

Euromed Civil Society Conference 2026

Civil Society, Women and Resilience in the Mediterranean

Barcelona, 23rd November 2026

Gender Perspectives for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation

The Conference on **Civil Society, Women and Resilience in the Mediterranean** takes place in the context of the Union for the Mediterranean's regional policy dialogue on Women Empowerment, which takes forward the collective commitments of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the role of Women in Society 2022. Conceived as a structured civil society participatory space, it builds upon the conclusions of the 2025 Euro-Mediterranean Civil Society Conference, which called for a renewed phase of partnership based on co-creation, strengthened civic space, structured dialogue and greater coherence among Euro-Mediterranean stakeholders.

Organised in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean's regional process on women's empowerment and gender equality, the meeting will assess the implementation of existing UfM commitments and formulate civil society recommendations to inform the next UfM Ministerial Declaration on women's empowerment and gender equality. It will also support the implementation of the Pact for the Mediterranean and the European Union's external action priorities on gender equality and women's empowerment.

By focusing on the role of women-led organisations and civil society actors in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the conference seeks to translate the shift **from consultation to co-creation into concrete policy and programmatic approaches**. It aims to strengthen the participation of women-led organisations throughout the policy cycle, promote more permanent and structured mechanisms for dialogue, and contribute to a coherent Euro-Mediterranean ecosystem by reinforcing collaboration between existing networks, institutions and territorial actors rather than creating new parallel structures.

The Conference

The conference is organised by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) in collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the European Commission – DG MENA, with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and the Catalan Agency for Development and Cooperation. It will take place **in Barcelona on 23 November 2026.**

The Conference takes place within the framework of the UfM Regional Platform on Women Empowerment taking place on 23-24 November, under the theme "**Advancing Equality, Shaping Stability: Women Driving Resilience Across the Mediterranean"**, alongside the UfM Regional Forum. As a preparatory event for UfM Platform, the Conference will contribute to the policy dialogue surrounding the official launch of the new UfM Gender Equality Progress Report, contributing with **concrete recommendations** to the policy dialogue and preparations leading to the next UfM Ministerial Declaration.

Building on the methodology developed through the 2025 Euro-Mediterranean Civil Society Conference, the meeting will apply the principles of co-creation, civic space, structured dialogue and stronger coordination among regional stakeholders to the gender equality agenda, ensuring that civil society perspectives inform future ministerial commitments, cooperation programmes and implementation mechanisms.

The conference is not conceived as a standalone event on gender equality, but as a **structured consultation** through a participatory and multi-stakeholder approach with civil society organisations, women-led initiatives, researchers and practitioners.

Objectives

- **Identify** the priority gaps in implementing regional commitments that public authorities and provide their partners could address, drawing on evidence and the experience of civil society, women-led initiatives and institutional stakeholders. The findings will also inform relevant regional processes and initiatives, among them the UfM Regional Platform.
- **Promote** the exchange of participatory models, experiences and good practices on accountability mechanisms and monitoring systems, with the aim of moving beyond gender mainstreaming towards genuine co-creation, where women actively shape priorities, design interventions and influence decision-making processes.
- **Develop** a focused set of actionable civil society recommendations for consideration by UfM Member States, aligned with current Euro-Mediterranean priorities and supporting a more effective and locally driven implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society.
- **Foster** partnerships among EU-supported programmes, women-led initiatives, civil society organisations and practitioners, encouraging collaboration, mobilising relevant stakeholders and supporting the dissemination and uptake of the conference outcomes.

Format and Structure

The meeting will bring together approximately **50 invited participants** form across the Mediterranean region, including representatives of civil society organisations, Arab and Euro-Mediterranean women-led initiatives and networks, as well as researchers, practitioners and policy actors.

<u>Strategic Dialogue</u>

The session will examine how women drive inclusion, resilience and transformation amid social, political, humanitarian and environmental challenges. It will explore the regional context, policy and regulatory frameworks, and responses needed to implement gender equality commitments and strengthen women's agency and rights.

