

Thank for this annual meeting of CESE and for giving the floor to social partners.

BUSINESSMED exists since 2002 counterpart of BUSINessEurope, regional employers organizations regrouping more than 20 country members from EuroMed region and its projects is a clear example of how multilateral organisations of different types and nature could work together for the economic development of the Mediterranean region within a multi-level approach.

I will present some concrete actions we had this last 3 years only:

Internationalisation – Networks have been strengthened through **12** Roadshows and Matching Fora connecting business operators, business support organisations and investors from the region via multisectoral initiatives tackling added value sectors of the economies (traditional and non-traditional sectors – from artificial intelligence to robotics to agro-industry) of Med countries and dimension, such as **access to finance** and alternative source of financing.

The approach has been slightly amended to cope with the covid19 pandemic. BUSINESSMED is migrating the B2B opportunities in the **Business Country Desk platform**, a virtual marketplace that will gather together investors, SMEs, state and non-state authorities, civil society actors and local authorities and that will be launched on January 12, 2021 with our Italian Presidency Confindustria & our Egyptian VP, FEI. The platform will host more than **3 thousand** economic stakeholders by the end of 2023. B2B online will be also available starting by 2021 in collaboration with ITC EuroMed helpdesk

Capacity Building – **1325** BSOs executives, SMEs, private and public sectors representatives as well as institutions have been trained on managerial and operational skills particularly for employers organizations with ITCILO.

The need of strengthening or reinforcing services within employers involved in the action resulted in the development of **7 services' prototypes and the injection of 8 new services within the intermediary organizations** dealing particularly with the digitalization strategy of their business models and services' portfolio, digital savvy businesses, CSR and the integration of digital technologies such as regional platforms in the value proposition to employers and affiliated SMEs. The activities developed target mainly Employers' Organisations, Women in Business NGOs and Economic Development Agencies of the Euromed region and include innovative tools to help SMEs going international, redefining the export strategy, as our partner AFAEMME

Digitalisation: a set of 13 training seminars have been held and are still ongoing to explore the state of art of BSOs in delivering digital services to the Med business community.

Several Technical assistance missions have been carried out in Belgium and Italy with concrete results in terms of partnerships established and replication of best practices. The twinning exercise have highlighted similarities between Northern and Southern BSOs as well as the need to reinforce some key departments of Southern BSOs (EU Project and Export Units) and the possible cooperation in launching new SMEs' innovation clusters in Palestine

Women empowerment - The gender mainstreaming as cross-cutting priority has been a process for promoting gender equality, which in turn can facilitate the achievement of other developmental goals, including economic goals. Women-led organisations, professionals and SMEs have been mobilised in all the operations carried in 2019, reaching a **42 % rate of involvement**.

Policy:

Employers, Chambers of Commerce and Investment Promotion Agencies will produce by the end of the year a set of regional recommendations on the way forward, to address the challenges that SMEs and investors are facing. This includes roadmaps for the Mediterranean private sector on topics linked to sustainable development, vocational training, green deal and blue economy, investments and aftercare strategies

Employers Thematic Committees have been established and will lead to the drafting of regional economic outlooks reports that will be presented beginning of December 2021 (Women on board, Renewable energies, Vocational training)

From a larger perspective, the lessons learnt and the experience in the field of Euromed development affairs as well as the incumbent circumstances linked to the crisis have brought several new ideas to gather institutional stakeholders around two regional **Committees on private sector and social dialogue led by BUSINESSMED, endorsed by the UfM and international partners.**

Talking about UfM, we also participates in all HLWG with tripartite concertation and the Ministerial declaration and also bilateral with Beurope, Atuc, Etuc. In the last one in Cascais, the Min Decla also supported and highlited our common project, and by the way it was also a point of the declaration of ESEC in 2018.

The project SOLiD1

Between 2016 and 2019, three different phases have been implemented. **The mobilization phase** focused on the diagnosis of social dialogue institutions and structure through capacity building workshops. During the **dialogue** phase, concrete bipartite, tripartite and multipartite with EuroMed SEC

discussions between the social partners have strengthened the practice of social dialogue via seminars, workshops, exchanges and study visits. On the other side the **convergence** phase included bipartite concertation between Employers and Trade Unions in view of the strengthening of a community of practice around the social dialogue and capitalize on a multi-stakeholders' united vision on principles and good practices of social dialogue in the region.

The concertation between Employers' Federations, Trade Unions, Civil Society Organisations, Local Authorities & CES from Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and the EU countries led to the implementation of **80** activities and the mobilisation of **1196** representatives of social partners within the National Capacity building workshops; **176** beneficiaries involved in the dialogue with local authorities; **102** experts trained on social dialogue; **8** Focal groups on Migration, decent work and social rights; **2** exchange visits between the Tunisian and German Social Partners (DGB – BDA – UGTT – UTICA); **22** publications taking the form of diagnosis studies on social partners' attitudes and positions towards social dialogue content and practises in the region including an in-depth analysis of the economic, political, social and institutional conditionalities of social dialogue in the Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan along with a **database** as a learning and working instrument for social partners in sharing experience in the region.

The whole process led to the drafting of a unique document, the **charter for the promotion of social dialogue** between Employers', Trade Unions and Civil Society Organisations. The programmatic document is based on twelve principles that consolidates social dialogue culture between the social parties with the aim of institutionalizing this dialogue by improving working conditions and providing a suitable environment for economic development.

The Charter on the promotion of social dialogue was signed by the Ministers of Social Affairs of the target countries as well as the Trade Unions, Employers, Civil society organizations besides the project's consortium during SOLiD's closing conference in Brussels on March 14th 2019 in CESE headquarter. It was followed by the official adoption of SOLiD's charter in the sidelines of the UfM Ministerial Meeting on April 2nd 2019, in Cascais – Portugal.

SOLiD has been a collective intelligent response to a complex and difficult situation, politically, economically and socially. Moreover SOLiD was a “Relational Platform” between social actors, guided by a balanced rational dialogue on Social and Societal Dialogue. SOLiD addressed the long-standing mistrust relationships among social partners. The active role played, and impetus provided by the social partners and regional organizations in mobilizing and steering social partners and beneficiaries is a lesson to be taken into account in the implementation of future projects.

For future steps, the establishment of a regional SD Centre for research studies, training, and SD workshops among social partners could target “Leadership” in TUs, Employer Associations, Civil Society, and Government officials, to reinforce SD concept and sustainable development particularly with the 2nd phase of SOLiD with ITUC & ILO.

Finally, vulgarization of the social dialogue in the region is still very important. Continue the exchange of experience North- South and across the region and explore all potential synergies with other EU Initiatives or other donors must be explored.

BUSINESSMED has built around its activities a portfolio of activities with international partners such as the ILO, the ITCILO (Actemp), BUSINESSSEUROPE, the International Trade Union Confederation and other non-state actors.