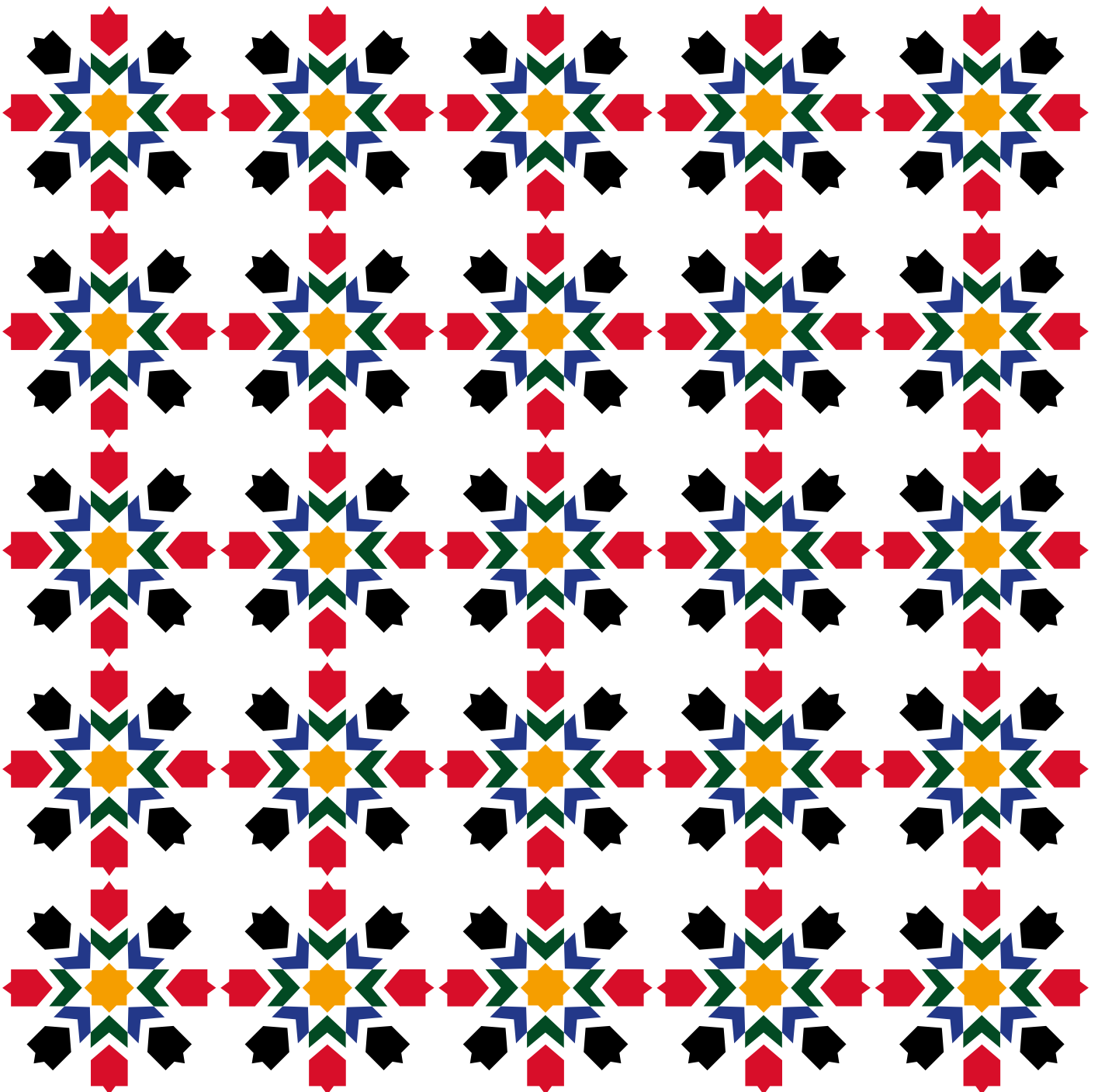


# MASAR AL'AN MASAR AHORA

REGIONAL PROGRAMME WITH  
THE ARAB WORLD | AECID



MINISTERIO  
DE ASUNTOS EXTERIORES, UNIÓN EUROPEA  
Y COOPERACIÓN



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# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>AECID</b>	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
<b>ALF</b>	Anna Lindh Foundation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FIIAPP</b>	International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies
<b>IEMed</b>	European Institute of the Mediterranean
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>MSMEs</b>	Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>RDI</b>	Research, development and innovation
<b>SMEs</b>	Small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>TEI</b>	Team Europe Initiative
<b>UfM</b>	Union for the Mediterranean

