

Preface by the Union for the Mediterranean

I am pleased to present this first edition of the UfM Progress Report on Regional Integration at a time when the Union for the Mediterranean Region (and the whole world) experiences the wind of change brought about by the digital and value-chain disruptions and awakens to the immensity of the socio-economic losses triggered by the current COVID-19 pandemic. It is precisely at this threshold of a new era that the case for reinforced regional integration becomes more than evident; it becomes a vision for confronting a broad array of challenges, the scale and scope of which are beyond the capacities of any one country or entity.

This Report fulfills the mandate given to the UfM Secretariat by its Member States and outlined in the 2017 UfM Roadmap for Action, with a view to elaborate a progress report on regional integration in order to assess progress achieved in regional integration, using specific performance indicators which would allow for analysis of major trends and evolutions. It is also anchored to the UfM mission, the essence of which is to promote regional cooperation and integration in a way conducive to the creation of a common area of peace, stability, security, and prosperity.

There was a clear need for an evidence-based Report prepared by a credible and neutral third-party that would use sound data and scientific statistical models to cover the key policy domains of integration; namely trade finance, infrastructure, movement of people, as well as higher education. Furthermore, this groundbreaking Report had to transcend the classical presentation of key findings to the provision of pragmatic policy recommendations. Among other findings in the Report, evidence shows that there has been progress in regional integration since the 1995 Barcelona Process, but it also indicates that the progress has been slow and remains below the potential of the region in terms of capacities and resources. We believe in this potential, and we are determined to join the efforts meant to unleash it.

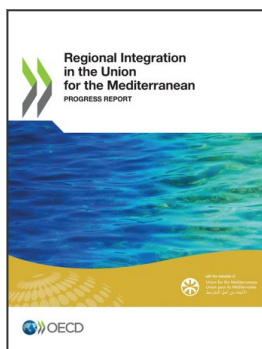
Regional integration is engrained in the Mediterranean mindset since times immemorial, being one of the very tenets of Mediterranean resilience and regeneration. I trust that this Report will help guide our collective compass towards enhanced cooperation and will flag the indispensable policy reforms that would create an enabling environment for a sustainable, responsible and inclusive progress that fulfills the legitimate aspirations of our people.

I invite you to read this first edition of the Progress Report which will be followed by other editions periodically, allowing us to keep track of the state-of-play of integration in the region.



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