Recovery plan and a new economic development model for the Mediterranean

Time to act

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1. TIME TO ACT: STRONGER TOGETHER

1.1. Introduction

The health crisis that has hit the world during the last months has oxidised the economic machinery with the exception of a few sectors, to such an extent that the essential sectors for economic survival, as providers of high added value and currency, are now paralysed under the effect of world economic conditions.

Taking into consideration the current situation in all countries of the Mediterranean region and worldwide after the coronavirus epidemic (COVID-19) and its devastating social and economic consequences, the Association of Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME) has called since the beginning on all Mediterranean countries to put in place exceptional measures to support businesses affected by this virus. As a matter of fact, many companies have been suffering the economic impact of this virus and, therefore, it was essential that business leaders imminently opened access to information and specific sectoral support measures.

ASCAME has asked governments of Mediterranean States to provide appropriate assistance and urgent programmes to help the private sector, such as the implementation of an aid scheme for startups, SMEs and large companies from sectors facing financial difficulties due to the coronavirus epidemic.

It must be taken into account that many Mediterranean countries have low competitiveness and productivity. These are countries that will suffer the effect of the cannibalism that will be established in the world market after COVID-19. Each country will have to fight for itself in order to survive, and this will not be an easy task. The question we must ask ourselves is: What will be our weapons in the Mediterranean in the post-COVID-19 global chain?

The horizons of the recovery strategy and the drive for a new model of economic development are totally different. However, the two projects carry the same genetic information in their DNA and tend towards the same goal.

A recovery strategy tends to strengthen growth, which cannot be achieved without good governance, without the development of a strong middle class, or without strong social cohesion. Aspects that should constitute the key pillars of the new development model.
A crucial point at this time is urgency. Urgency of a reactivation to avoid economic and financial suffocation, but also to lay the foundations for the new model of economic development.

There is no easy success or ultimate failure and, at the point where the Mediterranean economy is right now, there is no better option than to transform these difficulties imposed by the pandemic into an opportunity for complete change.

Recovery paths and the development model should cross at a common point. Why not save time and energy looking for it and define actions in favour of the recovery and a new economy for the Mediterranean?

The region lives immersed in multiple challenges: the pandemic, economic development, climate change, demography, youth, the inclusion of women, unemployment, urbanisation, education, democracy... And despite everything, we are doomed to succeed.
1.2. Why are Chambers of Commerce so important also during this crisis and the post COVID-19?

The entire private sector, and especially its intermediary institutions such as Chambers of Commerce, are deeply concerned about the social, economic and political consequences of the pandemic. It is a huge, unexpected and tragic shock to public life, health, social welfare and economic activity worldwide, especially in Mediterranean countries.

We do not know if everything will be as before. COVID-19 has broken into our lives, worldwide, without preserving human species, and even less organisations. Whether public or private, the consequences will be long-lasting and must be treated with a different vision in the post-COVID-19 world.

At a macroeconomic level, it is obvious that globalisation is seriously wounded. However, relativism will be established and the actors will review the priorities in light of the economic destabilisation that we are currently experiencing worldwide. Economic sovereignty will be imposed on States and, in particular, on so-called sensitive industries. China’s dependence has led all countries to question the reintegration of certain industries into their soil or, at least, some decrease in this dependency. The economy is systemic. All sectors of activity have been affected at the same time as never before.

For centuries, Chambers of Commerce have been a key driver in the development of millions of companies and have worked with governments and institutions to find solutions to local, regional and global challenges and to support the private sector.

The essence of the Chambers of Commerce and industry has been questioned in recent years. Even in several countries its role has been reduced, forgetting its importance for economic development, internationalisation, training and the promotion of the territory. Chambers promote the opening of international trade and investment, as well as market economy. Due to their international and supra-sectoral nature, they speak with the authority that emanates from companies in all sectors and from all parts of the world. They are necessary actors to play a key role as institutions in charge of promoting economic activity and fostering business cooperation.
Today companies operate in a new, volatile, technological business environment where innovation and adaptation are key. The structure of the company, the workforce, the products or the customer are constantly changing and new solutions are required. Chambers should be in a position to assist, seize opportunities, and unite synergies that aid development and economic prosperity.

Why are Chambers of Commerce so important now? Because they are funded and run by entrepreneurs. And these are the ones with the broadest knowledge about what the real needs are. Due to their international and supra-sectoral nature, they have the advantage of speaking with the authority that comes from companies in all sectors and from all parts of the world. They are key actors as institutions in charge of promoting economic activity and promoting business cooperation and investment, which transforms them into agents of cohesion and peace.

However, they need the participation of all actors in society and the public powers.

Therefore, the chambers cover the entire territory, meet business needs, act as intermediaries with administrations, are structured in associations that can be coordinated to reinforce the interests of a wide territory, and have close contact with companies. They are useful corporations in a global world.

The Chambers of Commerce, working together with supranational organisations, are key instruments for successful coordination of north-south business activities and promote three levels of cooperation: development aid cooperation, business cooperation through fairs and missions, and regional cooperation as interlocutors with multilateral organisations.

The challenge is to continue being a reference in the national, regional and international business world with the addition of quality service provision and the exercise of representation in front of public institutions. In this sense, its role in achieving trade openness in certain areas of the world is sometimes more useful than diplomacy itself.

Trade is a powerful force for peace and prosperity, and cameras are the best network for doing business. Their role is essential. However, a new approach is required to meet new challenges.
Chambers of Commerce and the private sector must focus on the challenges of the current state and events related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and on its effects on the business sector and the economy. A review of efforts has to be made at all levels to support business continuity and economic stability.

The public and private sectors have joint forces to manage the crisis, in particular to persevere in the health and safety of citizens and residents and ensure business continuity. In addition to combating the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the private sector needs government-initiated incentive packages to support the economy and organisations, as well as measures to partially open businesses and ensure economic stability.

Not all companies, including startups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), have found themselves in a position to switch to digital products and services overnight. In response to the challenge, Chambers of Commerce and industry have to launch support initiatives to help startups stay and grow while navigating exceptional market challenges. Virtual training workshops are also necessary to share guidance and ideas on how entrepreneurs can build or improve their web presence in a short period of time.

Technological entrepreneurs who want to evolve the region’s position as a global hub for innovation, should also be supported. A training programme is the first innovative model of this type that takes into account the exceptional circumstances in which we find ourselves and how to improve the capacities and abilities of entrepreneurs and new companies to sustain and grow in such situations.

Internationalisation and globalisation are new challenges, but so is the regionalisation of sectors that benefit from geographic proximity and economic complementarity. In an evolving business environment, chambers provide voluntary rules, guidelines, and codes designed to facilitate flows, balance cross-border transactions, and help governments manage global developments collaboratively. The chambers must not only protect the interests of their members, but their work must benefit the national and world economy as a whole and, therefore, promote the Sustainable Development Goals and help guarantee global peace and prosperity by promoting a more open and inclusive international trade system and creating a sustainable mechanism that measures and evaluates the needs, aspirations and challenges of the companies in its environment.
ASCAME Recovery plan and a new economic development model for the Mediterranean

Why are Chambers of Commerce so important also during this crisis and the post COVID-19?

Its characteristic of representing all business sectors worldwide via the International Chamber of Commerce, or at the regional level, comes from the particular organisation in the form of a dense network of Chambers of Commerce, especially in Europe, the Mediterranean, Latin America, Africa or Pacific Asia. In this sense, the regional associations of Chambers of Commerce, such as ASCAME, AICO or Eurochambres among others, which encompass entities at different levels of development, are a first-rate instrument for cooperation.

Chambers of Commerce around the world share common goals, such as facilitating trade, removing existing barriers, promoting economic development and improving the business environment. These goals have evolved to create a strategic partnership that facilitates trade finance.

Over the years, chambers have evolved and expanded their online offerings with the rapid growth and changing needs of the business community. They provide services to facilitate trade, training or support to explore international markets, but they must always strive to provide their members with the tools and knowledge they need to prosper and grow, both locally and globally, to develop smart solutions and innovative services for companies, and to adopt future strategies with frameworks to improve competitiveness.

The reconstruction of an increasingly agile cameral organisation, remote work, collaborative work, collective intelligence, where autonomy is based on trust and accountability, will be a great challenge, but also the ingredients of a culture credible corporate and strategic thinking leadership. Events show that sailing in uncertain times is not for everyone.

Integrating a purpose of social responsibility becomes an imperative of sustainable performance. Public policies have helped safeguard the cash flow of companies and the resources of those who work there. This was necessary, but not sufficient. Strong stimulus measures must now be taken.

Digitisation, e-commerce, innovation and R&D are the main growth levers that must be activated in order to better negotiate the sharp turn that international trade is taking. In any case, recommendations from the chambers should help solve the logistical problems found by exporters during this pandemic period and to reflect on the post-crisis.
Faced with the interruptions undergone by international trade and the activity experienced by various production lines in the Mediterranean region and throughout the world, Mediterranean and global exporters face an unprecedented situation and the results are alarming. Air, land and sea supply chains are being shaken by the spread of the new coronavirus and the measures taken by governments to fight against the pandemic. At an industrial and exporter level, this translates into shortages and closure of production lines, due to the lack of supplies, suspended contracts, payment deficits, etc.

Companies must establish real roadmaps that include new safety and health measures, but also new commercial and logistical approaches. Furthermore, they have to be vigilant during international transactions due to the insolvency of certain clients and increased risks. They must develop a certain capacity for agility and planning in the face of uncertainties and have a flexible business model to be able to change products, target markets and diversify supply sources.

Regarding the key for success, exporters must bet on digital and electronic commerce for the post-crisis period. Efforts should be made to promote the products manufactured in the region and make them competitive internationally, and to ensure and strengthen production chains as much as possible and reduce their external dependence.

In the post-COVID-19 world, having a voice in the international business scene to reflect national or regional interests is essential for growth. By working together, sharing knowledge, and using combined experience, Chambers of Commerce can achieve common goals, improve competitiveness, and advance companies by pursuing future strategies that pave the way for sustainable growth. Partnerships to achieve goals and progress are the right way.
2. RECOVERY PLAN FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN ECONOMIES

2.1. Actors

SMEs

SMEs are once again victims of a global economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which represents a great threat to their continued operation and the livelihood of workers. They act as the backbone of the global economy and are now in a difficult situation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to launch specific plans that provide concrete tools to help rescue them.

SMEs are the ones that generate most of the jobs. It is calculated that for every million euros invested from an SME, 14.7 jobs are created, compared to 3.1 that are generated if the investment is from a large company. They contribute more than 40% to GDP in emerging economies. The private sector contributes 9 out of 10 jobs in developing countries, plays a key role in creating new jobs, fosters growth and has enormous potential.

They are an inseparable part of the Mediterranean economy, since the region has 25 million SMEs. All administrations recognise their importance and impact in creating wealth and diversifying economies, taking into account that these and informal companies represent 90% of the business community, 60% of GDP and 70% of employment in the region. However, SMEs only receive 8% of total bank loans. This recognition has not led to effective solutions to the endemic problems suffered by these companies.

We must adapt our systems to support SMEs more effectively and thus better participate in their development. Its financing needs amount to 200 billion euros. Needs that constitute a real brake on their development and, therefore, on the economic development of the countries of the region.

It is necessary to support and improve their environment, extend their life cycle, boost their association with the public sector and facilitate their access to financing, especially for the most vulnerable SMEs. It is necessary to draw up specific policies, programmes and initiatives to support SMEs, bearing in mind that they are and will be the engine of economic growth and job creation.
SMEs are often left out of large circuits, despite their effective contribution to mobilising savings, modernising economies, increasing competitiveness and developing international trade. Channels for dialogue between government, employers, workers and communities must be implemented.

Governments have to offer a welcoming platform to entrepreneurship and provide a transparent and effective business environment if they want to get out of the crisis and in view of the material and human potential they have.
2.2. Sectors

Tourism

a) Current situation

Tourism is one of the most affected sectors by the COVID-19 pandemic, since this sector cannot be isolated from the local, national or global context of its operation. Many jobs are being threatened around the world and especially in the Mediterranean region.

The Mediterranean is the main tourism area in the world with nearly 400 million tourists: 32% of all international tourist arrivals and 30% of tourism arrivals worldwide. It represents 13% of exports, 23% of the service sector and employs more than 20 million people.

Due to its cross-cutting nature, the tourism sector impacts 70 other economic activities and represents 10% of GDP and 10% of employment in the world. Out of the 7.200 million inhabitants on the planet, 1.5 billion crossed a border in 2019 for leisure trips. Tourism revenue increased to $ 1.7 billion, reaching nearly $ 5.000 million a day: a record figure. In the last decade, tourism has grown at a fast pace with 69% more international tourists and the consequences of all this will depend on the type of management implemented. If it is responsible, tourism will stimulate inclusive growth, create jobs and SMEs, attract investment and boost the economy.