# Executive summary

A decade on from the launch of the Masar Programme, and as set out in the 2022–2023 Action Plan of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Agency has decided to roll out *masar al'an / masar ahora*, the new programme for regional cooperation with the southern shore of the Mediterranean. The new programme updates the original Masar Programme to adapt it to the changing development needs of a new situation in the region, and the new priorities of Spanish Cooperation in the framework of the future Sixth Master Plan.

The process of designing *masar al'an / masar ahora* began in December 2022 with a process of consideration in collaboration with the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed). Key cooperation stakeholders from the region also participated, as did AECID partners, and the whole Spanish Cooperation framework, including Casa Árabe, Casa Mediterráneo, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the European Commission, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) and several think tanks.

The Arab World is facing a series of challenges that affect its development and herald an unpredictable situation, particularly for the most vulnerable population groups. At the global level, there are dangers from the climate crisis, the food crisis, and the economic and social crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. At the regional level, tensions have been rising and there has been a resurgence of the conflict in the Middle East. These factors threaten to leave the region enormously exposed to even greater structural challenges (inequalities, lack of opportunities, particularly for women and young people, limited regional integration and uncompetitiveness).

In these circumstances, marked by the need for a threefold transition —social, ecological and economic— Spanish Cooperation aims to reshape and bolster its cooperation links with neighbours from the Arab World, as part of a commitment to shared development aspirations, based on dialogue and peaceful coexistence, working towards greater regional integration. *Masar al'an / masar ahora* is intended to be the AECID response to the complex problems that the Arab World faces in the modern world, contributing to inclusive sustainable development through practical knowledge- and innovation-based solutions.

The updated programme focuses on three areas for action: (1) job creation; (2) the ecological transition, the environment and water; and (3) gender equality. The cross-cutting priorities of programme activities are: (1) supporting young people; (2) fostering spaces for collaboration, to increase regional integration; and (3) inclusivity, strengthening local bodies and their involvement in development.

To put the programme into action, relations with key stakeholders from the region and AECID partners will be strengthened, including UfM, ALF, IEMed and the network of Casas, particularly Casa Árabe and Casa Mediterráneo. Regional-level projects and activities will be financed and implemented in collaboration with international organizations and civil society organizations from Arab countries. Activities with a regional scope will be designed alongside key stakeholders from the Spanish administration, such as the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) or implemented jointly with specialized bodies from Spanish Cooperation, such as the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP).



**masar | masar  
al'an | ahora**

## ISSUE-BASED PRIORITIES

**EMPLOYMENT AND  
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES**

**THE ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION,  
THE ENVIRONMENT  
AND WATER**

**GENDER EQUALITY**

## CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

**YOUNG PEOPLE**

**REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND  
COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS**

**INCLUSIVITY**

## INSTRUMENTS

**MASAR CONECTA**

**PROJECT FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS AND UNITED NATIONS**

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS FOR REGIONAL  
MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION**

**GRANTS TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

## PARTNERSHIPS

**UfM**

**IEMed**

**ALF**

**FIIAPP**

**CASA ÁRABE**

**CASA MEDITERRÁNEO**

**SPANISH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS**

**TRAGSA**

# 01

## **Building on what has already been achieved: the masar programme to support democratic governance processes in the arab world**

Spanish Cooperation's regional Masar Programme for the Mediterranean **came into being in 2012 in the wake of the Arab Spring**, in circumstances marked by increased political, economic and social demands in many countries from the Arab World. Spain, a close neighbour of the Arab World, with historical, cultural and economic ties to the region, sought to support it and contribute to further development of the democratic processes the countries had embarked upon.

