around €805 million to contribute to safe, secure, legal and orderly migration from, to and within the region and to support an effective management of migration flows that protects human rights. As migration is a complex phenomenon, the various regions covered by the EUTF for Africa are taking on a cross-border approach to allow the development of joint actions along migratory routes.

Efforts put forth by the EU has been able to bring about great progress in migration management throughout the country. They have offered protection and support to millions, saved lives and dismantled smuggling networks. Nevertheless, more work needs to be done to make the EU's migration policy truly future-proof in view of a constantly evolving geopolitical context and a steady rise in migratory pressure on a global scale.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION



DIGNIFIED HOMECOMINGS



Migrant protection and reintegration



2016-ongoing



€43 million

The EU-International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration is the first comprehensive programme bringing African partner countries, the IOM and the EU together around the shared goal of protecting migrants.

Launched with the support of the North of Africa window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF for Africa), the initiative seeks to protect migrants' rights along migration routes and safeguard access to basic services such as socio-medical care, consular services, assistance to voluntary return, etc.

The programme's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) fold assists migrants stranded in Libya – both inside and outside detention centres – to return home safely and foresees capacity building of local and national actors on protection, human rights, counter-trafficking and countering gender-based violence.

The Trust Fund substantially contributed to the voluntary return of over 50,000 migrants to their countries of origin with reintegration support and the evacuation of more than 5,000 refugees and asylum-seekers out of Libya.





Renewed hopes for the future

Dreaming of a brighter future for himself and his family, Gaspard, from the Ivory Coast, made the gamble of immigration a few years ago, like many of his African counterparts. He left everything behind, fuelled by the hope of a better life, at whatever cost.

After setting out, things quickly deviated from plan. Once he crossed through Niger, Gaspard found himself stuck in the depths of Libya's migratory hell, alongside thousands of fellow African migrants.

The young man recalls how many of them felt too ashamed to return to their home countries empty-handed, especially considering that many had borrowed money to finance their emigration.

To help alleviate this, Gaspard took advantage of the EU-funded Voluntary Humanitarian Return initiative, which offers a four-step support process to migrants willing to return home.

The programme provides migrants with pre-departure and departure assistance to return to their homelands, supports their arrival, and later ensures an up-to four-month follow-up and monitoring during their reintegration process.

"I am not ashamed to be back home," insists Gaspard. "People can talk and say what they want. I am now back in my country and have found a job."

Since the launch of the Joint initiative, more than 55,000 migrants have received assistance to support their decision to return to their countries of origin, the majority of whom are currently benefiting from post-arrival and reintegration assistance.





ISRAEL

The relationship between the EU and Israel is broad and multifaceted. The EU is Israel's first trading partner. In 2017, EU exports of goods and services to Israel amounted respectively to €21,4 billion and €7.2 billion, and EU imports in the same sectors to €14.7 billion and €5.2 billion.

Bilateral cooperation is extensive in many areas, including transport, industry and agriculture, higher and vocational education or justice and home affairs. Cooperation on security issues is growing. Israel participates actively in the EU's research and innovation programme, Horizon 2020. Meanwhile, business, tourist and people-to-people connections have grown exponentially thanks to initiatives that include the Open Sky agreement signed between the EU and Israel in 2013 and the resulting significant increase in air travel.

The EU supports a vibrant civil society through participation in programmes dedicated to law and justice, human rights, environmental sustainability, climate change, culture and youth. Israel benefits from Twinning and TAIEX programmes, which help government agencies approximate to norms and standards of European public administrations, and share best practices. Finally, the EU has supported citizen engagement with local authorities in Israel with socio-economic needs. The EU is also facilitating the involvement of Israel in many regional programmes with its neighbours on issues which are best tackled collectively, such as in civil protection, environment, energy, telecommunications and transport.

IMPROVING PUBLIC COMMUNICATION SERVICES



Telecommunication



2018-2020



€1.5 million

The Twinning project 'Strengthening the regulatory capacity of Israel in the field of telecommunications' is a project creating a framework for institutional cooperation between the Israeli administration and the administrations of Italy, Germany and Latvia. With this project, the EU provides assistance in understanding EU rules and practices in the telecommunication and audiovisual sector, following the request of the Israeli Ministry of Communications.