Governments, the private sector and the international community must work together to overcome COVID-19 and this unprecedented social and economic crisis. However, the stimulus capacity will vary considerably from one country to another.

To accelerate the recovery, it is necessary to promote stimulus measures and provide financial incentives for investment and tourist exploitation and preparation for the future. Provide incentives for job retention, support SMEs and startups in the sector and protect the most vulnerable groups. Review taxes, and charges and regulations that affect transportation and tourism. Guarantee consumer protection and trust. Promote events and conferences. Promote new jobs and the acquisition of skills, especially digital. Include tourism in economic emergency mechanisms at a national, regional and global level to restore confidence and stimulate demand. Create crisis management mechanisms and
strategies. In conclusion, prioritise tourism in national, regional or international recovery programmes and in development aid.

About the issue of how to tackle customer hesitancy once travel restrictions are lifted, experts advice to communicate trust, hope, and safeness. Present to the customers the information they need now, putting a special emphasis on the health measures and precautions you are taking. Use technology to reinforce trends already in place such as the personalisation of services, co-creation, and shareable experiences and instant gratification.

It is time to position the Mediterranean region as a sustainable destination. Mediterranean Tourism has a great capacity, an enormous potential to regain the essential place in economies within the framework of priorities for sustainable development. The pandemic is an unprecedented opportunity to reconfigure the sector and guarantee, not only its growth but its sustainability, with inclusion and responsibility as key factors.

In the past, the tourism sector has demonstrated its ability to overcome crisis periods and adapt to change, boost growth and create jobs, despite economic, geopolitical, terrorism or natural disaster challenges. Optimism is key, but a change is necessary. The crisis forces us to rethink the current economic model in the tourism sector. There is an urgent need to mitigate the impact of the crisis, guarantee the reactivation of tourism and allow the sector to play a leading role in the overall recovery.

b) **Initiatives for recovery**

- Establish the Mediterranean region as a sustainable destination.
- Promote stimulus policies and provide financial incentives for investment, tourist exploitation and preparation for the future.
- Give incentives for job retention.
- Attract local young talent.
- Support SMEs and sectoral startups and protect the most vulnerable groups.
- Review taxes and regulations that affect transport and tourism.
- Guarantee consumer protection and trust.
- Promote events and conferences.
- Create new jobs and foster skills acquisition, especially in the digital area.
☑ Include tourism in economic emergency mechanisms at a national, regional and global level, to restore confidence and stimulate demand.
☑ Create tourism crisis management strategies.
☑ Prioritise tourism in national, regional or international recovery programmes and in development aid.
☑ Set up a Mediterranean organisation focused on tourism.
☑ Undertake research relating to the competitiveness of the Mediterranean as a tourism destination.
☑ Provide technical support and know-how through an organised platform of business advisory.
☑ Give support to national tourism organisations to provide scope for the transfer of technology, know-how and product development between individuals and countries in the region.
☑ Enhance the network of cooperation between companies, tourism boards and other international institutions.
☑ Look for new opportunities for economic growth across the region through the creation of synergies emanating from the evolution of a new platform of cooperation amongst people and companies.
☑ Use the ‘Mediterranean’ as a ‘brand’ for the scope of co-branding for successful international marketing and promote expansion via franchising or via other models.
☑ Foster face-to-face, blended or online events to facilitate contact among the public and the private sectors, focusing on SMEs.
☑ Diversify markets, products and services.
☑ Invest in market analysis systems, economic intelligence, digital transformation, human capital and talents.
☑ Bet on regional cooperation and on the will to join forces to emerge stronger from this pandemic.
☑ Plan and implement a green tourism infrastructure and promote ecotourism.
☑ Finance and invest in sustainable tourism.
☑ Create policies and guidelines for a new tourism model.
☑ Foster adventure tourism in the Mediterranean, with new routes and destinations (adventure tourism in the region grew by 195% between 2010 and 2014).
✓ Create jobs for local communities in the mid and long term focusing on the inclusion of women and youth.
✓ Establish synergies with European projects and private initiatives aligned with sustainable tourism in the MED.
✓ Boost strategic alliances between public and private institutions through executive agreements or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster their coordination on sustainable destination management.

c) Concrete actions
✓ Celebration of events like MediTour, to foster Mediterranean tourism and be a platform for networking, knowledge and best practices exchange between the main sectoral actors, focused on the situation post COVID-19.
✓ Create and foster from ASCAME a unique ‘Mediterranean Tourism brand’.
✓ Develop a new and innovative communication strategy to reposition the Mediterranean as a main holidays destination. ASCAME and its partners would take the lead.
✓ Distribute information among ASCAME’s network on financial aids for the recovery of tourism.
✓ Create a training programme for young people willing to work in this sector. Tourism is a people oriented sector and requires friendly, efficient, professionals with a thorough understanding of the culture, heritage and environment of the regions they serve.
✓ Set up a ‘Mediterranean Tourism Council’.
✓ Create a fund to rescue and bailout for businesses and companies, many in the travel and tourism industry, including airlines, cruise companies, travel agencies, and tour operators.
✓ Drive a common regional strategy “10-year plan presenting the Mediterranean as a world leader destination”.
✓ Launch a discussion process within ASCAME’s working commission of Tourism and involve all members to draft a 10-year plan.
✓ Global market research on adventure tourism in the Mediterranean region available for open access.
✓ Inventory on adventure tourism assets in the Mediterranean using a coordinated and harmonised methodology.

✓ Training sessions on sustainable tourism about destination management, business planning, marketing and international sales, for business owners and local guides.

✓ Co-creation of 10 new sustainable adventure tourism products: regional cooperation to create routes, itineraries and day trips across the Mediterranean.

✓ Launch a ‘Mediterranean Adventure Treasures Competition’, where entrepreneurs will show their most innovative solutions for sustainable tourism.

✓ Development of a marketing strategy to promote the Mediterranean region as a top-world adventure tourism destination.

✓ Increase visibility of Mediterranean adventure tourism: by attending tourism and adventure international fairs, events and roadshows in the next two years.
Logistics

a) Current situation

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that logistics needs to evolve to build stronger supply chains. We all depend on them to achieve food security, health and stability, as their mission is to keep people safe and businesses operational, while customers adapt to new challenges.

Commerce keeps the world connected. Maritime transport, where 80% of the goods and 50% of the oil consumed circulate, is of vital importance in global geopolitics. In addition, transportation and logistics foster cooperation and development. They are blood for the economy by mobilising $4.3 billion. In developing countries, competitive logistics would help solve immigration, radicalisation or job creation problems.

The Mediterranean has more than 450 ports and terminals, represents 30% of world maritime trade by volume and is the leading tourist destination in the world. It is the point of confluence of three continents (Africa, Asia and Europe), where 500 million people live. From this new situation, a large platform with unique characteristics may emerge to facilitate world trade.

An efficient logistics reduces costs in export, import and distribution in the domestic market. It is the lever for growth and competitiveness. Furthermore, the sector is committed and has reacted by prioritising critical medical supplies, keeping the flow of fresh products and improving the use of technologies.

The global logistics sector is booming, with a greater demand for service from customers, the emergence of new competitors, the review of logistics processes and their incorporation into the digital revolution. Great challenges await us, such as the use of big data to efficiently manage logistics flows or the implementation of online platforms that optimise the volumes of cargo transported.

Beyond the immediate challenge, initiatives to make trade flows more robust must be urgently promoted. The construction of digital platforms will be crucial to adapt in the long term to this new type of crisis. The digitised supply chain, in addition to the global network
of ports, terminals and economic zones, will guarantee to move cargo from one place to another with just one click.

New technologies are driving online logistics and enabling smarter commerce, with more efficiency throughout the supply chain, greater visibility and transparency; while allowing the movement of goods to be optimised and redirected to where they are most needed.

Poor logistics performance creates an unrecoverable loss for producers and consumers alike, and results in a net loss of resources. Improved trade logistics would give a positive boost to the economy at a time of recovery from the global pandemic.

In fact, software can eliminate massive delays and inefficiencies in an industry that moves 180 million containers around the world each year. If so, more than a trillion dollars in cheaper products will arrive faster in ports around the world.

Logistics has demonstrated that it is a vital function for survival activities, thanks to the agility of its operators: supply of essential products, waste treatment and transport in general. But the extreme tension of globalised supply chains and the minimisation of stocks, the alpha and omega of logisticians for a few decades, have reached their limits now. And what is more, even if this pandemic was unpredictable, many Mediterranean countries suffered from a lack of anticipation, both in terms of health and logistics.

More and more voices are questioning an excessively globalised productive system that has become too complex and too fragile. The economic and societal importance of logistics and the awareness of its shortcomings in the Mediterranean, require a unique vision and strategic approach shared by public and private actors.

Greater integration of infrastructures is necessary, as well as more interconnection of the south through highways and the promotion of multimodal corridors, such as the Mediterranean Corridor. This would allow changing trends and benefiting all components of the region. It would attract international companies, increase exports and boost the creation of jobs and companies.

Betting on Mediterranean integration would change the trends and the beneficiaries of all actors in the region. It would attract international companies, increase exports, and boost
the creation of jobs and local companies. This would positively impact all countries on both shores, especially Spain and Italy.

Closing the gaps between the two Mediterranean shores is not easy, but achieving it would mean obtaining a more effective transport network, more trade and further development. The region has the capacity and ambition to become a key player on the international logistics scene.

Free zones are another key factor in logistics, as they are niches for business creation, employment, attraction of foreign investment, a platform for economic development and also the development of business cooperation. The Mediterranean region shows interdependency between free zones and the logistics and transport.

It is time to act reposition the Mediterranean as the great logistics platform for east-west flows and as the best option to channel cargo between Asia, Africa and Europe. Logistics has never been as important as today.

b) **Initiatives for recovery**

- Communicate effectively that, with more than 450 ports and terminals, the Mediterranean represents 30% of the world’s maritime trade by volume.
- Create new opportunities out of digitalisation and the fourth industrial revolution for people, companies and governments.
- Construct new digital platforms.
- Promote the digitalisation of supply chains to guarantee the transportation of cargo from one place to another through just one click.
- Apply new technologies to make trade flows easier and implement online platforms that optimise the volumes of cargo transported.
- Boost a smarter commerce.
- Increase efficiency throughout the supply chain.
- Promote initiatives to make trade flows more effective and robust.
- Increase transparency in logistics.
- Make the relevance of the logistics sector more visible.
- Optimise the movement of goods.
- Use big data to manage logistics flows more efficiently.
Bet on an efficient and eco-sustainable model for logistics and reduce carbon emissions, as 23% of CO2 emissions are attributed to transport.

Move towards a more eco-sustainable transport and logistics model, in line with the European 2030 Agenda.

Deeply integrate transport and logistics infrastructures.

Foster more interconnection between countries and regions through multimodal corridors, such as the Mediterranean Corridor.

Position the Mediterranean as a key player on the international logistics scene.

Foster research and development in transport and logistics.

Improve training in the sector so that young people from the Mediterranean region join the labour market.

Incorporate women into qualified jobs.

Fight against poor logistics performance.

Implement new software to delete delays and inefficiencies.

Boost the creation, the expansion and favourable measures for free zones.

Bet on Mediterranean integration to make the region more attractive to international companies and increase exports.

Initiate a sustainable organisational approach and logistical planning of the territory, articulated with a new industrial policy.

Create a renewed strategy of spatial planning, transport and infrastructure, reoriented on European and Mediterranean and African exchanges.

Support logistically the relocation of a certain number of industrial activities, by encouraging the local Mediterranean economy and industrial clustering and by strengthening shorter, more reactive and more resilient supply chains.

Foster new industrial and logistical cooperation, more balanced with between Europe, the Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Establish coherent regulations and continuous support for the transformation of transport.

Improve information systems.

Revalue financially and professionally the logistics trades to strengthen skills along the chain, from the producer to the distributor.
✓ Take logistics into account at the highest level of the State, with adequate governance and resources.

✓ Begin a process aimed at easing flows, less sensitive to hazards, by accepting higher stock levels and greater massification, which would promote multimodality, while preserving the agility of the chains.

✓ Develop an incentive tax system so that the physical flows are in line with the objectives in terms of climate, environmental and societal impacts.

