



CLUSTER (C_A.3.1_0014) WP6 – A.6.1.3 Action Plans

CLUSTER Project: Achievements, Lessons learnt and Strategic Orientations V.2

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PART I: ACHIVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNT

Introduction

The **CLUSTER project: advanCing youth and women social inClUSion in the mEditerRanean**, developed out of a collaborative effort spanning seven countries—Spain, Italy, Cyprus, France, Jordan, Palestine, and Tunisia— that tackled social exclusion and poverty amongst vulnerable groups by equipping young people, particularly women, who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs).

The essence of CLUSTER lies in its commitment to creating a conducive environment for the employment of NEETs, notably women aged between 18-30, through the development of employability skills in four crucial sectors—Blue Economy, Circular Economy, Green Economy, and Sustainable Agriculture. This endeavour seeks to forge enduring partnerships between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and the private sector. Moreover, it strives to raise awareness among public authorities and policymakers, fostering a supportive atmosphere for youth and women employment schemes.

The CLUSTER project has concluded with notable results on the Mediterranean landscape. It aimed to facilitate access to the labour market for 1925 young NEETs, empower 140 teachers and trainers from TVET institutions, engage 140 representatives of the private sector, and influence 180 public authorities and policymakers.

Through targeted online and on-site training courses, coaching, and tutoring actions, CLUSTER sought to bridge the gap for NEETs, offering them a pathway to employment. The project also promoted partnerships, encouraging collaboration between TVET institutions, SMEs, and professional stakeholders in the Sustainable Economy Sectors. The engagement of public institutions and policymakers was not a goal but a necessity, realised through action plans, policy-oriented regional reports, and cross-border advocacy sessions.

The transition from a traditional to a sustainable economy necessitated a paradigm shift, both in terms of training and the implementation of skill sets. Education, training, and sustainability converged, giving rise to new perspectives on training resources.

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The project, funded under the ENI CBC MED programme, has produced remarkable outcomes, enabling good practices across Mediterranean region. These transformative practices encompass an approach to the green economy, strategically designed to mitigate environmental impacts and cultivate resilient, sustainable, and equitable economies. Moreover, the project has played a role in supporting SMEs, start-ups, and entrepreneurs by fostering the creation of business and investment plans, promoting innovative business models, and cultivating new markets. Furthermore, CLUSTER has championed the exchange of knowledge and best practices among its partners, fostering collaboration and project efficiency. The project's commitment to heightened visibility aims to position the Mediterranean as a competitive, innovative, and appealing business destination, showcasing the region's potential.

The following pages will provide with an explanation of the project's development by presenting a schematic visual strategy of the project, as well as an infographic of CLUSTER's development plan and phases. Secondly, the key good practices will be highlighted through CLUSTER's capitalization journey, explaining the insights provided by the project's trainers and reflecting on the lessons learned from using E-Learning as a tool. This document provides with the results of the research conducted on the four thematic pillars around which the project has worked: Blue, Circular and Green Economies, as well as Sustainable Agriculture. In order to provide a comprehensive explanation of the project, also it will explore each of the partnering countries specificities and differences during the implementation of CLUSTER. Finally, the report provides with an inventory of projects in the Euro-Mediterranean area that respond to CLUSTER's mission and approach.

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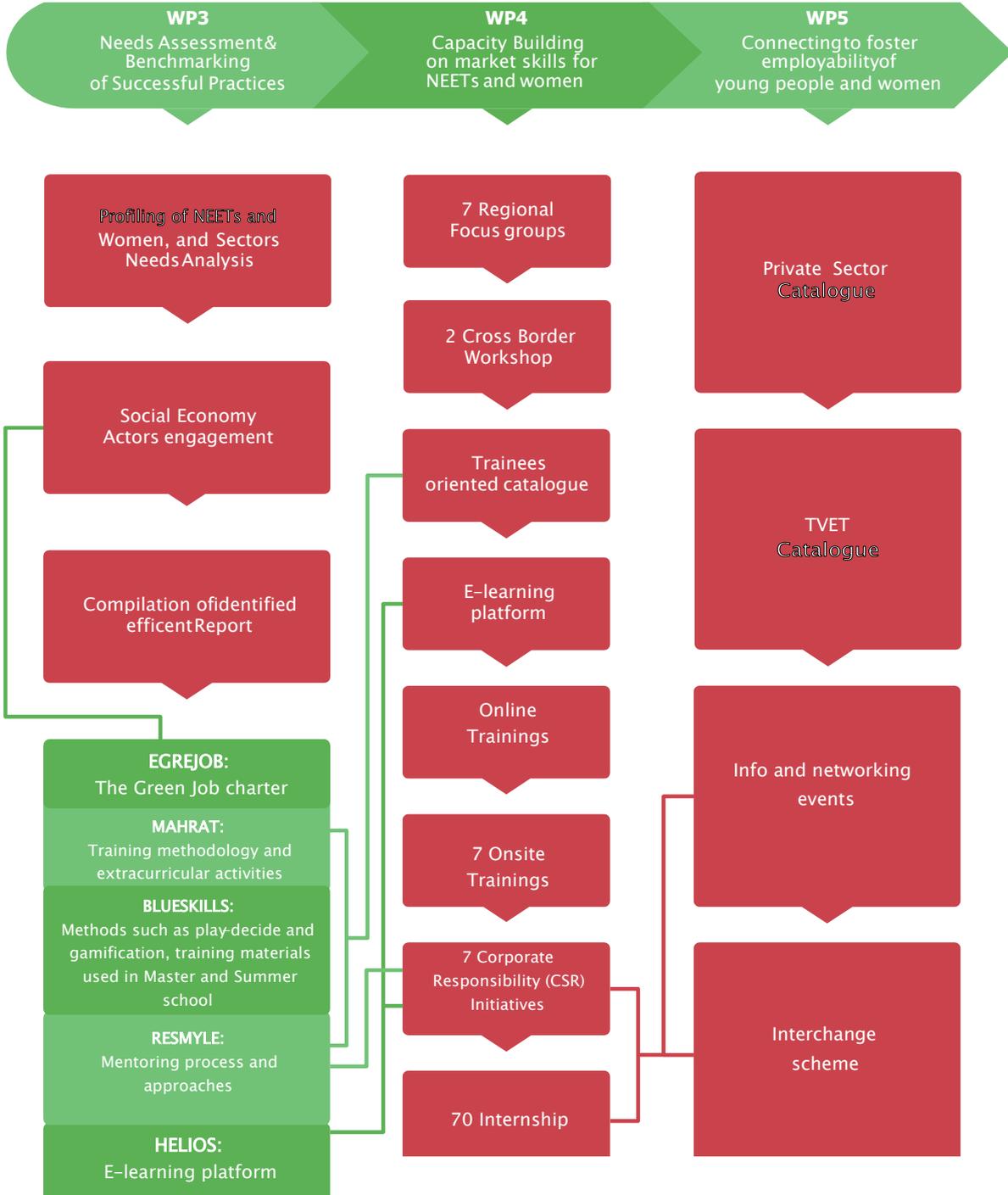
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CLUSTER at a Glance



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Capitalisation of innovative actions: challenges for inclusive labour market

The 'CLUSTER – Advancing Youth and Women Social Inclusion in the Mediterranean' project tackles several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, specifically, the 4th goal, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The aim of the project is to create a **supportive environment for youth and women employment schemes, focusing on NEETs** (People not in education, employment or training), especially for young women (between 18 and 30 years of age), and in **four sectors of the Sustainable Economy** (these are Blue Economy, Circular Economy, Green Economy, and Sustainable Agriculture). Lastly, it also aims to create permanent links and partnerships between the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and the private sector. These axes are significant in the reshaping of the economy in which the intervention takes place, as the shift from a traditional economy to a more sustainable economy entails a process of transformation both in terms of training and implementation of certain skillssets.

The primary goal of CLUSTER is to disseminate project knowledge and results across Mediterranean countries, targeting key stakeholders such as public authorities and policymakers. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, capitalization activities are highlighted as essential for revitalising the Mediterranean basin by promoting successful practices from previous projects.

Additionally, the CLUSTER Consortium plans to collaborate in identifying tools to transfer key project outputs, including tools to foster marketable skills among NEETs (with a focus on women), catalogues for trainees, TVET, and the private sector, and regional and cross-border action plans with policy recommendations. The utilization of ICT-based solutions, such as shared platforms, to enhance knowledge access, encourage result reuse, and strengthen national and regional CLUSTERS.

Upon the conclusion of the project, it has been observed that it has successfully implemented several impactful good practices to stimulate innovation and competitiveness in the Mediterranean region. Key good practices include:

- 1) Developing an integrated approach to the green economy, to reduce environmental impacts and build more resilient, sustainable, and equitable economies.
- 2) Providing support to SMEs, start-up companies and entrepreneurs through the development of business and investment plans, as well as the promotion of innovative business models and the creation of new markets.
- 3) Enhancing the skills and capabilities of the workforce to increase their employability and help them succeed in the globalised economy.
- 4) Promoting the exchange of knowledge and best practices among partners, to enable collaboration and to increase the efficiency of the project.
- 5) Increasing the visibility of the project and its results, to promote the Mediterranean area as a competitive, innovative, and attractive business destination.
- 6) Facilitating the development of partnerships and networks, to create an enabling environment for the development of new products, services, and markets.