Through trainings, exchange of experts, study visits, and more, the EU is assisting Israel in identifying gaps between its legislation and the EU legal framework, while formulating ideas and recommendations to bring the Israeli framework closer to the European one.

Promoting a sustainable environment for economic operators and preparing a legal framework adequate for this fast-evolving sector while preserving the interests and ensuring the protection of vulnerable groups are at the core of this action.





Working together to achieve greater regulatory standards

For Yair Hakak, Senior Deputy Director-General for Strategy and Planning at the Israeli Ministry of Communications (MoC), the cooperation with the EU on regulation in the telecom sector is having a noticeable impact. *“We have been inspired by our interaction with the EU experts to shape our internal policy discussions”*, he says.

Better telecoms regulatory policies eventually benefit Israeli costumers and citizens. The exchange between Israeli and European experts is a win-win for both sides. *“The European experts have an advantage of 20 years of experience”*, Yair explains. *“They come from fully liberalised markets with free market entry and are accustomed to regulatory practices in many diverse areas, from licensing to consumer protection. European Member States from their side can gain a better understanding of the Israeli telecoms sector and its specific regulatory challenges.”*

The project doesn’t only provide hands-on sharing of practice, but also for a long-term engagement, so Israeli and European experts can continue to learn from each other in the future. *“We have established an effective informal network of experts”*, Yair notes.

“ This will remain active and helpful long after the formal aspects of the Twinning project have concluded. This way the quality of regulatory practice in Israel can continue to improve, also in the years to come. ”

PITCHING GREEN IDEAS



Green entrepreneurship



2012-2022



Around €2.5 million¹

SwitchMed is leading the way to a circular economy in Southern Mediterranean countries by directly supporting the private sector and working with policy makers to create a regulatory framework at national and regional level.

Amongst other things, the project enhances the creation and development of circular and green businesses. In that context, it provides training to green business entrepreneurs, supports green start-ups in accessing markets and financing facilities, and provides capacity building for sustainable industry providers.

Furthermore, this regional programme aims to expand the presence of green entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean by connecting stakeholders to scale-up social and eco innovations.

So far, SwitchMed has trained 2,100 green entrepreneurs on eco-design and circular business models, leading to the creation of 200 green companies and 1,000 new green jobs.

¹ Switch-Med is a regional project (total budget : € 20 M). The amount featured here for Israel is only indicative.





Women lead the way

The EU-backed SwitchMed programme, which helps to support and scale up social and eco-innovation in the Mediterranean region, organised GreenPitch in Tel Aviv, an event where budding entrepreneurs were able to pitch their ideas, receive coaching and network.

Among the ideas presented there were environmentally friendly energy storage and efficiency solutions, and algorithms to monitor air pollution for disease management.

Interestingly, two-thirds of the enterprises selected present were led by women. The pitching contest was won by ECONcrete, an innovative ecological alternative to seashore defences to protect marine life.

“The experts and the programme as a whole, have given me some good links to potential investors, and of course the Green Pitch event was very interesting,” said Shimrit Perkol Finkel, CEO of ECONcrete.

“I’m happy to say we have been approached by some potential investors. Hopefully this will bring many interesting perspectives for the future.



FOSTERING PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS TO PROMOTE MIDDLE EAST PEACE

TRAINING THE DOCTORS OF PEACE



Peacebuilding



2013-2019



Around €1 million

The 'Medicine in the Service of Peace - A Cross-Border Israeli-Palestinian Professional Medical Cooperation programme' falls under the European Peacebuilding Initiative (EUPI). The project offers training to Palestinian doctors and nurses from various specialties in Israeli hospitals, and organises joint Israeli-Palestinian activities in the field of healthcare such as tours and conferences.

The project seeks to build mutual trust, cooperation and understanding between Palestinian and Israeli healthcare professionals, in addition to providing a transfer of expertise which can improve the standards of the Palestinian healthcare system.

By fuelling a spirit of co-existence within the healthcare sector through the development of strong professional relationships, this project also feeds into the peacebuilding process by improving interactions between Israelis and Palestinians.