✓ Implement a new organisation, new procedures, strengthened skills, clarified rules between the various stakeholders and a major investment in the performance of information to develop logistics more efficient and more durable.

c) Concrete actions

✓ Celebrate international events, such as the Mediterranean Logistics and Transport Summit, as a platform for networking and for sharing the latest trends in the sector, focused on the situation post COVID-19.

✓ Promote the participation of ASCAME members in events related to logistics and transport in the Mediterranean region to share their expertise.

✓ Distribute information among Mediterranean companies to improve their logistics systems.

✓ Invest in new technologies to optimise flows in the cargo transported.

✓ Create a series of webinars to share with Mediterranean actors the latest innovations in logistics and transport.

✓ Launch a communication strategy to promote the logistics sector as an adequate area also for women.

✓ Set up a career path in schools and universities across the Mediterranean to train young people and prepare them for a professional future in Logistics.

✓ Improve efficiency in transport and logistics.

✓ Promote the digitisation of paper document to achieve dynamism and efficiency.

✓ Creation of a digital platform, in which data from the entire global supply chain ecosystem will be gathered, involving shippers, port operators and shipping routes.
✓ Coordinate B2B events, bringing together stakeholders as entrepreneurs, companies, organisations, investors, in order to promote synergies and business opportunities.

✓ Put in place coherent regulations and continuous support for the transformation of transport and significantly improve information systems.

✓ Promote from ASCAME’s network of Chambers of Commerce the discussion between the private sector and public institutions regarding the incentives, economic measures and facilities to boost relocation.
a) **Current situation**

The pandemic that has hit the region has exposed the functioning of the food chains, especially their safety and resilience during complex times. Due to the globalisation of markets, agrifood chains have become specialised, intensified, fragmented and financed. This movement makes them vulnerable to economic and health crises. Agricultural markets are unstable, which in addition to the degradation of natural resources and climate change, directly challenges the agro-industrial food system.

These markets, driven by spot exchanges (Chicago, London), react to speculative forecasts by traders, amplifying variation of prices... The result is, for consumers, strong price increases that trigger hunger disturbances, and for farms and agrifood SMEs, high income instability. In addition to these market failures, in 2020 there have been interruptions in logistics networks and employment, due to decisions to contain and close borders.

Food insecurity, which affects nearly 40% of the world’s population due to lack of food or its poor quality, is likely to worsen with the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, this pandemic compromises the proper functioning of supply chains and public health. Agrifood chains or global value chains with the globalisation of markets have become specialised, intensified, fragmented and financed. This movement makes them vulnerable to economic and health crises.

This situation calls for solutions and a new approach to use local resources in a sustainable, durable and safe way. In this regard, the Mediterranean diet should form the basis for the construction of regional food systems, based on autonomy, proximity, and solidarity becoming therefore more resistant to economic and social crises.

By mobilising agro-ecology, circular bio-economy and participatory governance sustainable local development can be promoted by recovering the internal market, but also by exporting to an international market that increasingly values local products. In addition, this approach can contribute to reduce territorial divides and revitalise rural areas.

Patrimonial food diets, such as the Mediterranean diet, could constitute the basis for the construction of regional food systems, based on the principle of autonomy, proximity,
solidarity and, therefore, systems that are more resistant to economic, social, health and environmental crises. These crises, which are added to the degradation of natural resources (land, water, biodiversity) and climate change, directly question the agro-industrial food system.

The role of women in agriculture is also relevant. An OECD report shows that women are more concentrated in the agriculture sector than men. Around 27% of women and 18% of men are working in agriculture and up to two-thirds of women work in agriculture in countries with a large rural economy, such as Morocco. In Tunisia, 70% of the agricultural workforce is female.

Being food producers, rural women often face extremely heavy workloads since they combine physically demanding farm work with unpaid care work. Female farmers also often lack income security since women working in family businesses are often ‘invisible’ workers, doing much of the work without being paid. In some countries such as Jordan, many rural women are precarious daily wage workers working on large farms.

Moreover, despite some promising initiatives to facilitate rural women’s social protection coverage, rural women generally lack access to social protection and have very limited access to quality healthcare facilities, making them particularly vulnerable in the context of COVID-19. If provided with proper support, female farmers could play an important role in maintaining food supply chains in the region during the economic shutdown. This requires overcoming significant structural barriers in some countries where women’s work in agriculture is under valued and small farm holders are confined at the very end of supply chains.

ASCAME considers there is an urgent need for a new vision and partnership for the common Mediterranean agricultural and food sector based on networks of sustainable and joint development, inclusion, safety and solidity, which can overcome the current and future crises.

b) **Initiatives for recovery**

- Improve safety and efficiency in the agrifood sector.
- Bet on sustainable agro-industrial food systems, as climate change is deeply affecting them.
Agricultural products should not be subject to speculation as this can cause an increase in the number of people suffering from malnutrition.

Improve logistics networks in the Mediterranean to avoid a lack of supply.

Improve transport facilities, so that products can easily reach markets.

Work to improve employability in the agrifood sector, especially among young locals.

Promote training to get a more prepared workforce.

Improve agricultural education and promote the adoption of new technology arrangements.

Foster research to discover innovations that improve the sector.

Improve conditions of female workers in agriculture.

Reduce the use of chemicals.

Launch initiatives to help SMEs in agrifood overcome the COVID-19 crisis.

Create financing programmes to support SMEs and families working in agriculture.

Foster institutional credit. Adequate credit facilities should be made available at reasonable cheap rates in rural areas.

Apply conservation tillage practices to save time, fuel and machinery wear.

Implement management software to analyse usage of all inputs and expenses.

Use nitrogen for good plant growth, which can increase crop yields by 22 percent.

Improve varieties selection, such as heat tolerant varieties, which could increase crop yields from up to 23 percent.

Bet on smart water management to increase crop yields up to 50 percent.

Provide high quality inputs at proper times and at controlled prices to protect the farmers’ exploitation.

Ban the sale of adulterated fertilisers.

Promote co-operative farming and the adoption of modern technology on so-called big farms.

Communicate agriculture as a profitable occupation through economies of large-scale farming.

Boost and enhance the organic agrifood ecosystem in the Mediterranean: set the ground for the development of the Mediterranean whole organic sector and ease obstacles to help MSMEs be more competitive and better integrated.
a) **Concrete actions**

- Celebrate international events, such as the EcoMeda Sustainability Summit, in the framework of MedaWeek, to discuss the latest innovation, trends and best practices in the sector and forecast future developments.
- Promote the participation of ASCAME members in events or projects related to agriculture, agrifood, green economy, sustainability, etc.
- Organise webinars to share best practices on efficient and sustainable agriculture.
- Distribute information among Mediterranean SMEs and large companies about the access to financing.
- Hold seminars on implementation of new technologies in the agrifood sector.
- Launch a communication strategy to promote the agrifood sector as appealing for young people in the Mediterranean.
- Set up a career path in schools and universities across the Mediterranean to train young people and prepare them for a professional future in agriculture.
- Promote a marketing campaign in favour of eco-friendly and sustainable farming.
- Develop a Mediterranean organic agriculture network: +5,000 stakeholders are expected to join the Mediterranean cross-border organic agriculture network and Lab.
- Create a platform where organic producers, SMEs, entrepreneurs, researchers, Chambers of Commerce, business angels, public authorities, NGOs, and other stakeholders will be able to connect and exchange insights on production techniques, certifications, technology, job opportunities, and commercialisation of these products across the region and new markets.
- Strength synergies among organic agrifood stakeholders through networking, workshops and training sessions.
- Provide consultancy services directly to SMEs on agrifood for SMEs, producers and exporters to facilitate their entry in innovative organic value chains and participate in international agrifood fairs.
Health

a) Current situation

The Mediterranean region has been one of the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The region's health systems have proven to be insufficiently prepared. After the most intense months of the emergency, health systems are beginning to recover, but with significant consequences.

The experience highlights the importance of having a solid, efficient and interconnected health system in the Mediterranean region. It has become clear that the region must revitalise and reorganise its health sector in order to respond to the challenges that may arise in an effective and coordinated manner together with other countries, bearing in mind that health crises know no borders. In conclusion, it is time to engage in long-term cooperation on health in the Mediterranean.

The global demographic trend confirms this need and vision, since by 2050 the world’s population is expected to reach 10 billion and two out of five people will be over 60 years old, including more than 434 million people over 80. In this regard, the total healthcare expenditure would be 15% of GDP by 2050. This combination of population growth and demographic changes will seriously accelerate the challenges we face in health and healthcare delivery.

In this context, building sustainable health systems in Mediterranean economies is one of the biggest challenges of the region. Mediterranean economies have the opportunity to modernise their medical systems by taking advantage of the advances and innovation of the last years. In this regard, several Mediterranean areas and cities have positioned themselves as relevant innovation hubs.

In this sense, the public-private partnership (PPP) makes more sense than ever as it can be key to building resilient and emergency preparedness health systems. The traditional concept of these partnerships must evolve towards a sustainable ecosystem of collaboration and lasting in time.
While the health sector has not attracted attention for regional cooperation, recent developments make it clear that it must be a priority. ASCAME aims to highlight the potential benefits of an intensified cooperation on health issues at an Euro-Mediterranean level, gathering countries from all the shores of the Mediterranean basin. The Association will pursue its goal by mobilising its network, economic weight and other available tools to foster investment in a regionally integrated, credible, responsive health system.

Although the critical moments we have experienced, where countries have chosen to close their borders, it is not the time to stop international collaboration, but on the contrary, to make it closer than ever. Today's crises know no borders and demand global and consensual solutions taking into account the regional and world interconnection.

Within this context, ASCAME calls for more cooperation on public health, for greater investment in health infrastructure – including the construction of regional storage centres for medical supplies – and committed to improving the availability and affordability of products of reliable quality”, especially vaccines, drugs and other essential items. Ensuring fair access to health products and services should be the world’s top priority.

b) Initiatives for recovery

- Mobilise and coordinate an ecosystem of corporations, start-ups, NGOs, international and academic institutions, as well as health policymakers in order to transform the health systems in Mediterranean emerging economies.
- Mobilise and promote public-private partnership.
- Foster intergovernmental collaboration to deal with health crisis situations that transcend borders.
- Foster international collaboration and sustainable investment in health systems
- Bet on health integration in Mediterranean countries.
- Prioritise expenditure on health, on the provision of health systems and on staff training.
- Prioritise R&D research.
- Move towards universal health coverage.
- Strengthen health information systems.
- Promote a balanced and well-managed health workforce.
- Improve access to quality health care services.
Ensure access to essential technologies, including medicines improving the resilience of health systems to environmental change.

Involve the society in the decision-making process regarding recovery and modernization of health systems.

Commit to improve the availability and affordability of products of reliable quality”, especially vaccines, drugs and other essential items.

c) Concrete actions

Establish a platform to bring together investors, companies in the health sector and public authorities in order to search investment in the sector.

Establish a hub for regional health centres to share solidarity initiatives and information of regional interest.

Establish regional research funds and aid for research and development.

Foster investments through regional integration.

Bet on digital health and telemedicine.

Share best practices, resources and capacities between regions and countries.

Protect the health workers establishing decent working conditions, equipment and training.

Establish a regional health crisis management centre and protocols.

Construction of regional storage centres for medical supplies.
Textile

a) Current situation

The textile sector, one of the most important industries in the world, has always been very important and widespread in the Mediterranean. It is an industry valued at 2.5 billion dollars and employs more than 60 million workers throughout the production chain, being a veritable engine of development in the region. In 2018, exports worth 15.1 billion Euros were made to European Union countries. The leading countries are Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon.

Over the last decades, the Mediterranean has positioned itself as a unique region for the textile sector. The workforce, the method of production and the culture are some of the characteristics that are attracting more and more investors. Among the advantages of the region are the efficiency of the market and its producers, rapid communications and logistics, infrastructure, the opportunity to provide employment, the constant growth of SMEs, as well as easy access to new and high quality textile materials.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mediterranean textile sector has suffered millions of Euros of losses and on many occasions, it has redirected its production to serve the health crisis in an exemplary manner. Demand has fallen sharply, affecting many Mediterranean countries where the textile sector is very important.

Taking into account the upward trend of the Mediterranean textile sector and the exceptional situation in which we find ourselves, it is clear that the sector should take advantage of this turning point to consolidate its position in the market and also commit to a sustainable methodology. It is clear that the Mediterranean textile industry should redesign its social and environmental footprint. It should be more mindful of diminishing natural resources, environmental pollution and the exploitation of nature, people and animals, and it should tackle unequal distribution of commodities.