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Furthermore, three sets of good practices relating to the development of the project itself were also identified which focus on:

- Firstly, the benefits of E-Learning in international cooperation projects, with emphasis on cost savings, increased access, flexibility, improved communication and enhanced learning experiences. These advantages contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of such projects, particularly in remote or economically constrained regions.
- Secondly, considerations for adapting training programs to local contexts, emphasising the importance of needs assessments, access to local resources, mentorship, progress monitoring, impact assessment, informed future iterations, and ongoing relevance to local needs. These elements collectively ensure that training programs are targeted, effective, and adaptable.
- Thirdly, the advantages of conducting needs assessments in training programs. These include the identification of training needs, improving programme effectiveness, increased participant engagement, saving time and resources, and improving learning outcomes. Needs assessments play a vital role in shaping relevant and impactful training initiatives.

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Training for Employability: E-learning as a tool

To increase NEETs' employability, CLUSTER has **taken E-Learning as a training tool** for the project's beneficiaries.

The CLUSTER E-Learning tools and platform has been developed to assist young people aged 18-30 and women (without age limitations) who are presently unemployed and not enrolled in any education programs. Its primary objective is to enhance their employment opportunities through training courses in four key sectors that contribute to a sustainable economy:

- Blue Economy
- Circular Economy
- Green Economy
- Sustainable Agriculture

Employing a blended learning methodology, students registered for virtual classes, which comprised pre-recorded sessions, assessments, assignments, and self-paced learning materials.

The technical trainings provided encompass Hydroponics in the **Green Sector**, **Aquaponics in the Blue Sector**, **Food processing in the Circular sector**, **Organic farming in sustainable agriculture and Soft skills**. CLUSTER also aims to deliver training in multiple languages across Spain, Italy, France, Cyprus, Jordan, Palestine, and Tunisia.

Utilizing a comprehensive approach known as the **blended scheme**, the platform incorporates self-paced learning, live interactive sessions, recorded sessions for review, and opportunities for peer exchanges. It is built upon the Moodle solution, specifically tailored to address the unique requirements of CLUSTER. **Moodle** was selected for its exceptional flexibility, robust support system, and proficiency in managing **multiple course programs and learning paths, as well as identifying effective programs, teachers, and trainers**.

The platform supports a multilingual interface and content with access to over 100 language packs. It includes features such as Pre and Post Assessments, automated graded activities, automated certification and detailed reports.

The **design of the platform is based on the users' journey** provided by the Business Development Center, the CLUSTER Jordanian Partner.

Euro-Mediterranean context

In the Euro-Mediterranean context, several similar platforms were examined for lessons learned:

1. **Helios** approach of the platform and vision of the e-tool was based on several functions, e-Services and collaborative learning. In this sense, within the platform, it is possible to view and consult all the contents of the course modules, case studies of SMEs operating in circular and blue economy sectors,

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videoclips and get in touch with their teachers. In addition, the platform is connected with the HELIOS channels, in order to allow students to stay informed about the next project activities and opportunities that could involve them in the future such as web seminars or thematic events.

[INTERNISA's](#) platform displayed a user-friendly platform which is able to offer women in the Mediterranean area more opportunities to enter the labour market by using the tools available to raise their digital skills. This platform could be used for online workshops and training for women, businesses and public sector administration.

[RESMYLE's](#) eLearning platform aim is to train 24 trainers who will be in charge of organising and implementing the training workshops on the ground in the 5 partner countries on the themes of social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Additionally, RESMYLE created [ACT4URPLANET](#), a web portal for environmental awareness activities, diverting from the initial E-Learning platform investment.

These platforms showcase diverse approaches and challenges, providing valuable insights for the development and implementation of the discussed platform.

Challenges Encountered

- **Agreement among partners on Selection Criteria:** Delays in achieving agreement among partners regarding the selection criteria for designing the registration process posed a significant challenge during the platform's development.
- **Multi-Language Support and Feedback Collection:** Considerable effort was required to collect feedback from eight partners, reach agreements, and translate content to provide multi-language support, adding complexity to the development process.
- **Impact of the Pilot Phase on User Engagement:** Time and resource limitations during the piloting phase adversely impacted user engagement, constraining the platform's potential audience and affecting its intended reach.
- **Focus on Regional Design vs. National Level Opportunities:** While designing the platform, the emphasis on regional efforts for a comprehensive CLUSTER design and cooperation process limited the exploration of country-level opportunities, hindering the platform's adaptability and promotion at the national level.
- **Technology and Internet Challenges:** Limited internet access in certain areas posed challenges for accessing and participating in e-learning through the CLUSTER platform, necessitating the proactive introduction of the CLUSTER mobile app for offline access.
- **Engagement and Motivation in E-Learning:** The absence of face-to-face interaction in online learning, a common challenge, prompted the adoption of various strategies such as awareness sessions, WhatsApp groups, emails, and introductory videos to enhance

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engagement. Additionally, partners incentivized learners with extra activities, such as site visits, to boost motivation.

- **Content Quality Assurance:** Ensuring the accuracy and high-quality delivery of interactive content was essential. The platform was equipped with interactive tools like H5P and Moodle to minimize differences in content quality among partners. Business Development Center played a vital role in supporting partners by providing design tools and resources like storyboards, admin manuals, and trainer manuals.
- **Manual Management of Large Number of Participants:** it was addressed through the automated design of CLUSTER platform registration forms, automatic beneficiary selection, and the automation of assessment reviews, grading, and certification processes based on pre-defined criteria. This automation enhanced the efficiency of the platform's operational processes.

Key Findings

- **Youth E-Community Potential:** The platform envisions a vast potential for a dynamic and inclusive youth e-community fostering personal and collective growth through activities such as knowledge sharing, networking, cultural exchange, entrepreneurship, and collaborative projects.
- **Entrepreneurial Training and Development:** To create a supportive employment environment, the platform can be tailored for corporate training, addressing specific needs in areas like Human Resources, leadership, compliance, and technology.
- **Public Education Initiatives:** Supporting public education initiatives by providing educational content for students, teachers, and parents, enhancing the learning experiences of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions.
- **Continued Education Programs:** Repurposing the E-Learning platform to offer continued education programs for professionals, aligning courses with industry needs to increase opportunities for youth and women in the job market.
- **Platform Features and Potential Uses:** The platform currently offers features for various purposes, with flexibility for customization and incorporation of additional uses, such as job announcements, employer accounts, and a job matching system.
- **Needs for Extension and Adjustment:** Sustainable platform support requires hosting for 2,000 users, yearly technical support, and maintenance costing around 17,000 JOD, and human resources, including system administrators, technical support personnel, and instructional designers.
- **Solutions:** A proposed solution involves a Training of Trainers (TOT) program to equip a group of trainers with instructional design skills.

Trainers' Inputs

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Regarding the feedback offered by trainers, this section provides a global overview of the implementation of training services, divided into two deliverables:

Deliverable 1 - New NEET-oriented curriculum materials

The deliverable discusses the **successful completion of adapting materials for NEETs**, utilizing SCRUM methodology. Challenges include synchronizing content with the online platform and a shift in the presential training schedule from February to May. The report details progress in conceptualization, online training material development, internship programs, and recruitment efforts focused on youth and women.

Deliverable 2 - Labor market oriented training:

The deliverable outlines activities related to identifying **key stakeholders for the youth employment initiative**, emphasising the concept of Ecoregions to foster CLUSTERing and job creation along the industrial chains. Initiatives in the Parc Agrari Ecoregion candidacy, collaboration with the Ferrer Foundation and the participation in the Sabadell Job Fair are detailed. These activities, together with the promotion of the initiative are found to be crucial for the creation of a network of collaborators and supporters, which in turn will increase the visibility, attracting more young individuals.

As seen, the project has noted the importance of ongoing promotion activities to establish a robust network of collaborators and supporters for the youth employment project. It discusses difficulties in finding NEETs, collaboration with the Service of Occupation, and the need for an official certification to increase motivation. The report also discusses the outcomes of the presential training, including successful employment in the green economy sector.

Living Lab Integration:

The **report proposes the creation of a Living Lab by integrating formal vocational training and informal education**, emphasizing strategic alliances, opportunities for NEETs, and innovation and adaptability.

Results and Activities:

The assessment of results for deliverables includes the **creation of materials and access on the CLUSTER online platform**, as well as successful insertions into the job market and interest from participants in the CLUSTER program in Catalonia. Challenges, risks and problem-solving strategies are also discussed.

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Sustainable Economy as an Essential Condition

Circular Economy: Empowering Youth and reversing Ecological Degradation

In the Mediterranean, the simultaneous challenges of an ecological crisis and escalating youth unemployment are pressing. Despite diverse circumstances, common issues include high youth unemployment, significant NEETs presence, gender gaps in employment and education, and educational systems misaligned with labour market demands. Stagnant economies struggle to absorb the increasing supply of skilled workers. While circularity rates are generally low, a few exceptions exist, and comprehensive transition frameworks are lacking. Despite limited data on the Circular Economy (CE) in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) countries, certain informal sectors show promising potential for circular transitions.