Peaceful coexistence through medical training

Even though the Palestinian nurse Enaam² had years of experience, her career wouldn't remain the same considerably after her six-month training in an Israeli hospital.

"This allowed me to form excellent relations with the Israeli staff, even after I completed the training", Enaam explains, noting that she continues to visit the Israeli department from time to time and to seek advice from Israeli colleagues. The project definitely brought her and the Israeli patients and health care workers closer to each other. The project also gave Enaam and her Palestinian fellows the opportunity to work in an advanced medical environment in which they could develop their professional skills.

Colleagues who joined her in the training express similar happiness towards the project, highlighting the *"noticeable changes in perceptions and attitudes"* among the Israeli staff and patients themselves. *"The staff loves, appreciates and respects the Palestinian trainees. After a while, we started to understand that prejudices have nothing to hold on",* one Israeli mentor points out. Many Israeli mentors also note that they became more aware of the daily hardships facing Palestinians, and more reflective about the Israeli-Palestinian situation. *"The programme helped humanise Palestinians in the eyes of staff workers and to fight stereotypes and prejudices,"* one mentor underlines.

* Name was changed



JORDAN

Jordan is a key partner of the European Union in the Middle East, taking forward important reforms to boost economic performance and create jobs, even as the country has been affected by regional instability and slow growth in strategic markets, and as competition for scarce resources - such as water - has increased.

The country also hosts the world's second largest population of refugees per capita, including over 750,000 Syrians and other nationalities.

Since 2011, the EU has allocated almost €2.2 billion to Jordan. More than €800 million of this has been dedicated to bilateral cooperation to enhance Jordan's social and economic development e.g. equipping young Jordanians with the education and skills to meet the challenges of a modern economy, boost entrepreneurship and bolster innovation. These funds are also used to reinforce the rule of law and enhance the judicial system, as well as to upgrade border management. In addition, the country has been able to access loans worth €850 million in the sectors of energy, water and sanitation, transportation and small enterprises development thanks to EU grants. These are used to increase the concessional nature of loans from international financial institutions or absorb political and economic risks.

Across the region, the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis has mobilised €336 million for Jordan through programmes that benefit Jordanian hosts and Syrian refugees. These programs focus on education, livelihoods, health, protection, and the water sector. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the European Union hosted the Brussels I, II and III conferences to encourage the international community to accompany the EU in stepping forward to meet the needs of countries, such as Jordan, that have been negatively affected by the Syrian crisis. In 2019, the EU led a High-level Mission to Jordan, with the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and French, German and British institutions, to confirm international support and identify key structural reforms and investments.

PROMOTING SOCIAL COHESION TO ENHANCE CHILDREN'S WELLBEING



Socio-economic development



2017-2019



€1.4 million

Improvement of the Quality of Education, the program that is part of the Madrasati (“My School”) programme, seeks to improve the social cohesion between Jordanian and Syrian children, their parents and the school personnel, while improving the quality of education for all schoolchildren.

The 18-month project targeted 100 double shifts schools – institutions that teach one group of students in the morning and another in the afternoon – across refugee camps and host communities. It offered grants aimed at infrastructure renovation and upgrade, capacity building activities and mentorship programmes for teachers and students. It also organised community events and sensitisation campaigns to bring parents and members of the local communities closer together.

Approximately 115,000 students benefited from the project, as well as 500 Jordanian and Syrian parents.





Playground for peace

In the playground of the Khadija Bent Khawyled school in Ajloun, in northern Jordan, running children are giggling while tossing footballs at each other. A picture of schoolchildren that seems normal to an unexperienced eye, but that shows “*the long way the school has come,*” according to teacher Enas Zaki.

The school, located 50 km from the Syrian border, is one of the 100 institutions working on the so-called double shift system, which was implemented to accommodate the soaring number of Syrian refugee children. It allows two shifts of teaching: an early session, 7am - 12:30pm, is held for local Jordanian students while a later session, 1pm - 4:30pm, is held for Syrian students.