In addition, the fourth industrial revolution is already impacting the textile business through digital fabrication technologies, additive manufacturing, 3-D printing and new computational design techniques. Therefore, for the Mediterranean textile industry, the time to join the revolution has arrived.
Certainly, the Mediterranean textile sector must take advantage of this crisis to emerge stronger and change its production model making it more sustainable with the environment, the society and modernise through the new technologies available.

b) Initiatives for recovery

- Enhance the value of "Made in the Mediterranean" textile through public-private action in media communication and the development of a label symbolising quality, respect for the consumer and the environment, to encourage global purchasing.
- Stimulate purchasing habits in order to buy textile made in Med.
- Take advantage of the Mediterranean's outstanding position as a textile producer to further consolidate its position.
- Strengthen the fight against smuggling and under-invoicing of imports.
- Promote regional textile consumption and investments in the sector.
- Promote sustainable partnerships between retailers and manufacturers with a production reorganisation based on flexibility, swiftness and nearshoring.
- Protect workers in the supply chains and tackle and deal with the lack of protection for unregistered workers.

a) Concrete actions

- Support the relocation of a certain number of industrial activities, by encouraging the local Mediterranean economy and industrial clustering, in order to diversify their risk and strengthen a shorter, more reactive and more resilient supply chains.
- Reconstruct the fashion industry more sustainable, from supplying sustainable materials to reducing carbon emissions and pollution and workers' rights. If fashion houses want to remain avant-garde, they must redesign their thinking beyond next season, and take part in the sustainable fashion revolution.
- Reschedule, without penalties or interest on arrears, the tax debt of companies.
- Abolish VAT on investment to boost investment in the sector.
- Extend social security benefits to enable companies to cope with the very slow recovery of their activity by the end of the year.
- Strengthen the price competitiveness of Mediterranean exports.
✓ Tighten non-tariff barriers to imports of finished textile products, standards, labelling, etc.
✓ Reduce social charges taking into account the constraints imposed on companies to ensure health and safety in industrial units.
✓ Grant a rebate on the cost of energy for industrial companies in the upstream textile sector.
✓ Create the Mediterranean Youth Fashion Platform for students passionate about sustainable fashion.
✓ Promote joint ventures between Mediterranean companies in order to compete better in the international and regional market.
✓ Create platforms for investors interested in the textile sector putting them in touch with companies looking for investment.
a) Current situation

The global COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected many sectors of the economy but especially those activities with global production chains spread throughout the world, such as the automotive sector.

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, the automotive sector was in full expansion in the Mediterranean, with Spain, Turkey and Morocco as major players. Spain is the second largest European manufacturer after Germany and the first in the Mediterranean with 83% of its production exported. France is the second largest manufacturer in the region, while Turkey and Morocco have recorded strong growth in their exports. 73% of the regional Mediterranean production is destined for export.

For decades, the automotive industry has been weaving complex, global-scale supply chains based on maximum efficiency, rigorous timeliness and just-in-time parts supply, a model that in current circumstances has led to a total halt in what is Europe's second largest vehicle producer.

The time has come to regionalise the sector, to focus on proximity and the alliance between the two shores of the Mediterranean as the next frontier of growth. The Mediterranean has the ideal characteristics to become a hub for the automotive sector and to house production chains, as an international hub for manufacturing and assembly with easy access to Africa, Asia and Europe. Cheap energy, raw materials, geographical location and a young workforce that can be trained with the required skills are the main advantages. Moreover, there are possibilities of complementarity between countries that could promote the region to play a leading role in the global automotive scene.

The vision should be to create a global Mediterranean hub, for the production of both low-cost and high-end cars, and the cars of the future of new technological or electrical generation. The Mediterranean automotive industry could play a major role in the development of a global supply platform that is likely to place the region on the world stage and reaffirm its attractiveness and capacity to attract more investment in key sectors.
The Mediterranean must focus on greater regional integration, supply chain efficiency and the improvement of regional know-how and new sustainable technologies. The Mediterranean automotive platform has a great future ahead if it takes advantage of the opportunities.

In addition to this, it is key to understand the changes that will take place in the sector within the coming years. Sustainable mobility is gaining more and more importance and will soon be a protagonist in the market. In fact, there has been a downward trend in the sale of traditional cars for some time now. More and more people are betting on new models of cars that pollute less and are more sustainable. It is important to embrace this change and adapt to it as it is necessary and has come to stay. Market operators are also changing, focusing on new forms of transport such as shared mobility, autonomous vehicles, smart-mobility, micro-mobility etc.

Therefore, the Mediterranean must be prepared to welcome this new form of car production and attract investors and producers to the region. When this crisis is over, car sales will go up again, but they will be more focused on sustainability and smart-mobility. Thus, the Mediterranean must be ready.

**a) Initiatives for recovery**

- Bet on the Mediterranean region as an automotive hub by taking advantage of its unique characteristics.
- Boost the sector and expand its capacity to manufacture, export and create jobs.
- Commit to regional integration and international collaboration to strengthen the automotive hub.
- Implement appropriate support and funding mechanisms.
- Restructure the sector in business ecosystems.
- Governments should encourage the creation of business support funds for industrial and market recovery.

**b) Concrete actions**

- Bet on the development of sustainable cars and vehicles.
- Adopt strategies to address and prepare for the change of sector towards sustainable and smart mobility (training, materials, infrastructure).
✓ Adopt measures to encourage the purchase of new sustainable cars such as returning old cars in exchange for discounts or money.
✓ Address strategies for transforming the sector towards sustainable mobility.
✓ Adopt measures to protect workers in the production chain.
✓ The sector needs to adopt a comprehensive approach and develop a variety of scenarios and robust contingency plans to navigate through this crisis.
✓ The sector must begin to diversify its supply chains in order to reduce risk.
✓ Reflect on the impact of this crisis on the implementation of European obligations in the sector.
3. NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN ECONOMIES

3.1. Why is it necessary to rethink Mediterranean economies?

At a time when Europe and some Mediterranean countries have become the epicentre of the pandemic, we must all work together to relaunch the economy in every Mediterranean country. With this aim, the public and private sectors must work closer than ever to reactivate every affected sector in the region.

In order to refloat the pillar sectors of Mediterranean economies, such as tourism, logistics, textile, energy, automotive or health, national governments should put in place all reactivation measures available. Companies will also have to do their best to succeed. And in this context, the European Union, built on the principle of solidarity, cannot stand aside at such a crucial juncture. A solidarity response from all European member estates that rises to the occasion, is needed more than ever.

The request for continuous support over time (not only at the beginning of the crisis) help from Italy, Spain, Greece and other affected countries in an unprecedented situation, needs to be heard to alleviate as soon as possible the human and economic tragedy. Europe cannot ignore the Mediterranean, but must be fully involved since its future is closely related to the development capacity of this region due to the strong interdependence and multiple transmission channels. The cost of not doing so would be very high.

The battle against this pandemic has already been and will still have to be fought on several fronts. In its first period, it was urgent that all medical supplies reached the most affected areas as quickly as possible, avoiding any customs restrictions or limits to the free flow of medical supplies. After that, relaxing budgetary orthodoxy and country deficits was considered essential for European economies to survive. And now the time has come to provide direct help to both companies and workers, while preserving jobs and offering a wide range of social benefits.

The micro, small and medium-sized companies, which constitute the backbone of the world economy, and their workers, who represent more than 80% of employment in many countries, have been the most affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19. That is why
governments must commit to taking urgent stimulus and safeguard measures to maintain their viability and avoid rampant unemployment.

In the Mediterranean region, the global economy is expected to lose near $8.5 trillion in output over the next two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. GDP growth in Mediterranean economies is expected to plunge to minus 5% in 2020. A modest, 3.4% growth – barely enough to make up for the lost output – is expected in 2021. Trade is forecast to contract by nearly 15% in 2020 amid sharply reduced global demand and disruptions in global supply chains.

Tourist arrivals in the Mediterranean region could decline by 20% to 30% in 2020. This translates into a loss of 100 to 200 billion USD in international tourism receipts (exports). A constant deterioration of the regional economic situation since it began conducting weekly updates, with economic impacts in lower-income regional economies following demand shocks in higher-income countries, where outbreaks have struck first and hardest.

Getting out of this deep crisis and placing value on Mediterranean tourism is undoubtedly the correct path. However, what is the strategy to follow? What tools will economic actors and communities implement? The exchange of best practices and coordination between countries in the two Mediterranean shores should be the priority. Governments, the private sector and the international community must work together to overcome COVID-19 and the unprecedented social and economic crisis it has caused.

The stimulus capacity will vary considerably from one country to another. Various factors will come into play, such as infrastructure, human resources, the economic capacity, and even political factors. There is an urgent need to mitigate the impact of the crisis, guarantee the recovery of all key Mediterranean sectors and allow them to play a leading role in the overall recovery. To accelerate the recovery, it is necessary to promote stimulus policies and provide financial incentives for investment, tourist exploitation and preparation for the future.
3.2. What is this plan about?

Today, ASCAME has put forward its proposal for a major recovery plan. To ensure the recovery is sustainable, even, inclusive and fair for all the Mediterranean region, ASCAME is proposing to create new recovery recommendations embedded within a powerful, modern and revamped long-term action.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the Mediterranean region and the world to its core, testing healthcare and welfare systems, our societies and economies and our way of living and working together. To protect lives and livelihoods, repair the Mediterranean economy, as well as to build a lasting and prosperous recovery, ASCAME aims to harness the full potential of the Mediterranean region.

This new Economic Development Plan for Mediterranean Economies has the objective to be a guide of recommendations and to mobilise the private sector to build a new region based on the new economic pillars of our immediate future such as the Digital Economy, the Green Economy and the Blue Economy.

Through complementing national efforts, the Mediterranean region has the power for a more equitable socio-economic recovery, the ability to repair and revitalise the Mediterranean economy, guarantee a level playing field, and support the urgent investments, in particular in the green, blue and digital transitions, which hold the key to Mediterranean future prosperity and resilience.

This Plan is focused on offering solutions on financial support for investments, suggesting a set of economic initiatives and concrete actions from the private sector in order to alleviate the socio-economic impacts of the crisis.

Some of the initiatives are taking action in accelerating the transition towards climate neutrality, supporting rural areas in making the structural changes necessary in line with the Green Deal and European discussions regarding the future of Green economy, mobilising private resources to urgently support viable Mediterranean SMEs in the sectors, regions and countries most affected to give new dynamism to the recovery and equipping the Mediterranean with a powerful tool to get the economy back on its feet and build for the future.
Relaunching the economy does not mean going back to the status quo before the crisis, but bouncing forward. We must repair the short-term damage from the crisis in a way that also invests in our long-term future.
3.3. Digital Economy

New technologies are a necessary tool for SMEs and the self-employed, and more so in a time of crisis like the current one. Reinventing yourself and looking for new opportunities in digitalisation seems to be one of the clearest solutions. In the post COVID-19 era, with rare exception, operating digitally is the only way to stay in business through mandated shutdowns and restricted activity.

The COVID-19 crisis has placed us all quickly and intensely in a VUCA scenario (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity). Digitalisation is an essential element, rethinking how we want to work and live through new processes and new ways of doing things, taking into consideration that it is not a matter of digitalising the mechanisms, it is a way of changing those mechanisms, without imitating the analogue world in the digital world.

This digital future will create new opportunities for people, companies and governments. A new era based on digital emerges creating new opportunities. Nevertheless, the benefits of technology are not distributed equally, since more than 3.600 million people on the planet still do not have access to the internet, where the way we work, learn, buy or communicate has changed. Therefore, the so-called ‘new normality’ will also bring new threats, polarisations between societies or divergent economies where the current economic models need to give new answers, since the existing measures are not enough. More economic integration, emergency plans and realistic solutions are needed to solve endemic problems implying numerous changes that governments struggle to regulate.

Never before has the digital agenda been as necessary and vital as now as an immediate response to the impact of the COVID-19 making also indispensable the drive for research and innovation. Technological change threatens jobs, but also creates alternatives. Relationships at work, between companies, employees, services, mobility are evolving. The only key to progress is to improve innovation and education. As in everything else, the future of Europe, Africa and the Mediterranean lies in adapting, sharing experiences and moving forward together.

New digital technologies generate a new competitiveness that, for the moment, does not reach many Mediterranean countries. Meanwhile, Mediterranean governments should
focus on job creation and not so much on business creation. An expired model that consists of launching massive public employment programmes instead of financing and investing in successful companies that create jobs. It is clear that economic progress is directly related to training, research and innovation activities, and that there is a correlation between social progress and business activity.

There are constant challenges in the region, mainly driven by a rapidly changing e-commerce landscape, increasing digitisation and growing customer demand; indicating that technology and digital transformation will continue to play an important role in the future of commerce and industry. For the region, a successful transition would guarantee business competitiveness and would be a determining factor for regional industrial consolidation.