Thus, the **Masar Programme** to support democratic governance processes in the Arab World was born, named after the Arabic word for path. The programme was an AECID initiative and the result of reflection and work alongside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, with the collaboration of Casa Árabe and Casa Mediterráneo. The processes begun during the Arab Spring progressed differently, and the Masar Programme was adapted to the sociopolitical situations in each country.

Although Masar initially focused on governance in the region, in 2019 a second pillar was added, which then became a core line of work for Spanish Cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA): **Masar Género**. The aim of this pillar has been to build knowledge, capacities and skills among Arab women as part of the construction of democracies, including in relation to their social and political importance, and also to increase their autonomy and the recognition and visibility of their contributions to economic development.

Four lines of action were established:

- Protection of women's rights, through the required changes to law to end gender-based discrimination and build institutional capacities to mainstream gender.
- Political participation and the women, peace and security agenda, to contribute to political empowerment of women.
- Socioeconomic empowerment, with activities to guarantee equal access for women and girls to education and training, the labour market and production resources.
- Training for the media, raising awareness of the importance of women's rights and gender equality.

As set out in the Fifth Master Plan, which covered the period from 2018 to 2021, the Masar Programme was updated to include another component, centred on water resources management. Water is vital for eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development, and critical to achieving many of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Masar Agua** drew on the experience of the different levels of the Spanish administration in water management, as well as the technical know-how accumulated by Spanish Cooperation, especially in the context of the Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation (FCAS) in Latin America and the Caribbean and through environmental work under the Azahar Programme.

The overall aim of Masar Agua was to contribute to sustainable water management in the region, with three specific objectives:

- Supporting comprehensive public management of water and promoting its effective governance.
- Improving and expanding, efficiently and equitably, water and sanitation services.
- Promoting efficient use of water in agriculture through modernization of irrigation systems.





# 02

## New challenges, new approach

Over the decade since the launch of the Masar Programme, the Mediterranean has undergone far-reaching transformations, as has the world.

Many of the challenges of the global agenda can be found in the Mediterranean: climate change, polarization, the energy crisis, mounting inequality, a food crisis exacerbated by the repercussions of the war in Ukraine, and regional instability caused by the conflict in the Middle East. The Mediterranean is also a constantly changing space, where currents from the Middle East and Africa converge with the geostrategic balances existing among the major global powers.

As required by its **2022–2023 Action Plan**, in 2022, in collaboration with IEMed, AECID began a process to examine how to update the Masar Programme, to enable Spanish Cooperation to meet challenges and opportunities in the region over the coming years. Therefore, on 16 December 2022, an internal symposium was held to discuss the future of the regional programme. Subsequently, at the end of April 2023, IEMed and AECID, with the collaboration and involvement of Casa Árabe, organized a second symposium with international experts and other stakeholders, on the subject of development cooperation in the Mediterranean and the future trends and challenges in the region.

One of the most important conclusions of the meetings was that attention needed to be paid to a crucial demographic feature that had clear socioeconomic, political and cultural repercussions: the high proportion of young people in Arab societies. Therefore, it was considered vital for the new regional programme to be oriented towards **young people**, with a cross-cutting focus on them, and for it to foster **inclusive economic growth and job creation**,

as key factors in the fight against the severe inequalities in the region.

Participants also noted the lack of international regional integration networks or organizations in the Mediterranean, making Spain's dedication to **strengthening existing networks and organizations** even more relevant, with a view to providing greater support to regional integration processes. Consequently, efforts will be made to strengthen strategic collaboration with the two key regional-level stakeholders and partners —UfM and the European Union (EU)— and AECID is entrusted with the task of identifying synergies and complementarities in that regard.

Lastly, the attendees remarked on the need to apply a knowledge- and innovation-based methodology under the new programme, as one of its distinguishing features and in order to respond more effectively to the new development situation in the region.