“We have Jordanian and Syrian students at the school and, every day, as school hours are over, students from both shifts meet. They usually were hostile, bullying and picking on each other,” Enas explains, a double shift teacher herself. *“So, when Madrasati proposed the initiatives concept, the first idea we thought of was a playground.”*

The playground, which is being used for all sorts of activities in addition to sports, has helped improve the relationship between students from both sessions, reducing the tensions inside and outside of school.

“We implemented activities that foster the integration of Jordanian and Syrian students. And, after that, the students in turn inspired us with their own ideas of ways to socialise with each other.”

Rasha Na’San, a Syrian mother whose kids study at the school, agrees, *“I have sensed a positive impact on my children. The school really benefited from the students’ new energy.”*

“As a mother, I used to worry about my children’s safety, fighting with other kids and getting injured,” she admits, noting that she is much reassured now that they have a safe space to play together.

STITCHING CULTURAL INFLUENCES TOGETHER



Socio-economic development



2014-2019



€5.6 million

Co-funded by the European Union and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Creative Mediterranean project seeks to develop hubs of creative and cultural enterprises in the Southern Mediterranean.

Operating under the Creative Jordan Cluster, the project fosters cooperation between Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in the creative sector by improving entrepreneurship, innovation, product design and marketing capacities.

In turn, this capacity-building helps the enterprises collaborating under this cluster to access new markets, which ultimately contributes to sustainable and inclusive economic growth and job creation.



A woman in a dark, patterned jacket is seen from the side, looking out over a cityscape. The city is filled with buildings and roads, and the sky is a mix of blue and white, suggesting a clear day. The woman's hands are clasped together, and she has red nail polish. The overall mood is contemplative and modern.

Reviving Bedouin heritage through fashion

“As a Jordanian woman, I wanted to pay tribute to my roots while offering a modern take on a long revered tradition,” explains Dina Maqdah, one of the young fashion designers behind JO!, the first ever industrial-based Jordanian fashion collection.

“The Bedouin world is our main source of inspiration, as we translated traditional drawings into asymmetric, unusual embroidery placements. We did not want to copy existing models, but rather create contemporary pieces that were adapted to the international market, to help our culture survive and to improve our living conditions,” Dina continues, as she describes the collection’s pieces as *“sophisticated, casual and unexpected.”*

Through its modern reinterpretation of Bedouin traditional clothing, JO! aims to revive the unique Jordanian embroidery stitch which has gradually disappeared over the years. The brand also uses traditional Indigo-Blue fabric, hand-dyed by local women from underprivileged areas, to replace contemporary denim fabric.

But the challenge was compelling. Like many other SMEs operating in the Jordanian market, the group of creators behind JO! had little to no connection to textile factories, let alone access to export channels. Through the Creative Jordan cluster, the young female designers were connected to local productive industries, regional markets and fellow designers.

The brand, that began only a little over a year ago, is now well on its way to taking Europe by storm, judging by the positive reaction their collections received at fashion shows in Milan, London and Paris.

“ We are aiming big. We want to take Jordan all around the world,

asserts Zain Mango, one of the other talents behind the brand.

”





LEBANON

Lebanon is a diverse, creative and entrepreneurial country. It is also a major centre of Arab culture, art and publishing.

At the same time, Lebanon now hosts over one million refugees and has the largest per-capita concentration of refugees in the world, the result of regional instability that has magnified the country's economic and social challenges.

As its biggest donor, trading partner and investor, the European Union is working to boost Lebanon's resilience.

The EU has allocated more than €1.7 billion to Lebanon since 2011. More than €350 million of this is being used to promote inclusive growth and job creation through such measures as improving the business environment, diversifying the economy, supporting Small and medium-sized enterprises and providing opportunities to women and youth. EU funds are also being used to support Lebanon's local authorities and regional development, as well as to reinforce the rule of law and enhance security while respecting human rights.

In 2018, the EU offered Lebanon a package of up to €150 million, conditional on reforms, to leverage up to €1.5 billion in loans for capital investment, with EU grants intended to increase the concessional nature of loans from international financial institutions or to absorb political and economic risks. Through the blending mechanism, Lebanon benefitted from EU grants (€40.3 million) that have leveraged total investments of €580 million in the sectors of urban development and roads in 2018-2019.