The Mediterranean region will have to create hundreds of millions of new jobs in the next three decades. This challenge presents an opportunity for the region to transform its economies and harness the creativity of its large youth population and the disruptive power of technology to create wealth. Nevertheless, in this new required digital era, production lines will require less and less manpower thanks to more efficient machines, automation and robotics. We already know that 8 out of 10 jobs will be lost due to new technologies (not due to immigration or globalisation), that 64% of existing work today will be automated and that 66% of jobs for the next 10 years have not yet been invented.

The region has an enormous human capital to develop. Education, promoting the private sector and understanding this technological revolution, will be key ingredients for success. This is a complex task that will require broad social consensus and determined action by governments. Entrepreneurship and the private sector can drive adaptation to technology and innovation, be the vehicle to engage youth and move forward being necessary to promote a new mind frame, taking innovation as a lever for creating value by transforming the way of doing business through a multiplying effect on the growth of a nation and its companies.

The digital potential is unlimited, which represents an opportunity for the Mediterranean. A large market with rapid growth. A hub of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, where resources are found in youth to find solutions to pressing problems. Now more than ever, it is time to invest in market analysis systems, economic intelligence, digital
transformation, human capital and talents. Taking innovation and digitalisation as a way to develop and survive.

There is a great need for a new collaboration platform that brings together governments, companies and other stakeholders interested in Mediterranean public-private cooperation, which also facilitates a progressive dialogue that understands and respects the values and culture of the region. In the same way, it is needed to invest in young people to unlock the demographic dividend in an area where the interests of governments, the private sector and international organisations are fully aligned presenting the improving innovative capacity as a conditioning key factor for the near future. We need to connect, explore and foster partnerships in digital spaces.

Here are some of the strategic actions to enhance the cross-border SMEs and start-ups ecosystem, while integrating key actors, such as women and youth. Start-ups generally offer innovative solutions as they attract great and fresh talent across the region. Some of these safe spaces for innovation and digitalisation are organisations that are specialised in supporting women entrepreneurs across the region. Incubators and accelerator programmes for start-ups and entrepreneurs are the engine and the pool of talent and innovative solutions, start-ups have the mindset of doing a lot with less as they are driven by lean management approaches, and on top of that, they tend to have a close ratio of women and men.

When we think about the future, a future that seems closer than it has never been, we need to formulate some questions, especially on how to integrate cutting-edge technologies into key sectors while taking advantage of the extensive population of digital natives in the MED region. Some of the technologies that are here to stay and that we have to take into consideration are: Virtual Reality, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Internet of Things, Big Data, Blockchain, or mobile money. These must be tools to pursue resource optimisation and cost reduction towards a goal of being more sustainable, greener, and smarter.

In this regard, fintech, the mix of finance and technology, opens up endless solutions for the region. In spite of the criticising regarding the lack of transparency of this type of decentralised technologies digital currencies, blockchain, and mobile money have the
potential to regulate the informal sector, bank millions of unbanked people, reduce the cost of money or, even, devise a common regional cross-border currency.

Finding and adapting to this digitalised world and using the technologies available for our-own good is not something that only applies to companies. At ASCAME we are also building a roadmap for the “Chamber 4.0”. In this regard, we want to offer to our members for free some powerful online tools that have been recently developed and that could play a key role in the post-COVID-19 scenario and the services that the Chambers of Commerce can offer to their network.

We are looking at these online tools as a great opportunity for strengthening the management capacities of ASCAME’s Chambers of Commerce and thus, bridging BSOs knowledge into digitalisation and reducing the digital gap.

**Initiatives and actions on Digital Economy**

✓ **“Business Country Desk Platform” free and open access**: this online platform offers its users three main services: an intuitive directory, a Business HelpDesk and a tool for EuroMed Business Matching. Only user registration is needed.
  ○ Business Helpdesk: provides reliable and updated information related to socio-economic and regulatory context of 10 southern MED countries. This tool is composed of an investment guide, a travel guide and statistical data.
  ○ Business Matching tool: its objective is to create and strengthen partnerships. It offers the following functionalities: access to the event’s participants catalogue, manage profiles, send and receive requests for meetings with other companies or attendees, and consult the EuroMed business agenda. Soon it will also provide a space to set up B2B virtual meetings.
  ○ Intuitive directory with a multi-criteria search engine.
  ○ In addition, it has other useful sections: news, opportunities and resources.
  ○ Many of these functionalities can be sync to the Mobile App.
The first Mobile App to strengthen business and trade across the region: this app is available for iOS and Android. In this app, you can access events and webinars from all across the region, take part in activities and fill up surveys and quizzes.

New technologies in cultural visits: increase, through Virtual Reality, the visits to Humanity’s cultural heritage, recognised by UNESCO in the Mediterranean. This action aims to improve and disseminate new technologies in cultural visits in Mediterranean areas, based on Humanity’s cultural heritage places.

A successful transition into the digital era will mean modernisation of the region, an increase of wealth, creation of employment, and enhancement of the Mediterranean shared identity. To achieve the digitalisation of the region: a shift from a competitive mindset to a collaborative one, improve telecommunications and software infrastructure and boost civil society’s digital literacy. In order to name some specific initiatives to achieve this goal we propose:

- Strategic alliances between public and private to adapt the curriculum to job-demanded skills.
- Mainstreaming the dissemination and access to new technologies across sectors and business processes. And foster the use of agile tools like design thinking, scrum, or lean management.
- Promote and advocate for regional exchange programs for professionals and young entrepreneurs both virtually and onsite.

Creation of virtual academies: the jump into the digital world democratised access to education and boosted global networks across different stakeholders. Various programmes have included these services in their programme outlines:

- Educational units: develop and carry out a Sustainable Business Management Training Programme for ASCAME’s members.
- Online coaching and mentoring for and from ASCAME’s members to support other professional business ideas and challenges.
- Virtual network spaces where entrepreneurs and professionals can connect, acting as a HUB of talent and innovative practices, as well as a Mediterranean meeting point for solving common problems.
- **Celebrate virtual and onsite business pitches** and invite investors and venture capitalists to foster those connections. And incubation and acceleration programmes for Mediterranean entrepreneurship initiatives.

- **Support companies where youth and women have been given access to managerial positions.**

- **Stakeholder's interconnection:** facilitate the interconnection of advanced Research institutions with SMEs to stimulate innovation synergies, research practices and market actions.

- **Exploit and transfer research results:** foster 'from lab to market' framework to transfer technological innovation and to commercialise the research results in interregional clusters and SMEs.

- **Provide digital expertise** and related expert services to the service of SMEs on technological issues favouring knowledge transfer.

- **Surpass barriers:** the geographical, technical, scientific, cultural and linguistic barriers of developmental extroversion of SMEs, and to boost the development of local economies.

- **Scientific and technological developments accessibility:** ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wider range of users who can then further develop and exploit the technology into new products, processes, applications, materials or services.
3.4. Green Economy

The global COVID-19 pandemic is likely to set back the progress made in addressing the climate crisis. The reduction in vehicle circulation and industrial activities has cleared the air in habitually polluted cities, leaving residents amazed. This does not necessarily mean that we are making progress to mitigate climate change, but it does demonstrate to what extent our actions affect nature. However, renewable energy will be the only energy sector to show growth in demand this year.

Environmentalists are pressuring governments to withhold financial support from polluting companies with no plans to change and to instead provide vital economic incentives for the corporate world to incorporate sustainable initiatives into their practices. There are many challenges at stake, particularly in tourism management and the fight against pollution. Climate change is a serious threat to development and sustainability. Resources must be managed, energy policies must be promoted, and our great common historical heritage must be preserved.

Climate change and water scarcity in the Mediterranean will increase the impact of different conflicts and challenges. Most countries have begun to suffer the consequences of pollution and its effects on the population and other aspects of life. There is a growing awareness that this situation affects everyone: it is not subject to nationality, religion, or political ideas. Therefore, the situation requires us to mobilise and build a sustainable environment together.

In that way, now it is time to rethink the Mediterranean so that it becomes a positive and reactive actor on the international scene. It is necessary to establish a suitable Mediterranean reflection for the region as a whole because it is not just about clean energy, but also about a different way of operating, a different normality, promoting the creation of resource efficient and climate resistant economies. It is the first step towards a future that must increase cooperation between its two shores and for this, measures are required to protect the ecosystem.

Green economy provides a great opportunity to foster global development with sustainable growth and in line with the 2030 Agenda. It is present in clean technologies, renewable
energies, water services, green transport, circular economy, green building, sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation, among others. Also, taking into account the indispensable involvement of the private sector through business and employment opportunities, stimulating this sustainable growth in the Mediterranean.

In addition, it is important to highlight that the region could cover its own needs and those of the rest of the world only with solar energy. The total investment planned in the renewable energy sector until 2030 will be 250,000 million euros, which can bring the possibility to formulate a new Mediterranean global vision for the region to become a leader in the green economy. Large-scale solar parks and onshore wind farms offer the cheapest source of electricity for approximately two-thirds of the world's population. The future is optimistic.

Thus, it is essential to accelerate a global transition to 100% renewable energy with a regional strategy to achieve this goal reducing CO2 emissions converting, after this pandemic lockdown, the Mediterranean region becomes stronger. To guarantee sustainable development, Mediterranean countries must invest in human resources by providing financing for their development. Climate change affects all aspects of our lives: our environment, our economy and our health. The time for talking is over. It is time to take action.

In this recovery period, it is mandatory to incorporate and work in parallel with the principles of a green economy if we are to avoid further climate breakdown, driving it by new technologies that reduce water-energy-food nexus pressures. We need to turn the recovery into a real opportunity to do things right for the future where long-term planning and a shared vision are essential to mobilise the necessary resources to develop energy cooperation between the two shores of the region. We are all aware of the mutual dependence on energy between Europe and the Mediterranean.

To this aim, we need to produce significant long-lasting changes and wide-ranging in key thematic sectors of the Mediterranean area to make it more competitive, innovative, inclusive and sustainable among these the development of start-ups, the strengthening of economic clusters, the transfer of technology, the employability of young people and women, waste management and energy efficiency.
**Initiatives and actions on Green Economy**

- **MED region area innovation and inclusiveness laboratory**: promote actions that make MED region area a laboratory of innovation and inclusiveness. Allowing to intervene in favour of the employability of over 1700 people, including young people and women residing in the territories of the Mediterranean region, to whom active labour policy initiatives will be destined and will benefit from innovative training activities.

- **Training**: internship courses will be created, as well as tutoring, e-learning, mentorship, coaching and the establishment of sectoral skills alliances between SMEs, training institutions and a vast network of public and private institutions. It will thus be possible to produce long-lasting effects on direct and indirect employment and on the development of entrepreneurship also at the local level. It is essential to act together to face these challenges and improve the lives of men and women in the entire Mediterranean area.

- **Job monitoring and policy learning**: at least 3 visits abroad to public bodies reserved for key personnel of the institutions and political authorities involved in the project, and the development of an “Action Plan for Work in the Mediterranean” sharing good practices and suggestions from other stakeholders to innovate the regional LAPs, which will serve to increase the expected impact of future investments on the growth and employment.

- **Exchange of cross-border technical knowledge for sustainable construction**: promote the exchange of cross-border technical knowledge between the Mediterranean region, carrying out seven pilot actions co-financed by ASCAME and the European Commission characterised by a high degree of technological innovation in seven public buildings such as schools, administrative buildings and sports centres. This will allow to have a range of extrapolated tested solutions for different types of buildings through the development of joint strategies and cross-border applicable recommendations, helping public authorities to prioritise the measures that can carry out in the energy rehabilitation of public buildings according to their characteristics, energy consumption and required interventions, defining the best tools and solutions available and monitoring their performance.
3.5. Blue Economy

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all economies. In response, many countries are implementing policy and trade measures. Blue economy sectors such as travel, tourism, maritime transport, fisheries and seafood production are heavily affected.

It is necessary to focus on taking advantage of shared opportunities at the regional and global levels to resolve the impact of the coronavirus crisis and work for recovery. This is evident in the global domain that unites us: the Sea. We need to harness that potential, 70% of our planet, to provide the blue boost to our economies, and build a more resilient and sustainable world. Furthermore, taking into account that the sea has an essential role to play in terms of health, medicine, food and energy security, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and scientific discovery. The sea for the Mediterranean is the determining and the protagonist of everything that happens, it is a way of life, transportation, and communication. It is like the great catalyst of everything that happens, in one way or another it is always present.