Navigating the complexities of employment and ecological transition in the Mediterranean requires a comprehensive approach. Hence, a **multi-faceted strategy** involving various stakeholders and policy measures is proposed along with the prioritisation of the development and implementation of National Employment Policies (NEPs). These policies should specifically focus on industrial strategies and sectorial approaches, mapping the productive landscape and identifying areas crucial for a successful transition.

- To ensure the effectiveness of these strategies, **collaboration with all relevant stakeholders** is of paramount importance. This involves active engagement with ministries, sectorial federations, businesses, social partners, workers' organizations and trade unions. Through a strong public-private dialogue, consensus and ownership over the transition process can be achieved, paving the way for a decrease in youth marginalisation and ecological degradation.
- Fiscal policies also play a crucial role. **Implementing green and circular taxes** can redirect capital and labour towards circular jobs. Designing these fiscal policies as progressive measures, allocating additional revenue to lower labour taxation, higher social benefits, and financing employment, education, training, reskilling, and upskilling schemes is essential.
- Recognizing that not all countries have the same resources, addressing the unique challenges faced by low and lower-middle-income countries in the Mediterranean is crucial. Still, there is a need to **embrace the informal sector**, which often a significant employer in these regions that presents an opportunity for growth. On top of that, practical interventions, including providing infrastructure and safety equipment, can empower informal actors and ensure workers' rights and social protection in Mediterranean societies.
- As the transition to a circular economy progresses, it is essential to have mindful **consideration of global impacts**. Rich countries should consider the repercussions of their transition on low- and middle-income nations. Simultaneously, developing economies need to move away from reliance on low-value exports, seizing the opportunity to grow sectors

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aligned with endogenous resources and local needs, keeping an ecological perspective along the process.

- By **Shifting the focus to the youth**, it is imperative to address the broader challenges faced by NEETs, not just unemployment in a broad manner. Tailored programs, such as the EU Youth Guarantee scheme, can be effective but require strong institutions and efficient bureaucracies. Gender-conscious approaches are necessary, recognizing the unique challenges faced by young women without employment nor training.
- Addressing the **skills mismatch among the youth is crucial**. Therefore, reforms are needed in education, with a focus on STEM and Technical, Vocational Education, and Training (TVET), are therefore needed. These measures, however, need to go hand in hand with providing lifelong learning opportunities to keep pace with the ever-changing economy and become adaptable to the region's needs.
- Regarding innovative practices, it is vital to encourage **young entrepreneurs and small enterprises**, as well as a comprehensive integration of entrepreneurship modules in university degrees and active support for innovation hubs. Moreover, furthering youth protagonism, though measures such as quotas in executive positions, among others, ensures their active involvement in decision-making processes to avoid their disenfranchisement.

In conclusion, the strategy to foster youth employment in the **circular economy should encompass a range of actions**. From labor shifts and mitigating job erosion to fostering entrepreneurial skills and implementing gender-focused approaches, the approach must be tailored to the unique circumstances of Mediterranean countries. Creating awareness, developing legislative frameworks, and prioritizing circular strategies will be crucial in ensuring a successful and sustainable transition. These are some of the actions needed:

- Shifting Labor Demands Towards **Circular Models**
- Mitigate **Employment Erosion**
- Generate Adequate **Labor Supply in Education**
- Foster **Entrepreneurial Literacy and Skills**
- Implement **gendered approaches** to unemployment, education and training
- Promote **youth empowerment**
- Prioritise **circular strategies** that build on already available resources
- Develop strong and **clear legislative frameworks**

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Green Economy: Empowering Youth and Reversing Ecological Degradation

The Mediterranean region, rich in biodiversity, faces environmental threats from decades of intensive land and sea use, resulting in pollution and climate warming exceeding the global average. Landmarks such as the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention has made progress in addressing some pollution issues, but concerns persist, affecting human health and key economic sectors.

The Mediterranean Basin is a climate change hotspot, projecting continued threats to food and water security, human livelihoods, and health. In 2020, 15% of regional deaths were attributed to modifiable environmental factors. Moreover, water scarcity affects 30% of the population in water-stressed countries and 13% in water-stressed nations, calling for urgent remedies.

To address these crises, a Green Economy (GE) is seen as a practical tool, offering opportunities for job creation and sustainable economic growth if guided well and endorsed in a multifaceted manner. The transition to a GE can serve as a model for sustainable development amidst global challenges. The achievement of a Green Economy (GE) within the context of sustainable development and poverty reduction necessitates **the targeting of country-specific macroeconomic, industrial, sectorial, and labour policy mixes**. These measures aim to establish an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, fostering the creation of decent jobs. To effectively navigate this multifaceted challenge, a **coordinated approach** involving policy, investment, and innovation is considered crucial, as highlighted by experts from institutions such as the Italian National Research Council (CNR-NANOTEC) and the ACEN.

From a policy perspective, **strategies for integrating the young workforce into the GE in Mediterranean countries involve cross-sectorial and cross-vertical approaches**. These include the transformation of bureaucratic routines, expansion of career guidance, reduction of school dropout rates, and the implementation of second chance education programs. Moreover, coordination among public agencies, robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and gender-sensitive approaches to unemployment and education are recommended.

- The incorporation of **youth into decision-making processes**, promotion of entrepreneurship through access to finance and mentorship, and the promotion of gender equality in the work environment are emphasized. Additionally, effective employment schemes should be facilitated through streamlined procedures, reduced administrative burden, and individualized follow-up. The governance quality and management of employment agencies also require improvement.
- From an investment perspective, the focus should be **on labour-supply policies**, including consistent education, skilling, and reskilling services. Creating new jobs in the green transition

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should be accompanied by care and social economies to prevent further social divisions. Gender equality in green jobs, particularly in male-oriented sectors, should be actively pursued through measures like quotas and reverse discrimination acts.

- In terms of innovation, **cooperation projects** such as GREENLAND, MEDTOWN and RESMYLE, offer valuable experiences that integrate multiple objectives, addressing NEET situations and fighting against poverty, inequality and social exclusion. These projects cover various sectors, including sustainable transport, energy efficiency, renewable energies and cultural tourism destinations.

In conclusion, the pursuit of a **green economy for sustainable development requires comprehensive and collaborative efforts across various sectors and disciplines**. The intersection of policy, investment and innovation is vital to create an environment in which sustainable enterprises can thrive, ultimately contributing to poverty reduction and social inclusion.

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Youth and Women's Employment in Sustainable Agriculture in the Mediterranean

Gaps, Prospects and Opportunities

Sustainable agriculture in the Mediterranean is a complex interplay of behaviours, practices, regulations, and initiatives involving various actors and stages of the food production cycle. The scope of sustainability extends across environmental, socioeconomic, political, cultural, and demographic dimensions. Notably, the region **exhibits distinct characteristics on the northern and southern shores**, with countries like Spain, Italy, and France leading in modern technologies and intensive agricultural practices, while others, such as Cyprus, Jordan, Tunisia, and Palestine, face unique challenges like water scarcity and limited access to resources.

In the face of these challenges, the **inclusion of youth in sustainable agriculture emerges as a multifaceted endeavour**. This inclusion goes beyond direct employment policies, encompassing rural development frameworks, social and solidarity economy initiatives, and investments in resource-efficient agricultural practices. The Mediterranean countries employ a range of policies across different dimensions to shape youth employment in sustainable agriculture:

- **Seasonal Work Campaigns**

These campaigns address labour shortages through seasonal migration, albeit with varying transparency levels. Countries like Spain and Italy regulate these practices through frameworks that reveal collaboration between actors in the agricultural sector, raising concerns about the treatment of migrant workers.

- **Incentive Measures and subsidies for Youth Self-Employment**

Local, national, and regional measures aim to create favourable conditions for young people to enter the agricultural market. These include subsidies, tax deductions, mentorship programs, and support for sustainable projects to counter rural depopulation.

- **Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Practices**

Programs within the Common Agricultural Policy and regional development funds encourage sustainable practices on existing farms, benefiting young people who are often more attuned to such practices.

- **Identification and Protection of Sustainable Practices**

Recognition of organic production models through designations of origin and quality labels aims to protect systems with high barriers against the dominant intensive agro-industrial model.

- **Land Access Programs**

Limited access to finance and land poses a significant challenge for youth and women in sustainable agriculture. Improving access to credit, land tenure security, and alternative financing mechanisms can enhance employment prospects.

- **Measures to Support the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)**

The SSE, comprising cooperatives and social enterprises, is gaining attention. The EU's initiatives, such as the European social economy plan, aim to regulate and foster the development of this sector.

- **Rural Development Programs**

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Varied programs seek to improve access to services and socio-cultural relations in rural areas. Emphasis is on holistic approaches addressing food systems, basic services, and working conditions for young people and women. Key recommendations include fostering social inclusion, access to land and finance, and aligning existing policies at the regional level.

Based on the policies found, the potential employment opportunities for youth and women in sustainable agriculture hinge on **the regulatory frameworks' ability to tackle bureaucratic obstacles, leverage migration possibilities, foster the growth of the social and solidarity economy, and effectively implement care redistribution policies.** To advance in these areas, the study suggests an action plan rooted in the five dimensions (spatial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional) delineated by the EU Economic and Social Council in 2020, aimed at advancing inclusive economic development and social cohesion.