This new framework for relations with the Arab World is also a reflection of the **ongoing reform of Spanish Cooperation**. New legislation, in the form of Act 1/2023, of 20 February, on Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity, sets out a series of important reforms to adapt Spanish Cooperation's structure, resources and priorities to what is required by global conditions and the expectations of the deeply altruistic society of Spain.



# 03

## Aim, objectives, principles and strategic framework

*The aim of the new masar al'an / masar ahora programme is to contribute to a threefold transition —social, ecological and economic— in Arab countries, in response to their economic, social and climate-related challenges, and particularly creation of jobs for young people; and to foster partnerships by enhancing regional cooperation and pursuing practical solutions based on innovative knowledge.*

The **general objectives** of the programme are:

- To support **creation of socioeconomic opportunities for young people and women**, particularly by **promoting decent work**, as part of an inclusive digital economy.
- To contribute to **enhanced regional cooperation and integration**.
- To support **a transition to a resilient and sustainable production and consumption model**, through climate action, environmental protection, effective and equitable access to water resources, and by fostering a socially just blue economy.
- To make progress on **effective gender equality**, in line with Spanish Cooperation's feminist commitment.
- To foster **strengthening of local institutions**.

Implementation of the programme will be guided by a set of **principles**.

- **Building on what has already been achieved.** The Masar Programme has shaped lines of work and partnerships that provide a solid foundation for work towards the objectives of the new programme.
- **Identifying practical solutions to the complex development challenges the region faces,** through action-oriented learning and management of innovative knowledge, drawing on the methodologies set out in the AECID Intercoconecta programme.
- **Applying a comprehensive, multicountry, multistakeholder, multisector, multidimensional and inclusive** approach to formats and instruments, stakeholders and partnerships and consideration of activities, at the different levels of action.
- **Forming synergies with other AECID strategies, programmes and instruments,** such as the Agency's global programmes, multilateral and cultural cooperation, open calls for non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs), and innovation activities, with a view to activities having more of an impact, being better aligned and complementing each other to a greater degree.
- **Effectively applying a human rights-based approach to activities, mainstreaming cultural diversity, with disability inclusion.**

The **strategic framework** for *masar al'an / masar ahora* is based on the following documents:

- Act 1/2023 of 20 February, on Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity.
- *Fifth Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation for 2018–2021*, 2018, the draft Sixth Master Plan and the plan in force in each year.
- *2022–2023 AECID Action Plan* and the plan in force in each year.
- *Conclusions of the Council of the European Union on a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood - A new agenda for the Mediterranean*, 2021.
- *UfM Roadmap for Action, The Union for the Mediterranean: an action-driven organisation with a common ambition*, 2017, as well as the renewed priorities of UfM agreed in November 2020 on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Barcelona Process, and the action plans, strategies and other operational documents from the UfM agendas adopted through the ministerial declarations by UfM members.
- *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2015.

# 04

## Issue-based priorities

### 4.1. EMPLOYMENT AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

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#### Analysis

The countries of the southern Mediterranean are largely middle-income countries, characterized in socioeconomic terms by substantial population pressure (and a large proportion of young people in the population) and modest economic growth. Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of these economies, accounting for over 90% of all companies in absolute terms (International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2019) and providing around 80% of jobs. Their competitiveness at the global level, capacity for innovation, technological preparedness and economic diversification all remain limited. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 added to the structural challenges in the economies of the Southern Neighbourhood, exacerbating their socioeconomic challenges. OECD estimates that foreign direct investment (FDI) in the region has dropped by more than 45% and trade flows and global value chains have been disrupted.

The labour markets of most MENA countries are characterized by low activity rates and employment rates, structural unemployment and underemployment —especially among young people— job insecurity, low labour force participation rates for women, and a large and expanding informal sector. These countries have high levels of emigration, particularly of those with professional training (brain drain), together with significant numbers of refugees and foreign workers.

The Mediterranean region has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world, with elevated rates for young people and especially women (at around 40%), as well as large proportions (around 30% in some southern Mediterranean countries in 2020) of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).