The inhabitants of the Mediterranean depend extensively on the sea. We obtain essential supplies and services, from aquaculture and fishing to tourism. The pandemic has put all of this at risk. The global tourism industry faces uncertainty and profound challenges in the coming years. The Mediterranean forecasts a 52% decrease in tourist arrivals in 2020 with a 25% decrease in GDP. Food security is also at risk, supply chains have been disrupted by quarantines in a sector as vulnerable as fisheries.

The political will to act and the belief in our capacity to do things differently are the enabling factors to reach a tangible reduction of the human pressure on our Mediterranean environment. Such measures can only be reduced through informed, cooperative, inclusive, integrative, and adaptive governance approaches.

There are significant opportunities for investment in the blue economy and sustainable development where new back-to-nature economies where businesses realise the value of and invest in nature to obtain healthier and fairer benefits for all. We must unite our efforts and strengthen the collaboration of business communities related to the regional maritime sector to take advantage of these opportunities and face these challenges.
The blue economy is an essential source of wealth and prosperity for the Mediterranean. The region must take advantage of that potential and the opportunities for growth, employment and investment. National strategies must clearly identify priorities, develop a clear vision for sustainable development and guarantee the policies and actions necessary to promote the blue economy, in addition to safeguarding the sea.

Developing a healthy and sustainable blue economy is a must. Investing in key oceanic actions such as decarbonisation of maritime transport, mangrove conservation and restoration, sustainable production of seafood and the development of renewable energies provide global benefits. Not only financial benefits, but also better health outcomes for consumers, richer biodiversity and safer jobs, among others.

The Mediterranean must cooperate to launch and implement a sustainable maritime governance system that will benefit both shores and thus boost the economic contribution of the oceans, in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. A sustainable sea must be seen not only as a conservation imperative, but also as a priority for the future of the economy, the ecosystem and the future of society.

The main goal in this regard should be to contribute to the sustainable socio-economic development of the Med area through innovative investments in the blue economy.

**Initiatives and actions on Blue Economy**

- **Promote the participation in the online “Marina platform”,** which will bring together several blue economy stakeholders, in order to ease their interaction as a network in real time and share ideas and make mutual plans.

- **Knowledge sharing on Blue Growth issues:** as representatives of the private sector, ASCAME is taking part in the discussions of the most innovative processes of the Blue Growth, acquiring consciousness as organisation of the main Blue Growth sustainable issues and learning specific knowledge about Blue Growth benefiting all our members.

- **Promote the participation of MED SMEs in Blue Economy.**
✓ **Intra-thematic activities focusing on several Blue Economy’s** transversal topics opened to the private sector: events, working group sessions, webinars and online conferences, encouraging the participation of the MED private sector.

✓ **Endorse crowdfunding initiatives** to MED blue SMEs as an option for better access to funding. This will facilitate blue-economy SMEs in the Mediterranean region to have better access to funding and consequently deliver better and more innovative solutions.
4. ASCAME’S INITIATIVES

ASCAME is committed to playing its strategic role of supporting the Chambers of Commerce and the Mediterranean private sector during these difficult times.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, ASCAME has launched several initiatives to support SMEs and the private sector facing the economic crisis. The Association has been calling for recovery plans focused on regional tourism, SMES and industry, supported by a regional international recovery fund.

The future of the region depends on the ability to adapt to new realities, build bridges, create meeting spaces to transform this threat into an opportunity and turn weakness into strength. This will allow to properly face the challenges, create a common future by adding capabilities and apply this synergy to the search for new paths.

For the months ahead, ASCAME will continue its mission to serve the Mediterranean private sector, by carrying out initiatives that may be useful for the recovery of the sector.

Among a wide variety of initiatives, it is worth mentioning the support to the region’s chamber system and the strive to modernize its tools and strengthen its strategies. In this regard, ASCAME is pleased to present the Chamber 4.0 initiative:

**Chamber 4.0**

ASCAME will take a closer look at how Chambers of Commerce can adopt 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies and adjust their value proposition for their members. The Chamber 4.0 will give the Chambers a chance to rethink their priorities, find new solutions to remove trade barriers and explore innovative and sustainable solutions for businesses. Some of the concrete proposals of this initiative is the following:

- Promote Mediterranean companies and investment opportunities in the region through the Chambers of Commerce.
- Work towards sustainable economic development and enhancing development cooperation through the Chambers of Commerce.
- Interact with governmental powers, international organisations in order to work for the protection of the interests of the Chambers and the private sector.
- Actively contribute in the development of human resources.
✓ Promote interaction between member Chambers to create joint projects that can achieve greater efficiencies and benefits for the region.

✓ Promote platforms for members to explore recovery possibilities, initiatives and proposals. Keep the network informed about investment possibilities, development cooperation, opportunities etc.

✓ Work on the establishment of a positive, solid and united global image of the Mediterranean chambers network.

✓ Put the Association's network of institutional partners, cooperation agreements and partnerships at the service of the ASCAME network to work together for recovery.

✓ Communicate efficiently to members of the Association the services and resources available and engage proactively with its network to foster the sense of belonging of regional and global scope vision.

✓ Foster a centralised virtual database for Chambers’ network where is easy to find synergies, connect businesses, and share resources and opportunities.

✓ Support capacity building and cross-border training opportunities and give them visibility. Endorse virtual mentorship sessions across the region.

✓ Foster the creation of an online Mediterranean market-place where members can post job opportunities, look for partners, attract investments and engage with other stakeholders nationally, regionally and internationally.

✓ Boost a proactive role in the celebration of working commissions to exchange insights and create actionable items around top clusters.

✓ Overall, to be able to connect in real-time, to explore and maximize the potential of the resources and the network. Collaborate, communicate and add value merging efforts to create the Mediterranean we envision for us and the next generations.
4.1. Communication, training and human capital development

During the months of the health crisis, information on the subject has been overwhelming and abundant. In this sense, the Association has made an effort to distribute the most relevant information and make it available to its network.

In times as complicated as these, and taking into account the large amount of information that exists, it is essential to select those proposals that are most important and make them available to their intended recipients.

Help Desk COVID-19 Info

ASCAME has created a specific informative Helpdesk, the ‘HelpDesk COVID-19 Info’, with the aim of following the developments and impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the economy and business sector in all Mediterranean countries and the world.

The main objective of the ‘HelpDesk COVID-19 Info’ is to help Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce, companies and institutions in the region overcome the negative economic effects of the spread of the virus.

As an informative tool, the HelpDesk includes news, economic and educational resources and various economic viewpoints related to the current challenges and threats, as well as ways to confront them. In addition to this, it also contains short promotional videos on various topics concerning ASCAME’s members, about relevant business topics and also about Mediterranean public and private sector representatives.

Moreover, it includes interactive questionnaires for readers about economy, the effects of the current crisis on their work and proposals to confront them, in addition to providing comprehensive and updated information about Mediterranean countries. Several pieces of news, articles, analysis and documented news are shared through this channel.

The HelpDesk COVID-19 Info contributes to guide Chambers and the private sector towards making informed practical decisions based on reliable data. It also helps companies to overcome challenges and enhance their competitiveness based on their ability to keep abreast of all developments related to the business environment, indicating that this platform benefits companies in managing its activities and operations.
The HelpDesk COVID-19 info is just an example of practical instruments that are useful in these times. Over the course of the last 4 months, more than 150 informative links have been sent to the ASCAME network, including press releases, economic articles, information on grants, finance opportunities etc.

Training

The new situation we are living in has given us the opportunity to put training in the foreground, thanks to the possibilities of doing it remotely and the change in lifestyle. Thus, ASCAME strives to make available to its network online training possibilities, whether they are Webinars, Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC) or other types of training materials. The possibilities offered by today's technologies are unimaginable and have an enormous capacity to train teams. Indeed, the new currents of sustainable development of the economy demand training in respect and every day there are more options for training in blue, green, renewable energy, inclusion, etc.

Moreover, the ASCAME team is always ready to offer its expertise in event organisation, meetings as well as project planning and management for the benefit of its network.

In short, during these times of change, it is necessary to improve and train ourselves in order to come out of this challenge stronger.

Press

In order to publicise ASCAME's position on key issues for Mediterranean economies in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, ASCAME has regularly sent information to the media, such as official statements, press releases or opinion articles of the General Coordinator of the Association.

Some examples of subjects that the articles or press releases were about are: tourism, logistics, innovation, digitisation, green economy, blue economy, SMEs, etc., as well as statements on the measures that the public and private sectors of the Mediterranean region should take to face the pandemic, or on the latest initiatives of the European Union in the field of tourism.
Social Media

The different ASCAME profiles on social media have been the Association's main means of communication, both with its members and with the general public. Information of all kinds has been shared on them: webinars, seminars, conferences, events, news, new measures, relevant updates, etc.

User engagement on ASCAME profiles on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn has increased in recent months.

ASCAME’s Website

The Association's corporate website has been regularly updated with the latest content generated, such as official statements, announcements, articles, news, newsletters, events or information on projects.

It has become a useful consultation tool for all types of audiences where the reader could find out the latest news from ASCAME.

Human Capital Development

The Mediterranean is characterised by its enormous human capital potential. The young population of the Mediterranean and the incorporation of women into the labour market open up many opportunities. Investments in human capital, especially in young people and women, are necessary to promote the development of the region.

Societies and economies must also become more inclusive. The crisis of COVID-19 has left profound alterations to the nature of work and employment; broader measures are needed to provide for social and economic inclusion of Mediterranean youth populations, particularly women.

The support of Mediterranean women and young entrepreneurs is essential in order to achieve the objectives of sustainable development and integration of the region. It is essential that the Mediterranean builds and claims its society based on equal opportunities and gender equality, but also that women entrepreneurs are the channels for a new socio-economic era for the Mediterranean.
In this regard, ASCAME deems it important to enhance the Mediterranean as an entrepreneurial hub and to facilitate measures and incentives for those who want to embark on this path.

**Mediterranean Entrepreneurs Hub**

ASCAME proposes the creation of the Mediterranean Entrepreneurs Hub, a space for meeting and exchange for Mediterranean entrepreneurs. Our region is a land of connections and opportunities, a hub that benefits from an attractive and privileged international opening. Its dynamic economic market and its gateway to Africa attract entrepreneurs from around the world who wish to contribute to the country’s development but who do not always find the ideal way to do so.

The mission is to make available to the Mediterranean entrepreneurs of the world a space in the form of a region so that they can identify with it and fully appropriate it. To include it in a collective reflection with the aim of developing know-how wherever it is, increasing economic exchanges and promoting the Mediterranean internationally.

The ambition is to facilitate the access of thousands of Mediterranean women and young entrepreneurs worldwide to targeted, reliable and relevant information. To offer them quality intermediation, capable of generating ambitious and successful projects.

The Mediterranean Entrepreneurs Hub could be the perfect scenario for the creation of virtual academies, providing access to education and boosted global networks across different stakeholders.

These could include educational units on Sustainable Business Management Training Programmes, online coaching and mentoring as well as virtual network spaces where entrepreneurs and professionals can connect, acting as a hub of talent and innovative practices, as well as a Mediterranean meeting point for solving common problems.

Furthermore, the hub could celebrate virtual and onsite business pitches and invite investors and venture capitalists to foster those connections as well as incubation and acceleration programmes for Mediterranean entrepreneurship initiatives.
4.2. Events

ASCAME and its members will organise over the course of the next months several online events and meetings in order to revitalise the economy and work for the recovery of every sector.

Despite the fact that ASCAME's plan is to continue with the annual plan of events that was already defined, some of the events have had to be inevitably cancelled due to the social circumstances produced by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, other of the Association’s most iconic events will continue to be held either face-to-face or in a hybrid format (face-to-face and online). In addition, some new ones arising from post-COVID needs have been incorporated into the events plan.

✓ MediTex: The textile sector is one of the most strategic for the economies of the Mediterranean countries. For this reason, and despite the difficulties presented by the organisation of an international event like this, it is intended to maintain the MediTex event. Businessmen, entrepreneurs and experts in the sector will meet (probably in a digital format) to talk about the latest news in the textile sector, give examples of good practices and lay the foundations for the future of a sector that will be the basis of growth for the regional economy.

✓ Conference: “Why are Chambers of Commerce so important also during this crisis and the post COVID?”: This conference will be held virtually and will highlight the strategic and fundamental role that the Chambers of Commerce play in the recovery of the Mediterranean economy. Despite the fact that sometimes they are not given the deserved importance, the Chambers are the levers of the economic reactivation, since they are made up of businessmen, entrepreneurs and experts in all sectors and they are the ones who best know trade flows and the different industries of the region.