Sustainable agriculture in the Mediterranean demands a comprehensive approach that addresses the unique challenges faced by different countries in the region. By integrating various policies and initiatives across multiple dimensions, the **region can create a more inclusive and resilient agricultural sector**, ensuring the well-being of its people and the environment.

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Empowering Youth and Women in the Sustainable Mediterranean Blue Economy

The Blue Economy (BE) in the Mediterranean, focusing on sustainable ocean resource management, is seen as a crucial avenue for addressing youth unemployment. With over a million BE-related jobs in the region, the sector, including Blue Growth and Blue Tech, offers **significant potential for youth employment**, particularly in aquaculture, fisheries, and tourism. Digital technologies play a key role in modernizing the sector. Barriers to growth include issues of **financing and skills development, outlined in the regional BE roadmap**. The report highlights various career opportunities for young people, emphasizing an encouraging outlook for youth employment in the Mediterranean BE sector.

Skills promotion

- To enhance the **digitalization and sustainability of blue sectors, promoting green and digital blue skills**, along with interdisciplinary competencies, is crucial. Reskilling and upskilling initiatives, coupled with collaboration between education and industry, are vital for empowering the workforce with environmental and sustainability skills aligned with modern standards. The UfM Youth Strategy 2030 underscores the significant youth population in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean region. However, 15% of young individuals in the EU, particularly women, are not engaged in the labour force or education/training. Despite women's pivotal roles in certain blue sectors, gender disparities persist in maritime fields like marine renewable energy and maritime transport, contributing to wealth loss estimated at 10% of GDP in advanced economies and over 30% in the Mediterranean region.

Job Creation Opportunities

- Regarding job creation, the Blue Economy presents **diverse opportunities across several sectors**. In blue biotechnology, the focus is on marine organisms like algae for applications in food supplements, cosmetics, and biomaterials, contributing to healthy environments and creating jobs in research, biomass production, and policy frameworks. The decarbonization and digitalization of the maritime industry are crucial for the Mediterranean, with job profiles emerging in areas such as seafaring, emergency procedures, environmental management, and digital technologies. The desalination sector, driven by global population growth and water demand, requires ongoing investments and professionals for modernization.

Investing in Education

- Considering the aforementioned context, the action plan for regional policymakers aims to implement inclusive **youth employment schemes** in the Blue Economy (BE) sectors. The plan emphasizes the need **for substantial investment in blue careers** and skills at various levels, from education institutions to research centres and local administrations. European funding programs such as Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund Plus, as well as regional initiatives like ENI CBC MED and Interreg Next MED, play a crucial role in supporting education, training,

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and lifelong learning. Specific BE-focused funding calls, such as the Blue careers for a sustainable BE call, contribute to the development of blue skills and sustainable maritime careers.

Needs adaptation

- **Adapting learning schemes to current needs involves modernizing academic curricula and training methods**, incorporating gamification, virtual reality, and E-Learning to make maritime careers more attractive. Support for entrepreneurship in the BE sector is essential, with examples like the B-Blue Programme and the #EYESONGREEN regional competition promoting startups and SMEs. The circulation of skills among countries is encouraged through collaboration and knowledge transfer, facilitated by programs like the Science We Need for the Mediterranean Sea We Want.

Partnerships

- **Effective coordination and partnerships** across policy fields and stakeholders are crucial. Involving the private sector, financial institutions, and banks in designing national youth employment policies is emphasized, along with bringing young citizens into focus through initiatives like the EU Blue Schools Network and the BlueS_Med project. Engaging youth in policy creation, such as the Future Lives with Oceans and Waters (FLOW) project and the BlueMed Ambassadors Programme, encourages co-creation and co-implementation of policies with young people.

Empowering women

- Lastly, the plan underlines the importance of encouraging women's employment and entrepreneurship in the BE sector. Gender-responsive policies, capacity-building programs, and funding opportunities dedicated to women, like the EMFAF call on 'Women in the Blue Economy,' are essential for creating a more gender-equal society in the Mediterranean BE sector. Awareness campaigns and outreach programs further challenge gender stereotypes and promote women's participation in the BE workforce.

In conclusion, Mediterranean policymakers **should invest in blue careers and skills, revamp training for maritime professions, and boost sector appeal to promote inclusive youth employment in Blue Economy (BE) sectors.** Facilitating knowledge transfer between northern and southern countries, engaging youth through initiatives like contests and blue schools, and involving them in policy creation are crucial. **Digital platforms** play a vital role in providing access to opportunities. Addressing gender disparities in the male-dominated maritime industry requires focused efforts on gender-responsive policies and breaking barriers for women. A collaborative and

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comprehensive approach is key to realizing inclusive youth employment in the Mediterranean's BE sectors.

PART II: INSIGHTS FROM NATIONAL IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

The following section provides with **an in-depth description of CLUSTER's development in each of the partnering countries**: Spain, Italy, Cyprus, France, Tunisia, Jordan, and Palestine. It does so by addressing their regional specific strategies regarding the implementation of the project, the different challenges in the regions in relation to youth and women's employment in the Sustainable Economy, and the actions adopted to ensure the continuity of the project.

Spain

Regional Specific strategies

Strategies for NEETs and Women Access to Labor Market

- Catalonia has observed that women have **actively participated in training programs**, opening an opportunity to engage more **women in sustainable economy sectors**. Leveraging this observation, the project has taken steps to encourage and empower women to actively participate in the sustainable economy sectors.
- **Collaborative efforts with employment agencies and universities** have been intensified to ensure a more effective reach to NEETs. Through these collaborations, awareness campaigns, and educational programs have been designed to empower NEETs and provide them with the support and information they need to engage in the job market.

Employability StrategiesThe **enhancement of training content** with modules focusing on eco-citizenship and the development of **an environmental mindset** has been a priority. The project has aimed to go beyond traditional vocational training and has created programs that instil a sense of responsibility and understanding of environmental issues. These modules have not only provided theoretical and practical training but have also offered participants a broader perspective on their role in the sustainability of the environment.

- Moreover, **interactive, and live training has been crucial in Catalonia**. Real-time communication between trainers and trainees has been facilitated to allow for questions, discussions, and a deeper understanding of the training material. In-person training, especially when targeting NEET audiences, has been essential for promoting engagement and practical learning.

Implemented by



Sustainable Economy Sectors

- **Urban and urban-fringe agriculture projects** have been present in Catalonia. The project has actively explored opportunities in these areas, including initiatives surrounding **hydroponics and aquaponics**. These sectors have had the potential to offer innovative and sustainable job opportunities in the region.
- The **encouragement of startups** to invest in aquaponics farms has been a priority, as these represent a growing sector with significant employment potential.
- CLUSTER has highlighted that in Catalonia there is a great opportunity for employment in the sustainable agriculture sector. In this sense, Catalonia is an economic engine in production and processing of organic food.

Partnerships In Catalonia, priority has been given to **close collaboration with local authorities** and stakeholders to ensure that the needs of businesses operating in sustainable economy sectors are met. A targeted approach has been adopted to foster strong partnerships with key stakeholders in the region, including environmental organizations, local governments, and educational institutions.

- **Networking events** have been organized to connect companies and stakeholders, creating a platform for collaboration, sharing ideas, and fostering a sense of community within the sector. These events have helped businesses discover potential partners, identify investment opportunities, and discuss challenges and opportunities in the sustainable economy sectors.

Policies and Institutions

- The **urgency of education and labor market reforms is acknowledged**. Advocacy efforts have focused on accelerating these reforms to address poor educational outcomes, low participation in vocational education and training and digital skills deficiencies.
- Supporting the **modernization of the education system** has been a priority. This includes reforms to adapt the education system to the changing needs of the labor market, especially in sustainable economy sectors. Efforts have been made to address the mismatch between educational programs and the skills demanded by employers in Catalonia.

Project CLUSTER Action Plan

NEETs and Women Access to Labor Market in Sustainable Economy Sectors: Differentiated Challenges:

1. Targeted Outreach

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Catalonia's unique scenario, marked by a **higher proportion of women participants and challenges in reaching out to NEETs**, has necessitated **tailored strategies**. The Project CLUSTER has intensified its outreach to these demographics, fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment. Understanding the context of competition with Barcelona Activa and other similar entities, a nuanced approach has been devised to collaborate and complement existing programs rather than competing for beneficiaries.

2. Training for Employability

Acknowledging the feedback regarding the duration of training courses, the initiative has invested more time and resources to ensure **comprehensive training programs**. To overcome the training limitation, especially in agriculture-related programs, **non-formal education approaches have been employed**. Real-life experiences and learning by doing have been at the core of these programs.

3. Sustainable Economy Sectors

Catalonia's unique interest in **organic farming provides an excellent opportunity to foster entrepreneurship in this field**. The Project CLUSTER has supported and promoted the development of entrepreneurial projects in sectors that offer more employment opportunities.

Catalonia has a **great job insertion opportunity with the sustainable agriculture sector**, as it is an economic engine in the production and processing of organic food.

4. Partnerships

The initiative continues to **build partnerships with start-ups, SMEs, and other businesses** that align with the objectives of the project. Efforts have been made to connect businesses within Catalonia, especially those in similar sectors, fostering collaboration and mutual support.