## Strategic framework for EU and UfM cooperation

The 2021 EU agenda for the Mediterranean set a goal of spurring a sustainable and lasting socioeconomic recovery and creating decent jobs in Southern Neighbourhood countries, especially for women and young people. The European Commission *Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood (2021-2027)* underscores the need to address youth unemployment, especially for young women and NEET in the region.

UfM is also committed to the employment agenda and economic development, with a particular focus on women and young people, and initiatives to support the social economy and MSMEs, which are drivers of innovation and economic growth in the Mediterranean region.

UfM has forged close collaborative ties with the European Commission and some Member States, as part of the regional Team Europe Initiative (TEI) Jobs through Trade and Investment, in which the European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden are all participating, alongside the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The TEI was launched at the fifth UfM Ministerial on Employment and Labour on 17 May 2022 and addresses the challenges the region faces in terms of decent work, on both the supply and demand sides. To produce a transformative impact in the region, the TEI is structured around three thematic pillars: (1) sustainable trade and investment; (2) vocational training and technical skills; and (3) inclusive entrepreneurship. AECID has been actively involved in the initiative since its inception and is jointly leading work on the third pillar in collaboration with the European Commission.

### Goals and lines of action

#### **Promote creation of decent jobs for women and young people, supporting development of businesses and inclusive social and digital economies.**

- Promote the social and solidarity economy and support entrepreneurship by young people and women, supporting start-ups, with a focus on those related to the digital, green and blue economies.
- Support vocational training and labour market access.
- Foster financial inclusion in sectors with the potential to create decent jobs, through non-banking financial alternatives (impact investing, local investment funds, microfinance) and innovative financial products (venture capital, seed capital).

## 4.2. THE ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

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### Analysis

The digital transition and the ecological transition offer the Mediterranean region great opportunities to realize sustainable development that respects the environment. However, the region faces considerable challenges on land, in the sea and in the air, caused by anthropogenic changes in the environment. Spanish Cooperation believes that the fight against climate change, climate change mitigation and improved access to and management of water are all vital tools to combat inequalities.

Climate change, population growth, pollution and unsustainable practices in land use and the oceans are threatening the habitats and ecosystems of the region and exacerbating rapid desertification, water shortages and temperature rises.

The 2020 report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) entitled *State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean* states that population growth and unsustainable production and consumption patterns have already led to significant degradation in the Mediterranean. Droughts have continued to become more frequent and severe, and the water temperature in the Mediterranean has continued to rise, as has the air temperature, much faster than the global average. In terms of biodiversity, 20% to 30% of species in the Mediterranean are endemic to the region, and the forecast impact of climate change will be devastating.

Water access and supply and sustainable use of water are key issues. The countries along the south and east coastlines of the region are among the most affected by water shortages, with over 180 million people exposed to water stress and water pollution problems. The climate crisis has called attention to the growing interdependence of the Mediterranean region and the need to actively build resilience and open up new channels for bolstered cooperation.

### Strategic framework for EU and UfM cooperation

The new 2021 EU agenda for the Mediterranean sets out how climate action and energy issues, in particular the advancement of green energy transition, are a fundamental pillar of EU policy in the Southern Neighbourhood. The agenda aims to turn climate and environmental challenges into major opportunities for sustainable development and thus contribute to a just and inclusive green transition. In particular, the agenda identifies an opportunity to create green jobs and develop relevant skills.

It also underscores that the blue economy is a powerful tool to manage the Mediterranean common goods, promoting economic growth and improved livelihoods and social inclusion and reconciling them with the conservation, protection and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity, sustainable resource use, the promotion of sustainable tourism, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The EU will integrate the blue economy potential of the Mediterranean Sea into economic development planning, alongside the social economy.

In keeping with all of this, one of the priority areas set out in the European Commission *Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood (2021-2027)* is the green transition, through joint climate action —climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience to climate change impacts— and protection of biodiversity and natural resources through pollution reduction, sustainable food systems and preserved ecosystems, including efficient water management.

This is also one of the key areas of the work of UfM, as reflected in the ministerial declarations on water, on environment and climate change and on sustainable blue economy.