✓ BNew: This is a newly created hybrid event in which ASCAME intends to participate as a partner. The ‘Barcelona Free Trade Zone Consortium’ (Consorci de la Zona Franca de Barcelona) has recently presented this new event, that will be a meeting point for all actors in the new economy. Five will be its main pillars: logistics, digital industry, real estate, ecommerce and economic zones.
MedaWeek Barcelona: MedaWeek Barcelona, the Mediterranean Week of Economic Leaders, is the Association's quintessential event. Authorities, businessmen, young people, entrepreneurs, students, journalists and experts in different subjects will meet from November 18 to 20 2020, to explore the latest trends in the Mediterranean private sector and discuss the future of the region's economies.

The 2020 edition, which will be the 14th edition of MedaWeek and which bears the claim 'Time to act: Stronger together', coincides with the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process. For this reason, this year's design is inspired by Gaudí's work.

There are various forums to be held at the event, all of them of great relevance to the Mediterranean in post-COVID times: new Africa, Halal industry, hotels & hospitality, innovation & digital, healthcare, finance, exhibition & MICE industry, India, Mediterranean private sector, etc.

As there are still a few months to celebrate the event, it is yet to define what format it will have: face-to-face, hybrid or digital.

3rd Mediterranean Private Sector Summit: On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the 3rd edition of the Mediterranean Private Sector Summit will bring together the main actors in the Mediterranean region from the private sector (Europe, Africa, Asia), to support the Mediterranean integration process from a civil society perspective. Pioneer since 1982 in promoting economic cooperation and entrepreneurship between the two shores, ASCAME confirms its commitment with the continuity of the Barcelona Process to foster a new start that transforms the Mediterranean into an area of dialogue and interchange.

Business Leaders from the Mediterranean, Europe, Africa and the Middle East, such as Business Associations, Presidents of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and SMEs representatives, will gather at this unparalleled event, where they will join efforts and commit for the economic and social development of the Mediterranean through 25 initiatives for action. A meeting that pursues as main objectives to involve the Euro-Mediterranean Association, support the Barcelona Process and the
UfM, and make efforts towards the implementation of a Euro-Mediterranean area of economic integration.

In this process of generating wealth and a global and competitive Mediterranean, all stakeholders that promote economic cooperation activities (Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce, Business Associations, etc.) play the role of "real actors for peace".

*(This event will be held in the framework of MedaWeek Barcelona 2020).

✓ **New Africa Business Development Forum**: Africa cannot be described with a single narrative, as the gap between the richest countries and the poorest is substantial. However, despite there are still many common political and economic concerns, major progress has also been made with projects such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Intra-African free trade is seen as the best first step in breaking the cycle of underdevelopment that is denying opportunities for African workers and businesses.

The continent’s greatest deficiency is that only 15% of its total trade is within Africa. In this context, the AfCFTA is set to become the world’s largest free trade area, with a single market that straddles economies with a combined GDP of $3 trillion. As a result, ‘Africa’s route to the future’ has never been clearer. It is necessary to boost African economic integration, invest in infrastructure, improve health and education, and bolster governance generally. An agenda that will also increase productivity in many sectors and create the jobs that Africa needs to reduce unemployment, now running at 7.9% across the continent.

The New Africa Business Development Forum aims to provide a platform for informative and interactive sessions with the prime movers of infrastructure sector across various spheres like government, policy-makers, industry leaders, academia and future investors, to explore new potential areas for financial assistance as well as access to finance to the infrastructure players.

*(This event will be held in the framework of MedaWeek Barcelona 2020).
Innovation Summit: Digital transformation is here to stay. In the last few years, it has upended industries from retail and media to transport and business-to-business commerce and is now sweeping the financial services industry. Striking progress, such as ubiquitous computing power, pervasive connectivity, mass data storage or advanced analytical tools, that can easily be applied to Mediterranean economies. The Mediterranean region will have to create hundreds of millions of new jobs over the next three decades. A challenge that also represents an opportunity to transform its economies and encourage entrepreneurship in a region that is one of the most digitally connected in the world: around 88% of its population is online daily, 94% of people in the region own a smartphone and digital consumption is similarly high in some countries. Nevertheless, Meridional and Eastern Mediterranean region has only realised 8% of its overall digital potential.

The aim of the Mediterranean Innovation and Digital Transformation Summit is the creation of a new collaborative platform that brings governments together with businesses and other stakeholders in private-public cooperation. It will also serve as a platform for international and regional companies, start-ups, innovators, entrepreneurs, and investors to display their innovations and inventions, discuss various topics and establish business relationships that ultimately will enrich the economy; aiming to be the Mediterranean’s largest gathering of innovations and innovators.

In this Summit, several Forums and Meetings will be held:

- 3rd Mediterranean Startup Meeting
- 2nd Mediterranean Digital Transformation Forum
- 3rd Mediterranean Innovation Forum
- 2nd Finance & Business Angels Meeting

*(This event will be held in the framework of MedaWeek Barcelona 2020).

Mediterranean Healthcare Forum: The Mediterranean Healthcare Forum is an event that sits at the heart of the Mediterranean healthcare scene and brings together some of the most influential public and business leaders in Europe, the
Mediterranean and Africa to network, discuss about growth & development in the healthcare sector, share knowledge, talk about the latest healthcare trends and do business.

By 2050 the world’s population will reach 10 billion and two in five of these people will be aged 60 or over, including 434 million over 80 years old. This combination of population growth and demographic changes will seriously accelerate the challenges we face in health and healthcare delivery. It is expected that the total healthcare expenditure will be 13% of GDP in OECD countries by 2050. Therefore, building sustainable health systems in Mediterranean economies is one of the biggest challenges of the region. However, following the path of established health systems in developed economies is not the answer. With so many types of innovation available today, Mediterranean economies have an opportunity to bypass development stages that were previously unavoidable and sidestep the pitfalls of entrenched systems.

*(This event will be held in the framework of MedaWeek Barcelona 2020).

✓ Mediterranean Halal Industry Forum: The Islamic Economy can be described as a way of living (through products, experiences, services, processes and relationships) that is Halal, ethical, wholesome and family-friendly. It affects the lives of more than just the 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide. In fact, the Halal industry has now expanded beyond the food sector to include pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, health products, toiletries and medical devices, as well as service sector components such as logistics, marketing, print and electronic media, packaging, branding, and financing.

The Mediterranean Halal Industry Forum aims to raise awareness about Halal Industry by hosting sessions about Halal-related topics and create trading opportunities for Halal focused Mediterranean and Europe businesses, considering the 57 existing Islamic countries and the importance of Halal business for the global community. An excellent platform to exchange knowledge and best practices in the Halal industry, which is likely to grow between USD 3 and 4 trillion in the next five years. It will also serve as a meeting point for companies based in Europe and the
Mediterranean region to forge industrial and supply partnerships with businesses in the Islamic countries.

*(This event will be held in the framework of MedaWeek Barcelona 2020).

✓ **Mediterranean Hotels and Hospitality Forum:** Every year the Mediterranean region welcomes hundreds of millions of visitors and it is expected to further increase by the start of the next decade. In this context, hotels and hospitality become one of the main pillars of the Mediterranean Tourism sector. Together and under the umbrella of the Meda Hotel & Hospitality Forum, Mediterranean countries can reach and exceed their goals as well as drive success and prosperity within the tourism industry as a whole.

The Mediterranean Hotel & Hospitality Forum is an unparalleled event that will mainly focus on Mediterranean hotels, but also play a significant part in driving the Hospitality sector by bringing hoteliers together and facilitating partnerships. Successful strategies will also be highlighted, some of them related to making hotel and tourism products more sustainable. Renowned industry experts (regional and global hoteliers, restaurateurs, leisure experts, etc.) will present and highlight solutions and initiatives and discuss innovations that drive the sector forward. It is indeed the must-attend event for those looking to develop green hotel policies, projects and technologies or looking to make their existing operations more sustainable.

The Development and Finance sectors in the Mediterranean region are regaining confidence and now have the necessary growing energy, entrepreneurs and activists within them to not just transform themselves, but also help transform the region and the society around them. Both public and private sectors together can make the Development and Finance sector’s goals work on the inside and the outside. This MedaTalk will provide an updated comprehensive overview of donor and financial instruments available to institutions, chambers, business associations and start-ups, and SMEs across the region and will be a discussion platform about mechanisms available for the private sector in the Mediterranean.

*(This event will be held in the framework of MedaWeek Barcelona 2020).*
✓ **MedaTalk on Finance Sector Development:** The Development and Finance sectors in the Mediterranean region are regaining confidence and now have the necessary growing energy, entrepreneurs and activists within them to not just transform themselves, but also help transform the region and the society around them. Both public and private sectors together can make the Development and Finance sector’s goals work on the inside and the outside. This MedaTalk will provide an updated comprehensive overview of donor and financial instruments available to institutions, chambers, business associations and start-ups, and SMEs across the region and will be a discussion platform about mechanisms available for the private sector in the Mediterranean.

*(This event will be held in the framework of MedaWeek Barcelona 2020).*

✓ **MedaTalk on the Exhibitions & MICE Industry:** The Exhibitions and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions) industry is constantly changing but has also established itself as an attractive and stable sector as billions of dollars have been flowing into this industry in the last few years. Forecasts indicate that, despite the less positive economic outlook, this industry remains attractive for investors looking for solid mid-term returns of their investments. This MedaTalk will focus on analysing the global trends and opportunities in the Meetings & Business Exhibitions industry and the latest innovative and sustainable products and solutions that are driving forward the Mediterranean Event industry.

*(This event will be held in the framework of MedaWeek Barcelona 2020).*

✓ **Country Focus Session on India:** India and the Mediterranean regions have been trading for centuries taking advantage of the positive opportunities offered by countries from both regions. Opportunities which certainly remain strong today. With its large population, rapidly growing middle class and capabilities in industrial and post-industrial sectors, India is indeed a market with considerable potential. The Mediterranean region offers as well tremendous growth opportunities for Indian firms, with much-untapped potential. In fact, one of the strongest sectors of this
bilateral relationship is tourism, as Indian tourist numbers coming to the region grew by 15% last year.

India will be present at MedaWeek Barcelona 2020 to further enhance trade and business ties with the Mediterranean region. This Country Focus session will provide participants with the occasion to compare different systems currently implemented within India and use them to improve operational efficiencies to increase our bilateral trade investments flow substantially. It will also be a great chance for Mediterranean economies to help small and medium-sized Indian and Mediterranean companies expand their operations.

*(This event will be held in the framework of MedaWeek Barcelona 2020).*

In spite of the difficult situation in which the events sector is after the COVID-19 pandemic, at ASCAME we plan to continue celebrating the coming events that were already established in the annual events plan:

- Mediterranean Women Entrepreneurs Forum
- Mediterranean Real Estate Forum
- Mediterranean Tourism Forum (MediTour)
- Mediterranean Finance Forum (MedaFinance)
- Egypt Investment Forum

To face the difficulties for travelling, at ASCAME we want to launch a new tool that makes easier the celebration of all kinds of digital events and meetings:

- **ASCAEM Digital Live platform:** One of ASCAME's proposals to face the new reality after the pandemic is the creation of a digital platform available to ASCAME members and their companies, for holding events, conferences, seminars, online meetings or debates. It would be a meeting point that would serve as basis for the emergence of new ideas and initiatives aimed at relaunching the Mediterranean economy.

Furthermore, online B2B meetings and virtual visits will be prepared in order to boost economic exchanges in a safe way.
4.3. Financing and investment opportunities

In addition to loans and grants from banks and public institutions, today more than ever we are seeing a diversification in the sources of capital. The MED region has an unlimited potential from the perspective of resources and workforce and there is less concentration, which has led to an increase of the SMEs and entrepreneurs looking for funding opportunities and, on the other side, venture capitalist, business angels and private equity groups from all over the world interested in investing in new talent and solutions.

In this regard, ASCAME offers its members the “MEDA Finance 2019 Report”, which presents an exhaustive and updated list of more than 150 funding and investment institutions and opportunities focused on the MEDA region. Each one includes a short description, business sectors, target population, type of funding, amount offered, application process (if any), and contact info. After the regional section, there is country-specific which sums up another 33 opportunities in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia.

ASCAME will continue identifying potential financing opportunities for its members through meetings and partnerships with relevant stakeholders. ASCAME is planning to enlarge its network to be able to link and benefit its members, SMEs and entrepreneurs with new funding opportunities. It is important to think outside the box and be aware when looking for access to capital.