Action Plan for Ensuring Continuity of the CLUSTER Project

Type of Action 1: Policy and Institutional Development

- **Support for Urban Agriculture:** Advocate for policies that support urban and urban-fringe agriculture. Ensure that the policy framework extends to encompass innovative approaches such as hydroponic and aquaponic projects, facilitating the involvement of NEETs.
- **Promotion of Sustainable Practices:** Collaborate with local government authorities and non-profit organizations to establish recycling centres, solidarity garages and bicycle maintenance workshops. These endeavours create meaningful employment opportunities for NEETs.

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- **Training and Entrepreneurship:** Recognise the importance of training that doesn't just offer theoretical knowledge but includes practical experiences. Work with local governments to promote entrepreneurship in sustainable agriculture and provide support for startups.
- **Integrated Agriculture and Food Processing:** Highlight the significance of training programs that integrate agricultural practices with food processing. Assist the agricultural high school in designing a comprehensive course that equips students not only with farming knowledge but also with the skills needed to market their products.

Type of action 2: Training and Capacity Building

- **Practical Farming Training:** Provide in-depth and practical training sessions, involving volunteers and professionals in organic farming. These training sessions should be comprehensive and extend beyond basic concepts.
- **Entrepreneurship Training:** Create training programs that empower individuals with entrepreneurship skills specifically tailored for sustainable agriculture. Focus on supporting business start-ups in these sectors.
- **Curriculum Enhancement:** Enhance the curriculum of sustainable agriculture courses to address the specific needs of NEETs. Give special attention to emerging areas like aquaponics and hydroponics to provide diverse skill sets.

Type of action 3: Sustainable Economy Sectors

- **Supporting Sustainable Agriculture:** Establish strong partnerships between local startups, SMEs, and established companies in the field of sustainable agriculture. These partnerships should facilitate knowledge transfer, resource sharing, and collaborative projects.
- **Promoting Entrepreneurial Ventures:** Promote and support the development of entrepreneurial projects within subsectors that demonstrate high potential for employment. These projects should be guided and mentored effectively.
- **Marketing and Awareness:** Develop marketing strategies to create awareness about the benefits and opportunities in aquaponics and hydroponics among NEETs. Effective marketing campaigns can change perceptions and drive interest.

Type of action 4: Partnerships

- **Local Government Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships with local governments and non-profit organizations. These partnerships should aim at expanding networks, sharing resources, and collectively working towards the project's goals.

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- **Industry Alliances:** Collaborate with key stakeholders within the sustainable agriculture industry to create synergies. By sharing insights, best practices, and resources, the project can have a more significant impact.

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Italy

Regional-Specific Strategies:

Strategies for NEETs and Women Access to Labor Market

- In this context, Sicily faces a distinct issue where higher education graduates are unable to secure jobs due to the disconnect between their qualifications and the local labour market's demands. To address this, the **project has collaborated closely with regional education institutions. This partnership focuses on aligning curricula with the ever-evolving needs of the job market. Tailored programs** have been introduced to specifically target NEETs who have high educational qualifications. It's imperative to emphasize the importance of soft skills and practical competencies in their training to bridge the gap between their education and job opportunities. The focus has been on enhancing their employability, keeping in mind that they often lack experience and opportunities in their desired fields. Additionally, trainings and internship programs have been incorporated to give them the necessary practical skills for employment.

Employability strategies

- **Extending the duration of training programs is necessary to tackle the current issue of short training periods. By offering longer and more comprehensive courses**, participants have had ample time to acquire deep knowledge and skills. It's crucial to provide non-formal education and real-world experiences, fostering their ability to learn by doing and enabling them to apply their knowledge effectively in real-life work settings. The goal has been to ensure that they gain practical, meaningful skills that align with the requirements of the labor market.

Sustainable Economy Sectors

- **Sicily has high potential for entrepreneurial ventures in sectors conducive to sustainable development.** This region is primed for innovative and inclusive projects in sustainability sectors. A particular focus has been on encouraging startups and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) to participate actively. These entities can be at the forefront of job creation and skill development.

Partnerships

Sicily's project has prioritized strong collaboration with local SMEs to address the skills mismatch. The collaborative approach starts at the curriculum design stage, ensuring that the skills developed through training align with market demands. The involvement

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of private sector partners in curriculum design, training, and mentorship has been paramount for success.

- To maintain a high degree of SMEs and startups involvement, efforts have been made to continually engage them throughout the project's activities. This approach ensures that their needs and motivations are considered throughout the project.

Policies and Institutions In Sicily, advocating for policies that recognize the high proportion of unskilled youth and their need for targeted training has been a priority. This advocacy **extends to the need for reforms in the educational system, especially in the TVET sector**. The goal has been to facilitate the adaptation of the education system to the rapidly changing demands of the labour market. This also includes a focus on young women who often face specific challenges in accessing employment opportunities. The support for mentorship programs targeted at young women, especially in STEM fields, has been an essential part of the advocacy for educational policy changes.

Project CLUSTER Action Plan

NEETs and Women Access to Labor Market in Sustainable Economy Sectors: Differentiated Challenges:

1. *Skills Mismatch and Lack of Opportunities* Recognizing the existence of skills mismatch, Italy has meticulously designed training programs that align with the **specific needs of the labour market within sustainable economy sectors**. To this end, a close partnership has been formed with local businesses to ensure that the training curriculum is directly aligned with industry requirements. Furthermore, it has advocated for the creation of additional job opportunities in these sectors. By partnering with both the public and private sectors, the Project CLUSTER has endeavoured to stimulate the development of new enterprises and opportunities that cater to NEETs and women.

2. *Hands-on Training*

To bridge the experience gap faced by NEETs, a practical, **hands-on training approach has been adopted**. Such training programs have not only imparted theoretical knowledge but have also provided real-world experience through internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training. Collaboration with local businesses has been fundamental in offering such opportunities.

3. *Soft Skills Training:*

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Acknowledging the significance of soft skills in employability, the CLUSTER project has emphasized this, specifically through their incorporation into the training modules. In line with the observations, the initiative has implemented in-person interactions and mentoring as a key component of soft skills training to ensure that these essential skills are effectively imparted.

4. Partnerships:

Collaboration with **small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs) has been initiated early in the project. They have been engaged throughout the project's lifecycle to ensure the programs are relevant and motivational.

5. Policies and Institutions:

Advocating for education policies that are cognizant of the substantial number of unskilled youths who may require targeted training has been a focus. A special focus has been placed on **aligning technical and vocational education and training (TVET)** programs with labour market needs, with a particular emphasis on young women.

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Action Plan for Ensuring Continuity of the CLUSTER Project

Type of Action 1: Policy and Institutional Development

- **Policy Advocacy and Integration:** The project's findings and recommendations should be effectively communicated to policymakers at both regional and national levels. Collaboration with ministries of education and labour is has been to integrate the project's key takeaways into the educational policies.
 - Emphasize the alignment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs with the dynamic needs of the labour market, giving special attention to sustainable economy sectors.
- **Flexible Training Programs:** Collaborating closely with regional educational authorities to establish training programs that cater to NEETs. These programs not only cover theoretical aspects but place a strong focus on practical, hands-on experience.
- **Gender-Sensitive Frameworks:** Advocate for the development of gender-sensitive policy frameworks. These frameworks specifically target increasing women's participation in sectors traditionally dominated by men, particularly in the context of sustainable economic industries.

Type of Action 2: Training and Capacity Building

- **Comprehensive Training:** Expanding the range of training programs to provide more extensive knowledge in areas like aquaponics, hydroponics, food processing, and organic farming, extending hours to offer a comprehensive learning experience.
- **Non-formal Education:** Developing specialized non-formal education programs aimed at equipping students with practical skills. These programs complement existing curricula to address skill gaps effectively.
- **Soft Skills Emphasis:** Enhance the focus on training for soft skills, emphasizing face-to-face interaction to build effective communication and teamwork abilities.

Type of Action 3: Sustainable Economy Sectors

- **Educational-Industry Collaborations:** Actively promoting collaborations between educational institutions and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the design and implementation of capacity-building programs. These partnerships have been essential to ensure that training programs are directly aligned with the industry's requirements.
- **Emerging Subsectors:** Encourage SMEs to explore emerging subsectors such as hydroponics and aquaculture. Provide support, including access to resources and incentives, for SMEs to venture into these markets successfully.

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Type of Action 4: Partnerships

- **Key Partner Collaborations:** Collaborating closely with key partners, including Coopérative d'Initiative Jeunes Sud, to effectively engage with hard-to-reach NEETs and businesses.
- **Education Network Expansion:** Working towards strengthening partnerships with universities, vocational education institutions, and employment agencies. These collaborations have been instrumental in fostering a supportive ecosystem for sustainable economic sectors.

Cyprus

Regional-Specific Strategies:

Strategies for NEETs and Women Access to Labor Market

Targeted Outreach and Awareness Campaigns:

- Develop targeted outreach programs to identify and engage NEETs and women who are not actively participating in the labor market.
- Utilise various communication channels such as social media, community events, and educational institutions to raise awareness about available opportunities and support services.
- Collaborate with local organisations, community leaders, and schools to reach individuals who may benefit from reintegration into the workforce.

