

Foreword

25 years after the Barcelona Declaration, the importance of strengthening policy dialogue across the Mediterranean has not diminished. On the contrary, regional co-operation remains a strategic objective for the member countries of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), given the common challenges faced by countries in the region, many resulting from global trends. They also need to ensure that recovery from the COVID-19 crisis leads to greener, more prosperous and inclusive societies in the region. The shared long-term vision is one of stability and prosperity of the region, where people, especially women and youth, can meet their hopes for the future, enjoy their rights and live in a peaceful and secure environment.

The *Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean: Progress Report* reviews the progress of integration in the Euro-Mediterranean region and provides evidence-based policy recommendations to enhance integration. The report is the first issue in a future series that will monitor progress at periodic intervals. The *Progress Report* focuses on five major areas of regional integration: trade, finance, infrastructure, movement of people, and research and higher education.

This report was produced in the Global Relations Secretariat (GRS) of the OECD, led by Andreas Schaal, Director, and benefitted from the financial support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. It was prepared in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) Division under the strategic guidance of Carlos Conde, Head of MEA Division. The drafting team, led by Mariarosa Lunati, Senior Advisor, included Roger Forés Carrión, Alin Horj, Yasmeen Moreau, Salma Labyad and Peilin Lu. Mario Cervantes of the OECD Directorate for Science, Technology and Innovation prepared Chapter 5, with statistical support from Hiroyuki Shirato. Antonella Liberatore, Guannan Miao and Rodolfo Ostolaza of the OECD Statistics and Data Directorate developed the gravity model of trade presented in Chapter 1.

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During the early stage of the project, participants in the joint OECD GRS-STI Workshop on Regional Co-operation in Research, Higher Education and Innovation in the Euro-Mediterranean Region provided a useful exchange of views on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on regional co-operation in the EU-Mediterranean region and the emerging policy priorities for co-operation in research and higher education; and participants in the 5th Conference of Mediterranean Central Banks “Financial Integration and Inclusive Development: a View from the Mediterranean Countries” organised by the Banco de España and the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), with the support of the OECD, provided useful advice on measures of financial integration relevant to the UfM region.

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