## Goals and lines of action

**To support a transition to a resilient and sustainable production and social model, through environmental protection, sustainable, effective and equitable access to water resources, and by fostering a socially just and inclusive blue economy.**

- Improvement and expansion of environmentally sustainable equitable access to water, focusing on unconventional water resources and fostering effective governance of water that contributes to reducing water poverty.
- Nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Combating desertification and improving resilience to droughts, floods and fires. Conservation and restoration of degraded ecosystems, and particularly land and water.
- Sustainable, profitable, socially inclusive agrifood and fishery systems that are resilient to climate change, with an approach based on the Water–Energy–Food–Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus.
- Sustainable waste management, promotion of the circular economy and prevention and elimination of inland and marine water pollution.



## 4.3. GENDER EQUALITY

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### Analysis

Some progress has been made with respect to the situation for women and girls in the southern Mediterranean in recent years, as some countries have adopted legislative frameworks, policies and programmes to promote gender equality. They have encouraged political participation and improved women's access to economic resources, as well as increasing school attendance rates for girls.

However, gender gaps remain. In some countries, women's relative circumstances have deteriorated owing to political instability and conflicts, the impact of the pandemic, increasingly frequent climate-related disasters and economic stagnation. In other countries, there is a risk that progress could be reversed.

The Arab region has the lowest rate of participation by women in political life and is at the bottom of the gender gap index in terms of political participation. The region also has the lowest labour force participation rate for women in the world. All of the countries in the region have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Even so, 7 of those countries submitted reservations on article 15 (on women's equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property) and 11 countries submitted reservations on article 16 (on married women's rights to equality in the acquisition, administration and disposition of property). This severely constrains the economic empowerment of women in the region, as it limits their access to resources.





## Strategic framework for EU and UfM cooperation

The new 2021 EU agenda for the Mediterranean states that special attention will be given to the promotion of the role of women in society and the economy, combating all forms of discrimination and supporting empowerment of women and eliminating all types of violence against women and girls.

Since 2014, every two years UfM has held a High-Level Conference on Women for the Mediterranean, to promote women's empowerment and equality. The sixth Conference took place in Madrid in October 2022, and was hosted by the Government of Spain. UfM Member States adopted a declaration with specific implementable recommendations, actions and measures focusing on four priority areas: (1) improving legal frameworks; (2) improving women's access to leadership and decision-making positions; (3) raising women's participation in economic life; and (4) combating and preventing violence against women and girls. In addition, UfM has implemented projects to empower women and strengthen SMEs, employability and entrepreneurship.

In Spain, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation launched, in 2021, a "feminist foreign policy", to reduce gender gaps and make progress towards real and effective equality at the international level. This feminist approach is also reflected in the feminist approach of Spanish Cooperation and of its work around the world, in line with the Sixth Master Plan.

### Goals and lines of action

**To make progress on effective gender equality, and promote the political, social and economic empowerment of women and their effective contribution to inclusive sustainable development.**

- A legal and institutional framework that enables effective equality for women in the exercise of their rights, as well as equal opportunities in the political, economic and public spheres.
- Political participation and strengthening of women's leadership and participation in decision-making spaces in public life.
- Promotion of women's economic and labour rights and entrepreneurship, paying particular attention to start-ups and especially innovation and emerging technologies, and to closing the digital divide.

# 05

## Cross-cutting themes

The cross-cutting priorities for activities under the new programme are measures to support young people; support for regional cooperation organizations in the Mediterranean and fostering of spaces for collaboration to increase regional integration; and inclusivity, strengthening local bodies and their involvement in development.



### 5.1. YOUNG PEOPLE

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In the countries along the south coast of the Mediterranean young people account for some of the highest percentages of the population in the world, affecting their economies, politics and economic, social and cultural development. As a region, it has one of the highest percentages of young people in the world, and this pattern will not change as it has 100 million inhabitants aged under 15. Despite this, at present, young people represent just 24% of the regional labour force (and young women account for only 18% of the female labour force).

