On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process (1995-2020), the Generalitat de Catalunya, in collaboration with the IEMed, is promoting the “Dialogues of the Mediterranean + 25” cycle. Within the framework of this initiative, different conferences will be organized about central issues aimed at renewing the vision of the euro-Mediterranean relations and to present concrete proposals. This webinar opens the cycle of dialogues addressing one of the most relevant challenges for the region: how the innovation and digitalisation can became an instrument of inclusive growth and prosperity at a complex time of post-Covid19 recovery.

Small and Medium sized enterprises (SMEs) constitute the spine of Mediterranean economies. In the Mediterranean countries, they account for a majority of all firms in absolute terms, of which many are micro enterprises. One factor that undermines the development of vibrant and job conducive private sectors in the southern Mediterranean countries is a growing polarisation of enterprise ecosystems between few large enterprises that dominate the market and a majority of micro, small and medium firms that struggle to survive, with a noticeable missing middle. Against this backdrop, innovation hubs are flourishing across the Mediterranean region with an increasing number of dynamic start-ups that are able to generate economic growth and long-term employment.

Since access to adequate funding remains a major impediment for SMEs to take off and grow, MSMEs tend to be less productive and innovative than bigger firms, and thus less able to generate long-term employment. Through innovation and digitalisation, SMEs can reduce production costs and make productivity gains, adapt their business models to a growing globalised competitive environment, and increase access to funding. In this context, the support to the SME through innovation instruments should be a priority, and the synergies and cooperation through the region is a potential window of opportunities.
Some of the questions that will be addressed during the webinar are:

- How can digitalisation became a unifying factor between the northern and the southern Mediterranean countries?
- How the Covid-19 can be seen as an accelerator of the digitalisation path of Mediterranean SMEs?
- How can further cooperation between universities, research centres and the private sector boost digital transformation?
- How can digital transformation be a driving force on the educational field, with higher education institutions and private sector cooperating to increase opportunities for young people in the post-COVID era?
- How can the public sector in Mediterranean countries engage with SMEs to promote digitalisation?
- How can the regional and local governments favour public-private partnerships aimed at promoting digitalisation?
MEDITERRANEAN + 25 Dialogues

DIGITALISING MEDITERRANEAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES:
A PATH TOWARDS INNOVATION DEVELOPMENT IN A POST-COVID 19 ERA

Institutional Opening by
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Josep Ferré, Director General, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

Moderator
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Speakers
Mondher Khanfir, Co-Founder and CEO, Wiki Startup, Tunisia
Josep A. Planell, Rector, Open University of Catalonia
Didier Nkurikiyimfura, Director of Technology and Innovation, Smart Africa Secretariat, Rwanda
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