The Euro-Mediterranean Forum 2026 mobilises the private sector to turn the Pact for the Mediterranean into tangible opportunities for regional connectivity and competitiveness

- Piraeus (Greece) became the meeting point for Mediterranean business and institutional leaders committed to strengthening regional cooperation and unlocking new opportunities for shared prosperity.

- The Forum reinforced the Pact for the Mediterranean as a key framework for translating cooperation into tangible opportunities for businesses across the region.

Piraeus, 23 November. Mediterranean business leaders, policymakers, institutions and entrepreneurs gathered on 18 and 19 November at the ***Euro-Mediterranean Economic and Business Forum 2026 – The Piraeus Edition***, the second edition of ASCAME's flagship event that this year hosted in Athens (Greece) the **Piraeus Chamber of Commerce and Industry**. The summit, also co-organised with the **Chamber of Commerce of Barcelona** and the **European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)**, in collaboration with the **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)** and key regional partners, featured two days of insightful discussions on how the private sector can act as a catalyst for regional connectivity, sustainable development and deeper economic integration across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

Reinforcing this vision, **Dr. Josep Santacreu**, President of ASCAME and the Chamber of Commerce of Barcelona, highlighted the need to turn dialogue into concrete action: "The future of the Mediterranean depends on our ability to work together. We need more economic integration, stronger trade relations and closer cooperation between both shores of our region". Dr. Santacreu also underlined the key contribution of ASCAME in the design and implementation of the Pact for the Mediterranean, "connecting the voice of business with European institutions and fostering a common vision for sustainable growth".

Building on this call for greater economic integration, **Vassilis Korkidis**, President of the Piraeus Chamber of Commerce & Industry, emphasised Piraeus' strategic role as a gateway for Mediterranean economic cooperation: "By hosting the 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Forum, Piraeus reaffirms its role as a key maritime and economic hub of the Mediterranean". Korkidis shared the following reflection: "By turning our shared vision into concrete actions for blue economy resilience, smart logistics, and sustainable

connectivity we are not just navigating global shifts. We are actively shaping the future geoeconomic map of our own Mediterranean, the eternal seafaring cradle of creation, cooperation, and perpetual prosperity".

Reflecting on the broader significance of the forum for the region, **Roger Albinyana**, Managing Director at the IEMed, pointed to the growing importance of dialogue and cooperation in times of geopolitical and economic uncertainty: "Forums such as this are instrumental in advancing economic integration, fostering industrial partnerships and strengthening public-private dialogue across the Mediterranean. At a time of profound geopolitical and economic change, closer cooperation and strategic engagement are more important than ever to unlock the region's full potential".

Addressing the Mediterranean's key business priorities

Aligned with the theme of this year's Forum, **"Empowering a Nexus of Connectivity, Sustainability and Geoeconomic Leadership"**, discussions focused on the main challenges and opportunities facing the Euro-Mediterranean business community in the context of the new Pact for the Mediterranean, the framework launched by the European Commission in November 2025 to strengthen regional cooperation and shared prosperity.

The debates explored how to advance trade integration, unlock investment and industrial partnerships, strengthen transport and logistics corridors, accelerate the digital, green and blue transitions, enhance regional competitiveness, and harness emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence. Together, these discussions addressed a common objective: ensuring that the Mediterranean becomes a more connected, sustainable, innovative and competitive region, with the private sector at the heart of its transformation.

The Pact for the Mediterranean: From vision to action

A particular highlight of the Forum was the dedicated session on the Pact for the Mediterranean, which explored how the initiative can be translated into tangible opportunities for the private sector. The session was opened by video messages from **Dubravka Šuica**, European Commissioner for the Mediterranean, and **Francisco J. Gaztelu**, Director at DG MENA of the European Commission.

In her address, Commissioner Šuica reaffirmed the Pact as the European Union's framework for fostering stability, security and shared prosperity across the Mediterranean and highlighted the need to better connect investment, skills development and job creation. She also recognized ASCAME and the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce as essential partners in mobilizing the private sector and advancing the Pact's objectives.

Building on this message, Francisco J. Gaztelu emphasized that the success of the Pact will largely depend on the active engagement of businesses and business networks capable of translating policy ambitions into concrete economic opportunities. He highlighted ASCAME's unique position to connect markets, facilitate partnerships, promote investment and help bring the Mediterranean's economic potential to life.

The session also featured the presentation of the conclusions of **ASCAME's first Lab for the Pact**, held in Cagliari in October 2026, a pilot initiative that brought together 23 companies and organisations from 11 sectors to identify the main priorities, opportunities and challenges facing the Mediterranean private sector.

A key milestone unveiled during the session was the launch of the ***Mediterranean Business Alliance***, a new ASCAME-led platform designed to strengthen dialogue between businesses and European institutions. Bringing together companies from strategic sectors across both shores of the Mediterranean, the Alliance will channel private-sector insights and recommendations into the implementation of the Pact for the Mediterranean, ensuring that businesses play an active role in shaping the region's future economic agenda.

MedaWomen 2026: The Impact of AI on Mediterranean Businesswomen

The Forum also hosted the 18th Mediterranean Women Entrepreneurs Forum, (MedaWomen 2026, organised by **AFAEMME** under the theme **"How Artificial Intelligence (AI) Drives Growth for Mediterranean Women Business Associations"**.

In her opening remarks, María Helena de Felipe, President of AFAEMME, highlighted the need to ensure that AI becomes a driver of innovation, competitiveness and growth for women entrepreneurs across the Mediterranean. She also stressed the key role of women business associations in promoting digital skills, knowledge-sharing and cross-border cooperation.

The programme featured two roundtables exploring the opportunities and challenges of AI for women business organisations, as well as the impact of European policies on women entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean region, reaffirming the importance of empowering women as key actors in the region's economic future.

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