The discussion will be opened by high-level speakers and experts who will provide key perspectives and framing elements for the debate. Civil society discussants will be invited to respond drawing on their own experience and national and local contexts. Brief opening interventions should leave at least 25 minutes for participant discussion and conclude with implementation questions to guide the Policy Labs.

Policy Labs

Three consecutive Policy Labs will translate the Strategic Dialogue into proposals for local implementation in priority areas of the current UfM framework. Each lab will include three roundtables on **Governance**, **Funding and Instruments**, and **Cooperation and Networks**. Participants will co-develop practical actions, partnerships, accountability mechanisms and monitoring indicators.

Proposed Conference Outputs and Follow-up

Each roundtable would aim to agree one priority recommendation, giving up to three per lab and nine overall. A short outcome note, supported by the three lab summaries, would identify the proposed action, competent authority or other implementing actor, resource needs, a dated first milestone and a progress indicator. National and local actions would be distinguished from regional support. Additional ideas and significant reservations would be retained in the supporting record.

As a result of the Sessions, **key recommendations** will inform the discussions of the Regional Platform on 23–24 November.

These recommendations, together with the **final set of conclusions** reflecting the main inputs and contributions from the different sessions, will subsequently be conveyed through the agreed UfM channels to the relevant representatives of the UfM Member States.

Policy Lab Themes

Policy Lab 1. Gender-Based Violence Across Public, Private and Digital Spaces

Gender-based violence restricts women's safety, autonomy and participation across homes, workplaces, public life and digital spaces. Online harassment, image-based abuse and AI-generated sexual content can extend coercion across platforms and borders. Survivors may need protection, health care, housing, legal assistance and a digital remedy at the same time.

CSOs and NGOs on both sides of the Mediterranean document abuse, accompany survivors, provide specialist support and identify failures in protection and justice. Their practical acumen connects individual experiences with patterns that official reporting can miss. NGO submissions inform GREVIO's monitoring in Europe; in Tunisia, UNDP documents civil society's role in informing women about legal aid and supporting access to justice.

How can this accumulated evidence and experience by civil society organizations help governments design prevention, improve referral systems, train services and direct resources where protection fails? How can these mechanisms address the emerging digital and AI enabled threats? This policy lab will examine how sustained cooperation can support public action while protecting survivor consent, organisational independence and the state's responsibility to prevent violence and provide redress.

Proposed lab output: up to three priority recommendations on a specific improvement in GBV prevention, protection, access to services or redress. Each would name the responsible authority, service or other actor, the support needed and a first implementation milestone, with survivor consent and confidentiality safeguarded.

Policy Lab 2. Women peace and security amid intersecting crises: Climate change, conflict, displacement and humanitarian response

Thirty-one years after the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, gains in women's influence over peace and security remain dismal. Available global data for 2024 show women made up only 7%

of negotiators and 14% of mediators in formal peace processes. These figures expose the distance between commitments and decision-making power.

War and protracted crises compound displacement, humanitarian needs and the erosion of essential services. Women organise assistance, sustain livelihoods and mediate local disputes, yet their knowledge and leadership can remain peripheral to negotiations and recovery budgets. Climate pressures add demands on water, food, health and care, with consequences shaped by inequality and political decisions.

What would it take to expand the WPS agenda to address these intersecting demands? The lab will examine how women's organisations can shape peacebuilding, humanitarian response, climate adaptation and recovery together, with authority and sustained resources. Climate hazards do not automatically cause conflict; the discussion must retain attention to responsibility for violence and violations of rights.

Proposed lab output: up to three priority recommendations enabling women's organisations to influence a defined peace, humanitarian, climate adaptation or recovery decision. Each would identify the decision-making process, the responsible actor, the resources required and a first milestone, with attention to women affected by conflict and displacement.

Policy Lab 3. Women's leadership and inclusive participation: Representation, institutional influence and shared decision-making

Women's leadership depends on the written and unwritten rules through which institutions select people, retain talent, distribute opportunities and confer authority. Parties decide candidacies; public bodies shape appointments and deliberation; employers and boards control recruitment and promotion. Care responsibilities, unequal access to finance, discriminatory norms and violence can constrain entry and continued participation. A leadership agenda must therefore examine who enters, who remains and whose decisions carry weight, and whose leadership is considered credible and welcomed.