Across the region, and with a particular focus on Lebanon, the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis has mobilised more than €560million to Lebanon for programmes that benefit Lebanese hosts and Syrian refugees affected by the protracted crisis, with a focus on education, livelihoods, health, protection, and the water sector.

The Trust Fund has allocated more than a half billion euros to Lebanon to date.

In 2017, 2018 and 2019 the European Union hosted the Brussels I, II and III conferences to encourage the international community to accompany the EU in stepping forward to meet the needs of countries such as Lebanon, which have been negatively affected by the crisis in Syria.

WOMEN SHAPING UP THEIR PUBLIC IMPACT



Fostering local governance and socio-economic development



2016-2019



€1 million

The Direct Action for Women: Reform, Inclusion and Confidence (DAWRIC) project was implemented by the British Council and local NGOs and associations with the financial support of the EU.

The project aims to strengthen the capabilities of women in Lebanon to combat poverty, promote gender equality and engage in decision-making processes.

DAWRIC delivers trainings related to creative entrepreneurship skills, English language, media and communication. It also helps improve advocacy and campaign management skills. Furthermore, it provides platforms where women can share their experiences with peers, for example during panel discussions. The project offers funding to 21 community initiatives implemented at grassroots levels by women NGOs.

In two years, DAWRIC benefited a total of 4,000 women across 22 towns around Lebanon.





Painting a brighter future

When she looks back at her personal journey, Faten Mehri says she feels much more powerful. A mother of two boys, one of whom suffers from a severe form of autism, this 39-year-old Lebanese woman has endured tremendous hardship in recent years, especially after her husband's death a few years ago.

Yet, she says she keeps on laughing and smiling: *"God has given me the strength to keep fighting. After all, life is beautiful, so you have to live it!"*

Faten credits much of her optimism to the support she received from the Voice for Lebanese Woman centre in Chiyah, an NGO which helps families experiencing difficulties, mainly by offering day care for those in need.

"Initially, it was just to place my son, Loubnan, in a nursery so he would not be affected too much by his brother's behaviour," she recalls. "But this quickly became a place that allowed me to let off steam and occupy my mind through their various free activities."

After losing her husband to cancer, Faten decided to enrol in the centre's pottery workshop, where she learned about art, woodwork, cardboard work and decoration to make pots and pictures. *"It did me a world of good. I was able to use my suffering to create something useful. When I was there, I didn't think about anything else."*

Faten also says this helped her bounce back financially, as she managed to sell some of her creations. *"Given my situation, even if I sold just one or two paintings, it would make a huge difference to our daily life," she stresses, rejoicing that, "these workshops have also shown me what I am capable of. They made me realise that if I put my mind to something, I can achieve it."* Faten allows herself to dream:

// If one day, for example, I decide to open a shop and sell my creations, I know that I'll be able to achieve it.



PROVIDING MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO A SOCIALLY VULNERABLE WORK FORCE



Promoting growth and job creation



2016-2019



€15 billion

The EU Private Sector Development Programme (PSDP) seeks to provide financial and non-financial services to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) active in the wood processing and agribusiness sectors in Lebanon. The intention is to help them increase their competitiveness, productivity and participation in the economy.

Through the reorganisation of the country's MSMEs into stronger sectoral groups, the programme pursues a more collaborative, efficient and cost-effective use of inputs and resources, with a focus on the vulnerable sectors of wood processing and agrifood.

The PSDP brings together workers from similar fields, allowing them to share their experiences and improve their access to finance, so they can establish a stronger market position. Ultimately, the programme seeks to increase production and sales so that enterprises can have the financial breathing room to create jobs or at least not feel pressed to cut existing jobs.





Coming together to revive the golden age of Tripoli's woodmaking

Bustling around the woodworking machines inside the Minjara workshop, 27-year-old Mohamad al-Nizam looks like he has been doing this carpentry work his entire life.

Yet, Mohamad's career almost came to an end two years ago, when he had to sell the family's carpentry business in the wake of the country's economic crisis. *"It was really hard for me personally, but also for the whole woodworking sector of Tripoli,"* the young artisan remembers, a sentiment that was seconded by Raafat Nachabi, a company owner who explains that he had to lay off several of his employees after the crisis.