Customised Training and Skill Development:

- Design customised training programs tailored to the specific needs and interests of NEETs and women, focusing on developing relevant skills demanded by the local labor market.
- Provide vocational training, apprenticeships, and mentorship programs to enhance employability and confidence in seeking employment opportunities.
- Incorporate soft skills development such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving to ensure holistic preparation for the workforce.

Promoting Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment:

- Encourage entrepreneurship among NEETs and women by providing training, resources, and awareness to funding opportunities for starting their own businesses.

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- Offer workshops and seminars on business planning, financial management, and marketing strategies to equip individuals with the necessary skills to launch and sustain their ventures.
- Facilitate networking events and partnerships with local business organisations to create a supportive ecosystem for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Employability strategies

Skills Development Programs:

- Implement targeted skills development programs focusing on essential skills to create their one company in sustainable farming.

Traineeship:

- Facilitate opportunities for NEETs and women to participate in traineeships to gain practical experience and industry-specific skills.
- Partner with local businesses and industries to create internship programs tailored to the needs of NEETs and women, providing them with hands-on training and mentorship.

Entrepreneurship support:

- Offer support and resources for NEETs and women interested in entrepreneurship, including business development training, access to available grants in sustainable farming.

Sustainable Economy Sectors

Education and Training Programs:

- Develop and offer comprehensive education and training programs focused on sustainable economy sectors, including Organic Farming, Sustainable Food Processing, Aquaponics, Hydroponics, Soft Employment Skills.
- Provide specialised training courses, to equip NEETs and women entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in sustainable sectors.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives:

- Co-design and implement collaborative initiatives with partner organisations aimed at promoting sustainable practices, fostering innovation, and creating employment opportunities in target sectors.

Policies and Institutions

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Stakeholder Engagement:

- Promote cooperation and consensus building among stakeholders to promote sustainable economy sectors.
- Drive stakeholder engagement to raise awareness of sustainable economy sectors through targeted communication campaigns, expanded media outreach, and dynamic public events.

Project CLUSTER Action Plan

NEETs and Women Access to Labor Market in Sustainable Economy Sectors: Differentiated Challenges:

1. Outreach and Partnerships:

Cyprus' focus on profiling the NEETs population has been recognized as a crucial step. The Project CLUSTER has continued these efforts by **working with local partners and actively engaging in profiling activities.**

Strategic partnerships have been formed **with local** actors to facilitate the implementation of outreach activities.

2. Training for Employability:

Recognizing that **NEETs over the age of 30 might require distinct approaches**, the project has explored ways to offer tailored support. The live online training format has been adopted to allow direct interaction, making learning more engaging.

3. Policies and Institutions:

The importance **of modernizing the education system** to improve educational outcomes and digital skills has been a central advocacy point. Policies have been advocated for that promote upskilling and reskilling to ensure alignment with labour market needs.

Cross-Regional Actions:

1. **Knowledge Sharing:** Recognizing that the diverse regions provide valuable insights, the Project CLUSTER has established a knowledge-sharing platform where regions can exchange best practices, strategies, and successful initiatives.
2. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The project has employed a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework to continually assess and adapt

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strategies based on results. Continuous reviews have ensured that the project remains flexible and responsive to emerging challenges.

3. **Capacity Building:** Capacity-building programs have been designed for project coordinators and instructors to ensure they are well-equipped to effectively implement the project. Resources, training materials, and support have been provided to all regions to ensure consistency.

Action Plan for Ensuring Continuity of the CLUSTER Project

Type of Action 1: Policy and Institutional Development

- **Strengthening Outreach:** Continuing the efforts to strengthen outreach activities **targeting NEETs and vulnerable** groups. Regularly mapping and profiling the NEET population to tailor support and interventions effectively.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Facilitating **cooperation between public employment services, career counselling services, and providers of Youth Guarantee interventions.** Establishing regional partnerships to reach unregistered youth effectively.
- **Educational Reforms:** **Advocating for educational reforms to address challenges,** such as poor educational outcomes and low participation in vocational education. Enhancing the focus on digital skills in response to labour market demands.

Type of Action 2: Training and Capacity Building

- Training for Over 30s: **Expanding training opportunities for individuals over the age of 30** who seek a change in their career paths. These training programs should consider the specific needs and preferences of this demographic.
- Live Online Training: Emphasizing the **effectiveness of live online training** that allows for real-time questions and discussions between trainers and trainees.
- **Comprehensive Vocational Training:** Developing a comprehensive vocational training program that aligns with labour market needs and the skills required for sustainable economic sectors. This includes both theoretical and practical components to prepare individuals adequately.

Type of Action 3: Sustainable Economy Sectors

- **Supporting Sustainable Agriculture:** Continuing to support the sustainable agriculture sector, with a focus on implementing low-impact farming practices. Advocating for policies that incentivize investments in sustainable agriculture.

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- **Addressing Labor Shortages:** Advocating for policies that address the persistent labour shortages in low-quality occupations. Considering reforms to make it more attractive for Cypriots and Europeans to fill these roles.
- **Investing in Sustainable Sectors:** Promoting investment in sustainable agriculture and the circular economy. Ensuring that educational and training programs are aligned with the changing needs of the labour market.

Type of Action 4: Partnerships

- **Mapping and Profiling NEETs:** Collaborating with regional partners to continue the mapping and profiling of NEETs. This helps in identifying the needs of the specific demographic, making it easier to tailor support measures.
- **Multi-Agency Partnerships:** Fostering collaboration between public employment services, career counselling services, and providers of Youth Guarantee interventions. These partnerships aim to create a more holistic support system for NEETs.
- **National Study:** Considering the implementation of a comprehensive national study that explores the diversity and needs of NEETs. This study should encompass inactive young NEETs not registered with the Public Employment Service, and it should examine the reasons for their disengagement. In addition to mapping, it should delve into transition challenges, working conditions, youth entrepreneurship, and perceptions of governmental interventions. The findings will provide insights for tailored strategies and services.

France

Regional-Specific Strategies:

NEETs and Women Access to Labor Market:

- France's project has focused on promoting professional integration in **Sustainable Agriculture**, given their more promising results compared to traditional agriculture. The project has aimed to leverage this trend and ensure that NEETs have access to these emerging sectors. In addition, the project focused on sustainable agriculture as Petra Patrimonia as a branch in this sector, wanted to transfer the knowledge to youngsters in order to participate in the territorial plan of food for a healthy and balanced diet for the population, an important issue in order to counter the excessive consumption, the global market and return to local food, without additives. Labour is hard to find

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because the working conditions are not easy, but the value of the work is very high.

- In addition, **sustainable agriculture has been highlighted**, particularly market gardening ventures that employ permaculture and agro-ecological farming principles. Sustainable agriculture is deeply ingrained in France's agricultural traditions, and the project has aimed to promote this sector as it shifts towards organic production.

Training for Employability:

The training programs in France have been adapted to meet the unique needs of NEETs. The project has aimed to develop training modules that cater to the specific requirements of promising sectors. For example, courses have included hands-on training, focusing on practical skills rather than theoretical knowledge, to ensure that NEETs acquire skills that are directly applicable in the workplace. Online resources have complemented face-to-face courses, providing additional learning opportunities through case studies feedback.

Conclusions from CLUSTER Project Actions

Job Creation Sectors:

Recognizing that sustainable agriculture may have offered modest job creation opportunities, the Project CLUSTER has proactively explored other promising sectors in the circular economy.

Training for Employability:

Understanding the doubts expressed regarding online training for NEETs, the project has prioritized **in-person, interactive training modules**. Training includes modules on instilling environmental awareness and values to make professional orientations more meaningful.

Sustainable Economy Sectors:

Given the region's interest in sustainable agriculture and market gardening, the Project CLUSTER has actively supported **training programs in these areas**. There has been a special focus on integrated training programs that encompass agricultural practices and food processing.

Partnerships:

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The collaboration with social inclusion associations and local initiatives has been deepened. The Project CLUSTER aims to establish a **mutually beneficial partnership where local initiatives and the project can complement each other** in reaching the shared goal of integrating NEETs and women into sustainable economy sectors.

Policies and Institutions:

The CLUSTER project has advocated for education system modernization to address the challenges faced in educational outcomes, low participation in vocational education, and digital skills. An emphasis has been placed on **policies that promote upskilling and reskilling** in alignment with the demands of the sustainable agriculture.

Ideas for future capitalisation of the CLUSTER Project

Type of Action 1: Policy and Institutional Development

- **Diversified Training Modules:** Developing training modules that expand beyond traditional agriculture. Placing a strong focus on practical training in circular economy and recycling sectors, emphasizing areas such as fight against food waste, support for short distribution channels and use of renewable energy.
- **Sustainable Agriculture:** Supporting sustainable agriculture ventures and recognizing the recent upsurge in market gardening projects that utilize permaculture and agro-ecological principles. Promoting and nurturing ventures led by young individuals seeking professional redirection post-COVID-19.
- **Online vs. Offline Training:** Acknowledging the varying effectiveness of online training, especially with NEET-type audiences. While online resources can be supplementary, in-person, practical training should be taking precedence to enhance the learning experience.

Type of Action 2: Training and Capacity Building

- **Hands-on Training:** Developing training modules that prioritize hands-on experience in sectors such drip irrigation, food waste fighting, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy. Incorporating practical exchanges with professionals to provide real-world insights.
- **Inclusive Training:** Encouraging the development of training programs that extend beyond traditional agriculture. Supporting areas like circular economy and recycling, as well as urban agriculture initiatives that include hydroponic and aquaponic projects.

