



On 9 October 2018, 26 young women and men representing youth organizations from 20 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region gathered in Lisbon, Portugal, for the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Forum "Shaping the Digital Future" co-organized by the Regional Program South Mediterranean of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The forum was held on the sidelines of the high-level UfM Women Conference 2018, where the following joint youth declaration was presented to an international audience:

### **Joint Declaration**

With this statement, we - the participants of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Forum 2018 - voice our collective vision for the digital future and declare our firm commitment to facilitate equal opportunities for young men and women in a world that is constantly changing, bit by bit, through the development of new technologies and the continuous digital transformation.

We convened in Lisbon because we believe that discrimination that is based on gender is still affecting a high number of young people across the region, especially young women. Opportunities and the access to rights should be granted equally to youth of all genders.

In a world of growing nationalism and isolation, building social, economic, and digital bridges across the Euro-Mediterranean region is of utmost importance. To shape a just society for our future generations, we all share the following vision.

#### **-- Educating --**

Education remains a key to active citizenship, equipping young people for an ever-changing life in the 21st century. For young people to be empowered in the current environment, educational methods need to be more inclusive, personalized, participative, learner-centered and accessible for all.

#### **-- Inspiring --**

All around the world, young people continuously contribute to positive change in their communities. There are many examples of young influencers that serve as role models for kids and youngsters within our region. We need to promote the visibility of people that have the power and the outreach, especially into local communities, to inspire people to take action by themselves.

#### **-- Empowering --**

Already today there are many young people that are ready to take action but that do not feel sufficiently equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to turn their aspirations into reality. Thus, we need to foster digital tools and regional exchange that can help young people to self-develop the skills needed for them to seize or create their own opportunities. Only joint efforts of governments and the private sector can create the necessary environment for us to drive innovation and youth entrepreneurship.

To achieve our vision, we recommend the following action plan.



## Educating

- Fostering the use of e-learning platforms that enable students to independently learn while teachers can track their individual progress and thus offer personalized support.
- It is crucial to move from the current passive, front education to interactive education methods, for example by making use of methods like the flipped classroom concept or virtual learning tools.
- The education system should adapt to the increasing digital opportunities on the job market. Standard curricula should include education on digital tools.
- Considering the rising number of mental health issues among young people all around the region, the development of soft skills and self-awareness needs to be a crucial part of education to young people. In this context, we emphasize the recognition of the vital role of non-formal education and thus suggest to further support youth organizations and institutions that are engaged in non-formal education.
- Any advertisement that promotes gender-based stereotypes and, thus, leads to discrimination, should be forbidden by law.

## Inspiring

- Young people must understand their rights and what they are capable of. We must, for instance, create easily understandable and accessible online and offline content that is adapted to local contexts and that serves for inspiring women and youth by sharing local success stories from their respective communities.
- Hosting publicly accessible Webinars with local change-makers and influencers.

## Empowering

- In order to reinvent entrepreneurship and support youth-led startups and innovation - a powerful way of boosting the participation of young people in the labour market - the groundwork for a Euro-Mediterranean startup ecosystem needs to be laid out. This includes a flexible legal framework, which allows transnational transactions and creates harmonized banking systems between the UfM member states.
- For building an enabling environment for innovative startups, financial incentives need to be put in place to attract investors and encourage young people to start their own enterprises. The *Afric'Up* Africa StartUp Summit in Tunis is a very promising example of connecting young people and private sector investors.
- Regional exchange programs and summits that establish a network among young entrepreneurs from the UfM member states can support the exchange of best practices and innovative knowledge.
- Having access to quality telecommunication infrastructure is crucial to run a business of any kind successfully. Governments and the private sector should thus cooperate in driving the necessary infrastructure developments in selected UfM member states.
- Information on the effective use of digital tools in seizing opportunities and taking action can provide young men and women with better opportunities for inclusion.
- The future of work will be centered around an increasingly digitized project-based economy. To increase digital opportunities for young people in the economy of tomorrow, we suggest acquiring funding for already existing networking platforms, that focus on developing opportunities for young people.