Thanks to a collective entreprise implemented with the support of Expertise France, the two men started regaining hope. They now regularly gather at the Minjara platform, a 1500m² renovated building in the heart of Lebanon's second largest city. *"Our aim was to support these very small enterprises, often family-based, and help them to think innovatively about the way they manage, design and offer their products,"* Julien Schmitt, from Expertise France, explains. *"We have really put an emphasis on the preservation of the traditional aspect of their work, as these artisans represent the rare remaining relays of Tripoli's cultural heritage,"* he adds.

Hit by a harsh economic crisis a few years ago, Tripoli's carpenters and manufacturers saw their sales drop dramatically, along with their revenues. The local hub therefore appeared as a much-needed collective solution for these artisans, bringing them together to regain a decent living and preserve the soul of the wood-making tradition.

"Coming here gives me new experiences and I am expanding my knowledge of traditional techniques. Working together with fellow craftsmen has taught me a lot," Mohamad says, adding that, *"it really gave me a new chance at life...it is essential that this platform continues to operate."*

Next to him, Ibrahim Kurdi, in his thirties, agrees. Despite his 15 year-experience in furniture painting, he says Minjara has become necessary for him to be able to sell his products and earn an income. He comes to the workshop regularly to exchange with his peers, build his network, and most importantly, exhibit his work to potential clients.





PALESTINE*

The European Commission's support to the Palestinians and the Palestine Authority is based on a joint partnership, founded upon the Interim Association Agreement on Trade and Cooperation. It was signed in 1997 between the European Community and the Palestine Liberation Organisation on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. The EU is united in its commitment to achieving a two-state solution that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict.

The EU is the most important, reliable and predictable partner for the Palestinian people. It is active in the Gaza Strip and throughout the West Bank, including Areas A, B and C and East Jerusalem, to support the development of accountable and transparent institutions of a future Palestinian state. It has a strong and increasing focus on economic empowerment and job creation, and is particularly active in the water and energy sectors. It works to support a vibrant Palestinian civil society.

* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

EMPOWERING FEMALE BUSINESS LEADERS



Sustainable Economic Development



2016-ongoing



€3.5 million

The EU's Business Start-Up Incubators Programme (BSIS) empowers female Palestinian entrepreneurs and enables them to turn their ideas into viable businesses.

Implemented by the Belgian Development Agency (Enabel), BSIS seeks to enhance women entrepreneurs' skills to make their start-ups more competitive and financially sustainable. It does so by providing institutional capacity building to incubators and business training and coaching to entrepreneurs. They manage this through informational sessions and by leveraging a digital platform on access to finance.

The programme also promotes small business services through a business voucher scheme for start-ups and existing micro, small and medium enterprises.

As of 2019, BSIS supported a total of 127 start-ups across 6 incubators, a majority of which were women owned.





Entrepreneurship coaching to further language learning

When it comes to female education in Palestine, trends have been shifting over the past two decades; more females than males are graduating from high school and university. Nonetheless, women continue to face challenges as they enter the job market. Their wages are less in comparison to men doing similar jobs, and very few women make it up the employment ladder to executive positions.

Thanks to the Business Start-up Incubators Program (BSIS), Amal Aljojo, an English Language and Education graduate, escaped that fate. Right after graduation, she created an educational game dubbed “Cards of Playing and Interaction (COPI)”.

“The game addresses the problem of weak teaching of English as a foreign language and children’s spelling in English,” Amal explains, noting that the game consists of various puzzles, game boards and word dictionaries that teach students in grades 1-3 spelling and word usage.

“I participated in a training camp on business planning and business model development which helped me shape the direction I was heading in,” Amal explains. *“Afterwards, I continued to receive counselling through consultants provided by the incubator.”*

She says the programme also helped her in marketing and has been “her companion” since she joined.

Amal expresses great ambitions for the future. *“My goal is to target other age groups beside elementary grade students. Furthermore, I want to get COPI patented and to translate the game’s concept to other languages by reaching out to other organisations outside Palestine.”*

LEARNING TO LOVE AND LIVE SCIENCE IN EAST JERUSALEM



Education / Sustainable Economic Development



2017-ongoing



Over €12 million annually

Under the East Jerusalem Programme, the EU aims to strengthen the resilience of Palestinian East Jerusalem residents and preserve the Palestinian character of the city through a multi-sectoral investment. The programme covers a broad range of areas: education and health, social inclusion, private sector development, community empowerment and human rights.