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- **Interactive Learning:** Promoting live online training programs to ensure active engagement and interaction between trainers and trainees.

Type of Action 3: Sustainable Economy Sectors

- **Social Inclusion Support:** Continuing to support social inclusion associations and organizations that focus on circular economy initiatives, recycling centres, and urban agriculture projects. Facilitating job placements and providing comprehensive support to NEETs seeking employment.
- **Diverse Opportunities:** Promoting and supporting various sectors within the circular economy, including repair, reuse, and renewable energy. Encouraging the establishment of urban agriculture projects, particularly hydroponic and aquaponic initiatives.
- **Promoting Sustainable Agriculture:** Emphasizing the importance of sustainable agriculture. Supporting projects and initiatives in areas like market gardening, permaculture, and agro-ecological farming. Collaborating with educational institutions to provide comprehensive training.

Type of Action 4: Partnerships

- **Social Inclusion Collaboration:** Developing close collaborations with social inclusion associations and organizations. These partnerships are crucial for facilitating job placements, providing support, and enabling the successful integration of NEETs.
- **Circular Economy Initiatives:** Strengthening partnerships with circular economy initiatives, recycling centers, and urban agriculture projects. Collaborating on knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and collective advocacy for sustainable economic sectors.

Jordan

Regional-Specific Strategies

NEETs and Women Access to Labor Market:

- In the Steering Committee Meeting the project decided to launch an **information collection round** among partners on Euro-Mediterranean and Cross-Border Cooperation projects and initiatives in the field of youth and women employment.

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Project CLUSTER Action Plan

In the context of Euro-Mediterranean and cross-border cooperation projects focusing on youth and women employment and training, CLUSTER has **capitalized on five projects:**

- HELIOS: enHancing thE social Inclusion Of neetS
- RESMYLE: repenser emploi et insertion sociale des jeunes méditerranéens à travers le développement durable
- EGREJOB: Euro- mediterranean GREEn JOBS
- Maharat Med: Developing Youth Employability & Entrepreneurial Skills
- BlueSkills: Blue Jobs and Responsible Growth in the Mediterranean

Capitalization efforts have been aimed at gaining insights into the challenges and achievements of these projects.

Economic Challenges

Notably, a significant challenge encountered was **translating sustainable economic concepts into practical implementation**. CLUSTER faced the task of capitalizing on employment opportunities grounded in these principles, while ensuring beneficiaries understood the **broader objective of addressing poverty, environmental concerns, and adapting to climate change**. Other implementation challenges included economic constraints, a competitive job market, and a lack of vocational training centres adept at introducing these economic concepts.

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Ideas for Future Capitalisation of the CLUSTER Project

Drawing from Different projects, Jordan has analysed different EuroMed projects to apply them and ensure the continuity of CLUSTER:

Type of Action 1: Leveraging Technological Advancements in Skills Learning

- HELIOS has successfully demonstrated the transformative potential of **technology in skill acquisition**.
- Explored and implemented **cutting-edge e-learning tools** and methodologies.
- Focused on **making skills learning accessible**, interactive, and effective for target groups such as NEETs and women within the BaCE realm.

Type of Action 2: Integration of Digital Resources for Inclusive Skill Development:

- Learned from HELIOS's profound lessons on the impact of digital resources on skill development.
- Developed a **platform and training courses** to bridge gaps in skills and foster inclusivity.
- Emphasized the **importance of digital resources** as a cornerstone for future skill acquisition projects.

Type of Action 3: Strategic Employability Initiatives in Green and Circular Economy Sectors:

- The GREENLAND project's success lies in strategically **increasing employability** in the Green and Circular Economy sectors.
- Equipped individuals, especially NEETs up to 30 years old and women of all ages, with **marketable skills and qualifications**.
- **Mitigated skill mismatches in rural areas** affected by climate change through targeted initiatives.

Type of Action 4. Collaboration for Enhanced Implementation and Systematic Approaches:

- Highlighted the **collaborative efforts** of HELIOS and GREENLAND in implementing solutions within the Green and Circular Economy sectors.
- Addressed **technical issues** in online training collaboratively.
- Streamlined **onsite methodologies** with a focus on a more systematic approach, particularly within the CLUSTER project.

Type of Action 5. Vision for Sustainability and Inclusivity:

- Emphasized the role of **strategic projects**, such as HELIOS and GREENLAND, in shaping a future where skills are embraced with a vision for sustainability and inclusivity.

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- Learned from the **innovative approaches** and transformative impact of these projects for the ongoing and future initiatives within the CLUSTER project.

Palestine

Regional Specific Strategies

NEETs must be redefined in the context of each country:

- During the project implementation, CLUSTER consortium adapted the term NEET into the local context of each partner, in Palestine it was not currently employed or in training or education in the field of sustainable economy. In Palestine, there's a very low percentage of people who are not educated/trained, thus most of our trainees were women with BA and MA degrees, many of them had their personal business projects. If the project wants to target real NEETs in Palestine, its activities can't be promoted online, as these people live in far-away areas and might not have internet/laptops/phones. To reach them, the project must conduct field visits to specific places to personally talk to NEETs and propose to participate in the project and its activities/ set up a mobile centre/van where people could come and learn more about the project and its activities. Moreover, it can be suggested to develop criteria for each country to act as guidelines in project implementation in targeting NEETs.

Prolongation of the paid internship period:

- CLUSTER was implemented in most of the West Bank governorates, BWF learnt that employers in the governorates, especially in villages, are unable to employ new people after the internship period. Prolonging the paid internship will allow the trainees to learn more about the field and become experts, thus increasing their employment opportunities after the training. The project must also consider the cost of living in Palestine, taking into consideration to cover the transportation and meals cost for each day of the internship to encourage youth to participate.

Grants for employers:

- As an incentive for cooperatives and SMEs to train interns, the project can facilitate grants to cover employment of trainees.

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Project CLUSTER Action Plan

Training for Employability: insights into effective training programs and recommendations for skill development.

- **Insight:** introducing online training was an important and innovative milestone of the project. Many trainees stated it was their first time learning online, which they found convenient. However, many trainees couldn't register/start courses by themselves and required individual support.
- **Recommendation:** allocate more time to develop the platform/enhance the user-experience in the existing platform.
- **Insight:** onsite training was the biggest motivating factor for trainees to enrol in the online courses. Practice showed the highest number of course completions for the courses on which there were field visits or onsite training.
- **Recommendation:** Increase the number and areas of field visits and onsite training to increase the online courses completion.
- **Insight:** many of the trainees had positive feedback on the CSR training and were motivated to design their own project.
- **Recommendation:** allocate more time into the implementation of CSR initiatives, give detailed feedback for the trainees, teach how to create a professional document with all the details of the project (most of trainees have basic computer literacy, which means they're sometimes unable to create professional documents). Allocate budget towards grant/seed money for the CSR projects, this way the trainees will undergo a comprehensive journey from designing the initiatives to implementing it, which will have a bigger impact on them and the community.

Sustainable Economy Sectors: actionable steps to promote sustainability within these sectors.

- **Insight:** the green economy sector is emerging in Palestine, with many organic farms starting their operations. Taking into consideration the land scarcity in the country, fields of blue and circular economy are necessary but not yet introduced properly. There is a small number of hydroponic and aquaponic farms, and the general public isn't informed of the new ways of farming. Cluster project can capitalize on the results of the first phase, online training, and develop the knowledge and capabilities of those who already have a certificate in these areas from the online training, by giving grants to establish their own farm, or provide advanced training opportunities.

Partnerships and Policies/Institutions: recommendations on establishing effective partnerships and insights into policies and institutional frameworks conducive to economic development.

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- **Insight:** throughout the project implementation, BWF built strong networks with cooperatives and SMEs in various governorates in the West Bank, which can be used as a platform for future cooperation, such as establishing a committee consisting of trainers and private sector representatives to build a comprehensive syllabus for online courses/onsite training. BWF team attended other EU-funded projects where it was discussed by various stakeholders that there is a big gap between what the Palestinian TVET institutions offer and teach, and what the private sector really needs. Thus, the presence of this committee helps the trainees build connections with potential employers and enhance the overall education-employment system.
- **Insight:** During the implementation period, BWF tried to connect with various experts and trainers in the field of sustainable economy, food processing, blue and circular economy. However, WP3 lacked a specific action plan, which could suggest the exact ways of interaction with the partners. Upon signing the Memorandum of Cooperation, there was no systematic approach from the project design, which didn't result in meaningful connections/activities with the partners. Potentially, these partners could form a consortium, overlooking all project's activities, seeing what the project needs/how it benefits the society, and pressure the policy and decision makers in the country for the project to have a sustainable impact.

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Tunisia

Regional-Specific Strategies:

Strategies for NEETs and Women Access to Labor Market

Findings:

- Women's enrolment in the education system is higher success rate than man.
- Difficulties in accessing the job market for young graduates, especially women.

National strategies have therefore been adopted:

1. Orientation of girls' education towards technical subjects, which have long been reserved for boys and where the probability of access to the labour market is high.
2. Adopting specific programmes for the inclusion of women, including the "Tamkeen" programme (2022-2025).