The inequalities seen in the region hamper development and have led to considerable despondency towards the system; in some cases they have even become a source of extremism.

There is a consensus among EU Member States that measures aimed at vulnerable young people need to be strengthened, particularly those concerning young women in the Southern Neighbourhood. In this regard, *masar al'an / masar ahora* proposes:

- Supporting generation of socioeconomic and cultural opportunities for young people and their participation in national development strategies.
- Addressing, as a priority, the structural causes of limited opportunities, youth unemployment, brain drain, school dropout and a lack of schooling, in keeping with the new 2021 EU agenda for the Mediterranean, successor to the 1995 Barcelona Process.

## 5.2. SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION. PROMOTING SPACES FOR COLLABORATION AND GREATER INTERCONNECTION OF COUNTRIES IN THE REGION

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One of the most pivotal factors when formulating a regional programme for cooperation with the Arab World is the structural lack of regional integration projects, despite the Arabic language being crucial to integration in cultural terms. Spanish Cooperation's work is based on the conviction that greater regional integration can lay the foundations for more sustained and cohesive growth.

The *masar al'an / masar ahora* programme will contribute to strengthening the institutions of the countries in priority sectors through strategic support for existing regional organizations and institutions, such as UfM, ALF and IEMed. Spanish Cooperation's activities in this respect will be based on its experience working in networks in other regions and its know-how accumulated through decades of technical cooperation in the region.

Furthermore, as part of *masar al'an / masar ahora* Spanish Cooperation will implement a new regional programme on public policy insight and innovation — *masar conecta*— primarily aimed at public administrations of Arab countries. The programme will take the form of specialist technical training and provision of frameworks for collaboration (for instance, working groups, platforms and networks), drawing on Spain's experience in technical cooperation through the *Interconecta* programme with Ibero-American countries.

To achieve all of this, AECID intends to establish and bolster **networks and connections among development stakeholders**, to facilitate greater regional integration.

- The Agency will promote trans-regional and inter-regional cooperation in the Mediterranean by supporting and strengthening organizations and institutions such as UfM, IEMed and ALF.
- It will also foster collaborative networks for regional political and technical dialogue; establish, develop and publicize strategic plans and regional regulatory frameworks; finance regional projects; and promote mobility of researchers.
- It will support development of institutional and technical capacities of regional civil society organizations.

## 5.3. INCLUSIVITY

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Inclusive sustainable development is a priority for the Arab region, which is in the process of reforming its development systems to make them more inclusive and sustainable and increase their coverage, to contribute to social cohesion. This entails strengthening societies and institutional frameworks, with greater protection and inclusion for all segments of society, and particularly for vulnerable groups, in terms of participating in, preparing and deciding on public policies to end poverty and mitigate inequalities.

Local institutions are not only singularly important in terms of bolstering the social compact through the institutions that are in closest contact with citizens, but also in terms of their contribution to improved public services and more cohesive societies. Large swathes of the population no longer trust public institutions. To reverse that trend, authorities —especially at the local level— must increase transparency and public participation.

As part of this approach, the priority objectives of the new programme include fostering citizens' political, social and cultural participation, above all for groups that have habitually been excluded, such as young people and women, and also building the capacities of local bodies. With regard to the latter, Spain can offer added value by sharing its own experiences in administration at the local and regional levels.



# 06

## Formats, stakeholders and partnerships

The regional programme will combine activities implemented by AECID with activities undertaken in partnership with or through third-party stakeholders. **Activities under the new *masar al'an* / *masar ahora* programme will primarily be implemented using the following instruments and formats:**

- ***masar conecta***, a regional subprogramme on public policy insight and innovation, with three main lines of action: **specialist technical training; public policy dialogue; and research, development and innovation.**
- **Contributions to cooperation organizations for the Mediterranean region**, such as UfM, to launch, develop and publicize policy processes and tools for strategic plans and regulatory frameworks, and to implement programmes and projects.
- **Contributions to bodies from the United Nations system**, to implement regional programmes and projects in Arab countries.
- **Grants for civil society organizations in partner countries**, to implement regional projects in priority sectors and ultimately to improve their capacities and promote work through networks.