One of its implementers is the Al-Nayzak Organisation for Supportive Education and Scientific Innovation, with which the EU seeks to develop a new culture of scientific education in Palestine through the introduction of innovative, interactive and participatory approaches to teaching science in Palestinian schools.

By encouraging Palestinian youth to think in logical, critical, and creative ways to advance scientific innovation, this project aims to provide sustainable economic opportunities and to advance the everyday lives of Palestinians.





Entering the world of science

Like many children his age, Mohammad Mtour, 15, says he always struggled with understanding science and its benefits for his daily life.

“I used to hate science because it was difficult for me to understand and boring. I just memorised what teachers wrote on the blackboard without understanding anything,” recalls the teenage boy from Shu’fat neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. Mohammad is now telling a whole different story after attending the al-Nayzak Talented Students’ Incubator and the Jerusalem Innovation Park programme, which is supported by the EU.

“Now, science has become an interesting and entertaining subject. The al-Nayzak teacher uses practical activities to present the materials, so I do not forget what I learn with them,

explains Mohammad with a smile.

He says that in addition to giving him a better understanding of the concept of scientific research and its application in his daily life, the programme also provided him with confidence to speak in public.

With the aim to spread a culture of science and technology education and innovation in Jerusalem, the incubator has already helped 210 students, aged 8-15, to enter the world of science.

UNRWA: SUPPORTING A DIGNIFIED LIFE FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES

The EU acknowledges and supports the essential contribution made by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to the well-being, protection and human development of Palestine refugees. Generations of Palestine refugees have been educated and provided with opportunities to live in dignity thanks to the efforts of UNRWA.

The strategic partnership between the European Union and UNRWA has been based on the shared objective to support the human development, humanitarian and protection needs of Palestine refugees, and to promote stability in the Middle East.

The European Union is a dependable and predictable supporter of UNRWA and is the Agency's single largest donor. Between 2016 and 2018 the total contribution of the EU and its Member States combined reached approximately €1.4 billion.

In parallel, the EU supports UNRWA's internal reform process while reconfirming the crucial role the Agency plays in providing vital assistance to refugees in need in the Middle East.



WELCOME TO SCOTLAND





SYRIA

Syria has been entangled in a protracted conflict that has caused unspeakable suffering and has set the country back decades in terms of human development and economic performance. According to the UN, over 13 million people inside Syria need humanitarian assistance, and 6.6 million Syrians are internally displaced. In addition, 5.6 million Syrians are registered as refugees in other countries.

Following the eruption of the crisis in Syria and its violent repression, the EU suspended its bilateral ties with the Syrian regime. Still, throughout the turmoil, the EU has continued to address the needs of the civilian population ranging from lifesaving humanitarian aid to resilience assistance, as well as support in the fields of accountability and human rights.

The EU and its Member States are, together, the largest donor to the international response of the Syrian conflict. Since 2011, the EU has mobilised almost €17 billion to provide humanitarian, stabilisation and resilience assistance to those affected by the civil war, both within Syria and the wider region. Much of this has been provided via the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis that supported Syrian refugees in the region and assists neighbouring countries hosting them (see box).

Since 2011, over €1.3 billion has been allocated to key sectors such as protection, education, support to livelihoods, civil society capacity building, health and cultural preservation.

The European Union has hosted multiple international events to promote a lasting political solution to the conflict and to highlight the need for the international community to step forward and meet the needs of individuals whose lives have been upended. These have included the Brussels I, II and III conferences in 2017, 2018 and 2019 that brought together donors, politicians and experts on the subject, along with meetings of the Core Donor Group of top contributors, hosted by the European Commission since 2012.

SKILLING UP FOR THE FUTURE



Resilience programming



2016-ongoing



€15 million

The Syria Resilience Consortium (SRC) was formed by six INGOs operating inside Syria with the goal of equipping individuals, families, and communities with tools and skills to support a better economic future.