For young NEETs, strategies for better access to the labour market focus on improving employability through lifelong learning, improving conditions and training programmes to make them more attractive and in line with youngsters' aspirations.

Employability strategies

Unemployment is high among university graduates and higher among women than men. Strategies to improve employability include:

- Alternating training between training institutions and enterprises.
- Adapting graduate retaining programmes to young NEETs.
- Improving educational programmes.
- Reform of the training governance system, integrating the needs of enterprises and professional organisations in the guidance and evaluation of the youth training system.
- Adoption of programmes to improve the skills of workers who have lost their jobs, with a view to retraining them in other activities and maintaining their employability.

Sustainable Economy Sectors

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Tunisia has made a commitment to the environment and sustainable development with the creation of the Ministry of the Environment, following the recommendations of the first Earth Summit (Rio, 1992).

The tools to ensure this commitment are:

- Guiding and integrating environmental components into public and private investment projects in order to direct them towards sustainable economic activities (energy, water, recycling, etc.).
- Develop national sustainable development strategies, with a participatory local approach (2015-2020), with 9 priorities:
 1. Responsible consumption and production.
 2. Social equity and combating territorial disparities.
 3. Sustainable management of natural resources.
 4. Sustainable transport.
 5. Better quality of life for citizens.
 6. Energy efficiency.
 7. Adaptation to climate change.
 8. Promotion of the knowledge society.
 9. Better governance of sustainable development.
- Specify fiscal and financial incentives for investment in economic sectors (Investment Law 2017, 1993, with the creation of the Energy Transition Fund).
- Adoption since 1994 of Agenda 2021 for better integration of sustainable development in municipal investment plans.
- Inclusion of the right to water and a healthy environment in the 2022 Constitution, in line with the guidelines of the Earth Summit (Paris, 2015).
- Achievement of the ODS (Horizon 2030).

Partnerships

- Networking and resourcing initiatives of public actors, including TVET and sustainable development agencies (Water, Energy...).

Policies and Institutions

- Ministry of Environment (since 1992)
- NGOs
- National Commission for Sustainable Development (since 1993)
- National Sustainable Development Strategy (2015-2020)
- Participatory Local Planning
- Education for Sustainable Development

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- Constitution of the Republic (2022): right of access to water, in line with Earth Summit Guidelines.

Ideas for Future Capitalisation of the CLUSTER Project

Type of Action 1: Policy and Institution Building

- Disseminate the recommendations of the policy briefs to public stakeholders, including political and business authorities without SMEs.

Type of Action 2: Training and capacity building

- Share the modules developed during on-site and on-line training with labour market operators and vocational training centres.

Type of action 3: Sectors of the sustainable economy

- Introduction of legal incentives for investment in Sustainable Economy.

Type of action 4: Partnerships

- Creation of a Public-Private Partnership Platform associating TVET and Business sectors.
- Synergy with projects converging with the CLUSTER objectives. Example: Tunisia - ENI CBC MED MYSEA ENI Project.

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PART III: STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS BEYOND THE CLUSTER PROJECTS

Navigating Towards Sustainable Solutions

In the realm of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, a variety of challenges are foreseen that require innovative strategies and collaborative efforts to pave the path towards sustainable solutions.

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Key Challenges

The Euro-Mediterranean region faces multifaceted challenges, in particular youth unemployment, the integration of women in the labour market, skills gaps and the urgent transition to a green economy. These challenges, while daunting, serve as catalysts for innovation and cooperation, urging stakeholders to forge new paths towards inclusive and sustainable development.

The need for innovation

Innovation emerges as a fundamental cornerstone to address the complex challenges facing the region. Advocating the involvement of non-traditional actors and the adoption of innovative approaches such as e-learning and outreach programmes targeting NEETs is essential. Moreover, the transcendent nature of e-learning underlines the potential for cross-border cooperation, fostering synergies.

Aligning strategies with national policies

Alignment with national policies is essential for the effectiveness of interventions. Adapting vocational education and training programmes to the dynamic needs of the labour market, especially for young people and women, underlines the importance of flexibility and responsiveness. The preference for dual training signifies a paradigm shift towards practical and experiential learning, which enhances employability and fosters successful integration into the labour market.

Sustainable economy

The urgent transition to a sustainable economy requires concerted efforts to reconcile environmental imperatives with economic viability. Attracting youth and women to labour-intensive sectors, along with the creation of green jobs, emerges as a key strategy to foster sustainability and resilience.

North-South differences

Recognising the diverse needs across the Mediterranean, adapted interventions and transnational programmes are advocated to ensure inclusion and effectiveness. Shared responsibility and collaboration support efforts to scale up EU frameworks and resources, fostering synergy and mutual benefit.

Capitalization and the role of the regions

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The concept of capitalization underlines the need for sustainable results and knowledge dissemination. Regions emerge as key spaces for promoting employability and knowledge sharing, highlighting the transition towards cross-border and transnational cooperation. Joint activities, exchanges of practices and resource sharing are conceived as catalysts for mutual learning and collective progress.

Euro-Mediterranean initiatives

A historical overview of Euro-Mediterranean initiatives highlights the multiplicity of funding frameworks and the need for coherent strategies. Integrated approaches, complemented by independent thematic evaluation, are advocated to bridge the gap between the political and operational levels, fostering synergy and maximizing impact.

Lessons learned

The CLUSTER project offers valuable lessons, highlighting the effectiveness of a comprehensive approach, collaborative knowledge sharing and strategic visibility. The support to SMEs, the enhancement of labor force skills and the lasting impact on the economic landscape highlight the transformative potential of collaborative efforts.

In conclusion, Euro-Mediterranean challenges require concerted action, innovation and collaboration to find sustainable solutions. The strategic orientations outlined offer a roadmap to meet these challenges, underlining the imperative of collective effort towards inclusive and resilient development.

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PART IV: ANNEXES

The following list provides with an inventory drafted by CLUSTER's Project Partners on some of the projects and studies related to CLUSTER's mission in the Euro Mediterranean region.

| Project | Link | Partner Countries |
|---|---|---|
| SIRCLES- Supporting Circular Economy Opportunities for Employment and Social Inclusion | https://www.enicbcmec.eu/projects/sircles | Spain, Greece, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Italy |
| RESMYLE | https://www.enicbcmec.eu/projects/resmyle | France, Italy, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan |
| YEPMED | https://www.enicbcmec.eu/projects/yep-med | Spain, Italy, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, France, Jordan |
| Best Med Grape | https://www.enicbcmec.eu/projects/bestmedgrape | Italy, France, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan |
| MEDNC network | https://www.mednc.org/ | France |
| EMIPO EUROMED INVEST PROMOTION & OBSERVATORY | https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BD-Snapshot_EMIPO_FR.pdf | UfM Member states |
| SMARTLY Neets' employability in the green and digital economy | https://cde-petrapatrimonia.com/smartly/ | Poland |
| Region and Academy Mobilized for European Strategic Internships II | https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2020-1-FR01-KA102-078739 | France |
| Grow and Sell for Sustainable Living- Sowing the seeds of young female entrepreneurship | https://www.facebook.com/growandsell/ | Erasmus |
| Show your skills | https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2020-1-FR01-KA204-080409 | Erasmus |
| Youth Mobility Pilots | https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2020-2-FR02-KA205-018071 | Erasmus |

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| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Being a European student who discovers the professional world | https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2020-1-FR01-KA229-080491 | Erasmus |
| Women Home Working | https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2022-1-FR02-KA220-YOU-000087118 | Erasmus |
| Support and Value Young Adults Mobility and Training for Integration into Companies | https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2019-1-FR01-KA204-062318 | Erasmus |
| HELIOS | https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/helios | Italy, Spain, Jordan, Palestine Greece, Tunisia |
| GREENLAND | https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/greenland | Italy, Greece, Portugal, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Palestine |
| MedBEEsinessHubs | https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/medbeesinesshubs https://asala-pal.org/strategic-partnerships/2580.html | Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Italy |
| InnovAgroWoMed | https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/innovagrowomed | Italy, Spain, Tunisia, Palestine |
| RESET | https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/reset | Spain, Lebanon, Italy, Palestine, Tunisia |
| MedSNAIL | https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/medsnail http://rwds.ps/index.cfm?pg=cat&cat_id=YECGADMZDNFHPUNXKL&sub_cat_id=LMNBBTZAKPQZWCACSOJ | Spain, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia, Malta, Jordan, Italy |
| MEDISS | https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/mediss | Palestine, Italy, Jordan, Tunisia |
| MYSEA ENI CBC MED Programme | https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/MYSEA | Italy Greece Lebanon Tunisia Jordan |
| WINBLUE | https://winblue-project.eu/ | Italy, Slovenia, Malta, Belgium, Spain, France, Bulgaria |
| Mediterranean New Chance (MedNC) | https://ufmsecretariat.org/project/mednc/ | Algeria, Egypt, France, Lebanon, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia |
| EBSOMED | https://ebsomed.eu/en/about-ebsomed | Egypt, Spain, Tunisia, France, Belgium |

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|------------|---|--|
| CREACT4MED | https://creativemediterranean.org/about-us/ | Spain, Greece, Tunisia, Italy, Morocco, Belgium. |
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