International Cooperation projects also represent a sustainable and complementary source of income for Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Association. These entities bring to the table their expertise and their network, adding an incalculable value to the project. On the other hand, the entities funding these projects look for non-for-profit and public entities to help them implement the stated priorities, creating win-win synergies. ASCAME encourages its network to apply for regional cooperation initiatives and collaborates with its members to connect them with other partners to achieve successful project partnership.
**Initiatives on financing and investment**

- Support the development of new, sustainable entrepreneurship and business initiatives, in order to create new economic opportunities and jobs for young people and women.
- Create a supportive environment for sustainable businesses led by young and women entrepreneurs via targeted capacity-building, coaching and mentoring and actions facilitating access to risk capital.
- Facilitate access to new markets for SMEs/start-ups/recently established enterprises with youth or women in managerial positions through financial and capacity-building support services.
- Increase capacities of public authorities to facilitate access to and protect Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and commercial contracts of youth and women entrepreneurs via IPR campaigns, a capacity building programme and meetings with stakeholders in order to facilitate reviews of IPR laws and regulations.
- Create on a yearly basis a comprehensive and updated guide on how and where to access to capital across the region.
4.4. International cooperation projects

Several ASCAME members are involved in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation projects as they add strong value to the consortiums through their unique set of expertise and extensive networks in the MED region private sector.

Proof of that pledge is the active participation of our members in recently approved projects. All of these projects aim to serve as an instrument to tackle important elements on economic activation, green economy, energy efficiency, cultural heritage, innovation, investment, and technology.

Among others, ASCAME’s members and the General Secretariat are actively involved in numerous projects as CRE@CTIVE (Innovation for bringing creativity to activate traditional sectors in MED area), GREENLAND (green-skills for sustainable development), HELIOS (high energy efficiency for the public stock buildings in the Mediterranean), iHERITAGE (ICT Mediterranean platform for UNESCO cultural heritage), INTECMED (incubators for innovation and technological transfer in the Mediterranean), INVESTMED (innovative sustainable start-ups for the Mediterranean), TECLOG (technological transfer for logistics innovation in Mediterranean area), ORGANIC ECOSYSTEM (Boosting cross border Organic Ecosystem through enhancing agrifood alliances), MEDUSA (Development and promotion of Mediterranean sustainable adventure tourism), EBSOMED (Enhancing Business Support Organisations and Business networks in the Southern Neighbourhood), BLUE GROWTH COMMUNITY (Capitalisation and Communication project for Blue Economy innovation in the Mediterranean), MAIA TAQA (Mobilising new areas of Investments and together aiming to increase Quality of life for all).

This great potentiality to the service of ASCAME members network is clearly reflected, working aligned with strategic key sectors and cross-cutting issues such as blue economy, sustainability, agrifood, tourism, and business alliances, among others. These projects offer great opportunities to take action towards the recovery of the region and to establish synergies with other members and networks of stakeholders.

Here are some of the specific outcomes on the key sector from the projects we are involved in and that we expect to transfer to ASCAME’s network.
**Agrifood**

Specific actions:

- Mediterranean cross-border organic agriculture network and Lab opened to many stakeholders to exchange insights on production techniques, certifications, technology, job opportunities, and commercialisation of these products across the region and new markets.
- Training and several virtual and onsite meetings will take place to strengthen synergies among stakeholders.
- SMEs, producers and exporters will receive consultancy services to facilitate their entry in innovative organic value chains and to participate in international agrifood fairs.
- Stakeholders will benefit directly from the services provided, now in the digital scenario this number is expected to be larger
- Bring the private sector to the conversation on agrifood and support the matchmaking between both shores of the Mediterranean.

**Tourism**

Specific actions:

- Develop an open access global market research and analysis report on adventure tourism in the Mediterranean region.
- Carry out online and onsite training sessions for business owners and local guides on sustainable destination management, business planning, marketing and international sales.
- Conceptualise Mediterranean cross-border adventure tourism routes, itineraries and day trips to reveal lesser-known destinations and attract tourists throughout the year.
- Celebrate tourism competitions where entrepreneurs from both Mediterranean shores will show their best and more innovative solutions for sustainable tourism, the finalists will get grants to develop their ideas further.
✔ Develop and mainstream a coordinated marketing strategy to promote sustainable adventure tourism in the Mediterranean to establish relationships with tour operators and travel agencies.

✔ Boost strategic alliances through executive agreements to foster the coordination of public-private sustainable destination management.

✔ Promote less discovered regions in the Mediterranean region by going on roadshows and international events advertising the commercialisation of the new products.

✔ Establish synergies with other projects or initiatives aligned with sustainable tourism to add to their work and have more impact.

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砉 Business Alliances

Specific actions:

✔ Transfer knowledge and usage of new powerful online tools.

✔ Training to teach all potentialities of those new online tools.

✔ Free and open access to a Platform (to enhance BSOs businesses), which will offer its users services such as foster partnerships, Business HelpDesk and matching Euro-Med Businesses.

✔ Training actions for reinforcing the management skills and capacities of BSOs.

払い Blue Economy

Specific actions:

✔ Free and Open access to a Platform to bring together several blue economy stakeholders, to interact directly with the Blue Growth actors and promote the private sector participation in the Blue economy.

✔ Knowledge sharing on Blue Growth issues.

✔ Promoting the participation of MED SMEs in Blue Growth.

✔ Blue Economy’s transversal topics opened to the private sector (webinars and online conferences) encouraging the participation of the MED private sector.
✓ Offering “Blue Crowdfunding” to MED blue SMEs as an option for better access to funding and consequently deliver better and more innovative solutions.

😊 Sustainability

Specific actions:

✓ Opening innovative resource efficiency services to the MED SMEs.
✓ Innovation voucher service as a financial incentive to support the purchase of innovation on resource efficiency by local SMEs.
✓ Training events for SMEs to reinforce the introduction of the innovative resource efficiency services.
✓ B2B events to promote technological cooperation among EU /MED SMEs and transfer good practices among them.
5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Finally, we present the conclusions related to those key economic sectors that were heavily affected by the COVID-19, which are essential for any economic recovery of the region, as well as the main topics that Mediterranean economies will have to deal with.

**Tourism**

COVID-19 has demonstrated that collaboration is the only way to move forward. ASCAME encourages its members to facilitate and derive a common strategy on regional tourism to thrive in the new paradigm of value co-creation, collaboration and partnership to present the MED region as a consolidated and integrated lead destination.

Tourism should be used as a trigger to uncap the MED potential by fostering the escalation of digital tools, reaffirming our sea economy, pursuing a greener way of doing business and, today more than ever, promoting cross-border exchanges.

Cultural diversity is part of our heritage, and is our strength. By working together towards a Mediterranean Brand we reinforce the Euro-Mediterranean integration and create a more prosperous future for all while celebrating our shared identities, strengthening bonds and building bridges.

**Logistics**

The enhancement of logistics processes is vital for boosting and developing the Mediterranean region from the global pandemic and benefit all the components. Governments must have adequate governance and resources in order to build a Mediterranean logistic integration reoriented on the exchanges among Europe, Africa and the Middle East, which must go hand in hand with innovation, digitalisation, sustainability and social inclusion. Therefore, the region becomes more attractive, encouraging companies to rethink about relocation of supply chain processes with the aim to lessen dependence on Asian markets.

**Agrifood**

When talking about agrifood our main focus should be on shortening the supply chain and becoming as autonomous as possible. The Mediterranean region has all the possible
characteristics and aspects to be its own producer and feeds its population. To achieve this, there should be efforts on connecting stakeholders across the region, and put special emphasis on innovation and technology to attain resource optimisation. Youth and women should also be a central point in this picture encouraging them to take part in this sector and easing obstacles to access to finance and the job market. Organic agriculture, due to its alignment to environmental sustainability and its growing demand across the world should be seen as a priority when conceptualising the future agrifood scenario, helping farmers to transition into organic techniques. On the other hand, facilitate and boost the regional market it is important to create a common frame and close collaboration between private and public institutions.

**Automotive**

The global COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the automotive sector. Before the outbreak of the pandemic, the automotive sector was in full expansion in the Mediterranean, the automotive industry has been weaving complex, global-scale supply chains based on maximum efficiency, rigorous timeliness and just-in-time parts supply, a model that in current circumstances has led to a total halt in what is Europe’s second largest vehicle producer.

Cheap energy, raw materials, geographical location and a young workforce that can be trained with the required skills are the main advantages to make the Mediterranean region as the hub for the automotive sector and to house production chains, as an international hub for manufacturing and assembly with easy access to Africa, Asia and Europe, placing the region on the world stage and reaffirm its attractiveness and capacity to attract more investment in key sectors.

Moreover, the Mediterranean automotive platform must develop opportunities related to the sustainable and electric car sector, regional integration and supply chain efficiency to embark on this promising sector.
Health

Among all economic sectors, the health sector was the most affected by the COVID-19 and revealed the strategic importance of having efficient and well prepared health systems in the Mediterranean region.

Despite this sector has not been traditionally among the international cooperation priorities, the deep impact of COVID-19 in the Mediterranean populations (with high numbers of infected people and surpassed health systems unable to attend initially those suffering from the pandemic) put this sector into the regional strategic priorities and showed the importance of building sustainable health and interconnected systems in the Mediterranean.

The severe health crisis caused by COVID-19 has shown the need for Mediterranean health systems to become more efficient, more interconnected, developing further cooperation mechanisms as well as exploring new public-private partnerships in order to be able to cope with future health crises. Mediterranean health systems will demand not only for modernisation but for closer regional cooperation and larger economic investments in order to have better and more responsive Mediterranean health systems.

Textile

The textile industry as one of the priorities for the economy of the Mediterranean, representing the second-most exported goods needs to be put in evidence. Enhancing the value of “Made in the Mediterranean” is imperative in order to build up a strong industry that represents quality and respect for the consumer. Also, the construction of a Fashion Platform is very important in order to build up an inclusive industry and to strengthen the voice of the Mediterranean next generation in the Fashion sector. In addition, companies must take part in the sustainable revolution and integrate sustainability in the supply chain processes, through innovation and digitalisation.

Digital Economy

In the post COVID-19 era, with rare exception, operating digitally is the only way to stay in business through mandated shutdowns and restricted activity, taking into consideration
that it is not a matter of digitising the mechanisms, it is a way of changing those mechanisms, without imitating the analogue world in the digital world.

For the Mediterranean region, a successful digital transition would guarantee business competitiveness and would be a determining factor for regional industrial consolidation, having the opportunity to transform the economies and harness the creativity of its large youth population and the disruptive power of technology to create wealth. Thus, with an enormous human capital to develop, promoting the private sector and understanding this technological revolution will be key ingredients for success if it has also a determined governmental action, bringing governments together with companies and other stakeholders interested in Mediterranean public-private digital cooperation.

The 4th industrial revolution has already given birth to the 5th industrial revolution, where we shall focus to be back to “humanity” and use the technology for our own and the planet’s benefit. Artificial Intelligence shall help increase human labour productivity, Blockchain shall help give access to banking to the unbanked, and robots shall help humans align Return of Inversion (ROI) with impactful purposes.

**Green Economy**

Climate change is a serious threat to development and sustainability. Resources must be managed, energy policies must be promoted, and our great common historical heritage must be preserved. Now it is time to rethink the Mediterranean Green Economy establishing a suitable Mediterranean reflection for the region as a whole having in mind a different way of operating, a different normality, promoting the creation of resource efficient and climate resistant economies. Now, more than ever it is time to foster global development with sustainable growth and in line with the 2030 Agenda. It is present in clean technologies, renewable energies, water services, green transport, circular economy, green building, sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation, among others. Also, taking into account the indispensable involvement of the private sector through business and employment opportunities, stimulating this sustainable growth in the Mediterranean. We need to turn the recovery into a real opportunity to do things right for the future where long-term planning and a shared vision are essential to mobilise the necessary resources to develop energy cooperation between the two shores of the region.
Blue Economy

Many Blue Economy sectors have been deeply affected by the health crisis of COVID-19 such as travel, tourism, transport or the fishing and the food sector depending on the sea.

This crisis that blocked all economic sectors and paralysed the daily flux of the global economy revealed the high dependence of the sea in the Mediterranean region. Life and economy turned along history as they do nowadays around the Mediterranean economic connections exchanges among the Mediterranean regions and countries.

Therefore, one of the main lessons from this crisis is the urgent need that Mediterranean countries unite their efforts and strengthen their collaboration in order to boost investments and explore all possibilities offered by the Blue Economy. Now, it is the opportunity to invest in a sustainable blue economy in line with the UN SDG and then, ensure that future Mediterranean economies become more blue and sustainable, offering new jobs possibilities to younger Mediterranean generations at the time of preserving sea resources and favouring a more sustainable environment in the Mediterranean.