The consortium helps Syrians to improve their living conditions through cash-for-work programmes, vocational training and apprenticeship placements, as well as small business grants and agricultural input distribution. It provides support to vulnerable households through training on agriculture and food production and cash transfers, thus contributing to the reduction of households' debts and food insecurity.





Dismantling the obstacles of war

“I can dismantle and assemble a laptop without misplacing any of its parts,” asserts Reem*, a bright young woman who looks nothing like the typical laptop and service technician.

The 22-year-old Syrian was the only woman in her class to finish a vocational training course on computer maintenance provided by the Syria Resilience Consortium. *“In this course, I learned about hardware and software, a specialisation that was difficult at first but that brought me a lot.”*

“I know that all these technological problems have solutions and that, through practice, I can be more comfortable and confident in this field,” continues Reem, who was supported by her mother and two sisters in her career path.

“*The idea started after I finished my baccalaureate and enrolled at an Institute of Computer Studies, specialising in Software Engineering. The specialisation was difficult at first, but there were things that attracted me to learning more about it,*

Reem said.

”

Reem now works at a store specialised in computer repairs and maintenance, where she earns a much better income than many of her peers inside war-torn Syria. *“Financially, my income has increased due to my new skills.”*

The vocational training course Reem completed, which is offered alongside carpentry, knitting and aluminium-based handicrafts, seeks to teach new, marketable skills to Syrian youth to help them increase their employability and find jobs.

“I changed a lot after the course. It has been a real turning point in my life. I am better at organising my time, and I think differently about my future,” Reem underscores, as she voices her hope to learn new things and *“overcome obstacles that may stand in my way.”*

*Reem’s name has been changed for data protection and confidentiality purposes.

CATCHING UP ON THE FUTURE



Education and protection



2016-2019



€12.1 million

Supported by the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the program “Back to the Future” seeks to improve school readiness, inclusion and retention for children victim of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon and Jordan.

The project operates on various levels of the educational process: it implements early childhood development programmes, provides basic literacy and numeracy activities, and offers foreign language courses and homework support.

Back to the Future also works to repair and renovate school facilities and offers school transportation to children, in addition to proposing psychosocial support and awareness raising sessions about children’s rights to education.





The joys of learning again

Sidra, 10 years old, lives in Hara al Tanak, a slum in the heart of the Northern Lebanese port city of Tripoli.

She attends a local school supported by the 'Back to the Future' project, where her and her Syrian and Lebanese classmates, aged between 2 and 17 years old, benefit from catch-up educational programmes.

Due to the Syrian crisis, most of these children either missed out on school for several years or never had prior schooling.

Although she is already 10, Sidra is still focusing on basic literacy and numeracy. Studious, she says she is happy to learn the alphabet and play at the centre, where she is also making a lot of friends.

"They're all my friends," the young girl says with a smile, noting that this school has given her a safe haven where she sometimes comes even outside of school hours, *"to play with my friends or to receive some homework which I do at home."*

EU REGIONAL TRUST FUND IN RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS

Since its establishment in December 2014, and following the London conference on Syria (2016) and the Brussels conferences on the Future of Syria and the Region (2017; 2018; 2019), an increasing share of the EU support for Syrian refugees and Syria's neighbouring countries has been provided through the EU Regional Trust Fund.

This single and flexible instrument addresses the educational, economic and social needs of Syrian refugees, while also supporting overstretched local communities and their administrations.

Bridging the nexus between humanitarian relief and development aid, the EUTF covers:

- Early recovery, resilience and self-reliance needs of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in a manner that also benefits local communities and preserves the stability of neighbouring countries.
- Support to countries hosting refugees by investing in health and education, economic development, job creation and integration into labour markets. This targets both local communities and refugees, especially vulnerable groups such as women and youth.

As of 2019:

- 252,291 children have access to quality education
- 29,790 youth have access to higher education & vocational training
- 352,649 vulnerable people have access to protection services
- 554,719 vulnerable people benefit from livelihoods & resilience support
- 1,116,185 people have access to medical care & health services
- 274,241 vulnerable people have access to water & sanitation services

The EUTF has reached a total volume of more than €1.8 billion to date.





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