The programme's cooperation instruments will be applied through existing AECID mechanisms and administrative procedures (such as direct international cooperation grants, earmarked grants, agreements or delegation to other public sector bodies).

In terms of programme partners, AECID already **collaborates with regional organizations from the Euro-Mediterranean system, such as UfM, ALF and IEMed**, and that collaboration will be bolstered, to make it structural and strategic.

As part of the *masar al'an* / *masar ahora* programme, a specific line of work has been created for regional technical cooperation with public administrations and civil society in Arab countries: *masar conecta*. Specialist technical training and activities relating to public policy insight and innovation will be scheduled, in different formats: training itineraries, conferences, debates, courses, seminars, workshops, symposiums, dialogues, meetings and public innovation labs. Public policy dialogue will be promoted, as will collaborative frameworks (working groups, platforms, networks) and relevant research, development and innovation.

To implement *masar conecta*, AECID will work with stakeholders from Spanish Cooperation that specialize in technical cooperation, such as FIIAPP and other public bodies of Spain (General State Administration, Administrations of the Autonomous Communities, local authorities, public institutions and public-law entities) specializing in the planned lines of work —such as national research institutes and centres— drawing on the experience of bodies linked to *masar al'an / masar ahora*, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation's network of Casas (particularly Casa Árabe and Casa Mediterráneo), IEMed and TRAGSA. The methodology for implementing the programme will be learning- and knowledge-based, focusing on analysis, systematization and sharing of good practices.

# 07

## Governance and financial structure

A Steering Committee will be established, chaired by the head of the Directorate for Cooperation with Africa and Asia or the person they appoint, to communicate with the management of other institutions: Casa Árabe, Casa Mediterráneo, FIIAPP, UfM, IEMed, ALF and all of the bodies with which there is strategic collaboration. The Steering Committee will meet once a year, in addition to any coordination or implementation meetings considered necessary. There will be close coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation's Directorate-General for the Maghreb, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, to ensure that activities are aligned with the strategic framework for Spain's foreign action in the region.

In addition, a Technical Coordination Committee will be formed, chaired by the person in charge of the Department of Cooperation with the Arab World and Asia, or the person they appoint, comprising technical staff from said Department and management of the partner bodies that collaborate on implementation of the programme activities. The Committee will meet once a week.

Mechanisms will be established for coordination with Spanish Cooperation Offices, to ensure that identification, implementation and monitoring of activities in the field are aligned and complement each other.

The programme will be allocated an amount in the budget of the Department of Cooperation with the Arab World and Asia, determined annually. In 2024, the planned initial allocation is 4 million euros, although this may be amended or increased in subsequent years, depending on availability of funds and how the strategic context for AECID cooperation evolves. The allocation will be accompanied by contributions from other sections of AECID, including global sector-specific programmes, such as the Ecological Transition Programme (PROTEC) and Ellas+, and the planned activities of the AECID Multilateral Cooperation Department alongside the agencies of the United Nations system.

# 08

## Monitoring, evaluation and publicity

The operational planning of the programme will be based on annual work plans, setting out the lines of action and specific objectives, activities and resources for implementation, and related indicators.

A **monitoring, evaluation and learning plan will be drawn up for the programme**, to provide AECID with documentation of how activities are implemented, with a view to improving and adapting their design, efficiency and accountability.

An **internal monitoring report will be prepared annually**, based on systematically gathered data concerning specific indicators, to provide AECID and key stakeholders in activities with monitoring and status reports on progress, fulfilment of objectives and use of allocated funds.

An **external monitoring report** will be prepared every two years, based on the Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) approach.

Five years into the programme, a **strategic, systematic and objective evaluation** of the programme activities, design, implementation and results will be planned, with the following criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact, coherence and added value, to determine alignment with the objectives and the global and regional contexts, and to propose changes or updates to the programme.

A **publicity and awareness-raising plan** will also be drafted for the programme, aligned with the AECID communication plan.



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