



EU Med means Business

Shaping the future
of entrepreneurship in the South

21-22 **Brussels**
May 2019 | Belgium

EU Med means business – shaping the future of entrepreneurship in the South: 12 Priorities for Action

On May 21st and 22nd 2019 more than 150 young company founders, entrepreneurs, economic experts and business practitioners from North Africa and the Middle East convened upon the invitation of the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, to discuss challenges and solutions for the future of entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean South.

At the same time, and as part of the same effort, young company founders and entrepreneurs met in Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt to draw up elements and priorities to be presented to the plenary.

The participants have agreed on, voted and hereby submit the following recommendations to Commissioner Hahn in person, and, symbolically, to all those, on both sides of the Mediterranean, who will shape economic policies and the partnership between the EU and its Southern Neighbours in the future.

The participants wish that these elements shall be taken into consideration by governments, international organisations and international financial institutions and the media alike, in order to enable the building of more prosperous partnerships and resilient societies, to which entrepreneurship can, in their view, make a significant contribution.

These 12 recommendations are the priorities to be implemented by policy makers across the region and in the EU to, among other important goals, attract quality investment, create viable ecosystems for entrepreneurship, stimulate innovation and start-ups, and enable SMEs to grow and create jobs.

I

To enable the emergence of a functioning entrepreneurship ecosystem we recommend to:

1.

Connect these entrepreneurial ecosystems to the public sector via public-private partnerships and to the society via NGOs, to ensure that innovations will be transferred from the ecosystem to national economies and societies, and that the requirements of the traditional institutions will be integrated.

2.

Consider the entrepreneurial ecosystem a potential testing ground for progressive legislation on business law, as well as in related fields such as anti-corruption, gender equality and decentralised decision-making in public administration.



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II

To ensure that investments create sustainable and decent jobs we recommend to:

1..

Encourage innovative ways of education for better human skills, critical thinking and problem solving, early on.

2.

Create frameworks of collaboration in the region inspired by the Smart Africa initiative that is building hubs and clusters in many countries across the continent.

III

To bring down barriers to growth for MSMEs we recommend to:

1.

Foster dialogue between EU and Mediterranean business clusters and business communities and in particular between business communities and entrepreneurs in the Neighbourhood (e.g. South-South, South-East).

2.

Set up differentiated tax systems according to the stage of advancement of the company and not necessarily its nature, e.g. social enterprise, start-up or very small enterprises (VSE).

IV

To boost innovation and the creation of companies we recommend to:

1.

Create meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs) for incubators to evaluate their impact, in particular for those funded by public and governmental donors.

2.

Provide exchange programs between accelerators and incubators across borders. This will open up new markets for start-ups and give access to their networks.



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V

To allow young people to acquire the necessary skills and develop an entrepreneurial mind set we recommend to:

1.

Support training to SMEs in the Neighbourhood with regard to compliance, health, safety, environmental standards to enable them to sell goods and services to large and multinational corporations.

2.

Put in place measures to address the problems encountered at the business idea stage, particularly: support education systems that encourage critical thinking; mainstream entrepreneurship into school curricula; grant access to finance without personal exposure in case of failure ; enforce copyrights protection; further business mentorship in rural areas; establish an office to guide entrepreneurs through the preparation of paper work and permits.

VI

To attract and keep talent, a valuable resource for entrepreneurs, we recommend to:

1.

Articulate a new narrative about the world of work, and integrate digital and traditional manufacturing. A digital transition and decent jobs can be achieved.

2.

Introduce tax incentives within employment taxation to encourage businesses to recruit more talented workers.