This policy lab will address both individual representation and the institutional participation of women-led organisations. A seat, consultation or leadership programme can open an opportunity, but participants should examine whether it changes agenda-setting, budget choices and accountability. They should also ask which women benefit: class, disability, age, location, migration status and other inequalities shape access to influence in different contexts.

Proposed lab output: up to three priority recommendations for a specific change to selection, appointment, participation, funding or accountability arrangements. Each would identify the responsible institution, a first implementation milestone and an indicator of women's sustained influence, including women facing intersecting barriers.

EUROMED CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE ON GENDER AND RESILIENCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

UfM Regional Platform on Women Empowerment

IN THE FRAMEWORK OF 11th UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL FORUM

23 NOVEMBER 2026
BARCELONA

IN THE FRAMEWORK OF DAY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN NOVEMBER 24

Draft programme

08:30 – 09:00 | **Registration and welcome coffee**

09:00 – 09:30 | **Opening Session**

Petra Kežman, Deputy Secretary General for Human Development, Union for the Mediterranean
Lorena Elvira Ayuso, Secretary General, Ministry for European Union and Foreign Action, Government of Catalonia
Luisa María García, Deputy Director for Cooperation with the Arab World and Asia, AECID
Senén Florensa, Executive President, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

Introduction
Mariona Rico, Culture, Gender and Civil Society Department, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

09:30 – 10:30 | Dialogue: **Women as Drivers of Inclusion and Transformation in the Mediterranean context**

Speakers
Nouzha Chekrouni, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, Morocco
Zeinab Ismail, Senior Policy Analyst and Project Lead, SMEX, Lebanon

Facilitator
Carmen Geha, Research Fellow, IEMed

10:30 – 11:00 | Coffee Break

11:00 – 11:10 | Working dynamics and expected outputs
Juan E. Nicolás and Iyad O. Aljaber, Civil Society Facility for the Mediterranean (CSFM)

11:10 – 12:25 | Policy Lab 1. **Gender-Based Violence Across Public, Private and Digital Spaces**

Framing presenter
Lina Jarrous, Media, protection and legal advocacy expert, SEEDS (Lebanon)

Lab Facilitator
Susana Galán, Ramón y Cajal Assistant Professor, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI)

RT1 — Governance RT Facilitator: **Gihan Abou Zeid,** Arab NGO Network for Development, Egypt	**RT2 — Funding and Instruments** RT Facilitator: **Sama Aweidah,** General Manager,	**RT3 — Cooperation and Networks** RT Facilitator: **Camille de Garidel-Thoron,** President,

Case study: **Nadia Ait Zai,** President, Foundation for Equality / CIDDEF; Board Member, EuroMed Feminist Initiative (IFE-EFI), Algeria	Women's Studies Center, Palestine Case study: **Ghida Anani**, Founder & Director, ABAAD – Resource Centre for Gender Equality, Lebanon	Téthys, IRO, Aix Marseille University, France Case study: **Susana Pavlou,** Director of the Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies, Cyprus

Reporting back from the RT facilitators

12:25 – 13:40 | Policy Lab 2. **Women peace and security amid intersecting crises: Climate change, conflict, displacement and humanitarian response**

Framing presenter
Sara Rabie, Portfolio Manager - Climate, Gender and Migration, Arab Foundations Forum

Lab Facilitator
Anna Dorangricchia, Programme Manager Gender Equality, Social and Civil Affairs Division, Union for the Mediterranean

RT1 — Governance	**RT2 — Funding and Instruments**	**RT3 — Cooperation and Networks**
RT Facilitator: **Anthi Brouma**, Deputy Regional Coordinator, Theme Leader on Water Governance, Sustainable Financing, Gender+ of Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med), Greece Case study: **Hala Bugaigis,** lawyer, researcher and women's rights activist; Member of the Libyan Women, Peace and Security Advisory and Co-Founder of Jusoor Center for Studies and Development, Libya	RT Facilitator: **Rania Tarazi**. Gender Team Leader for UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, Amman Regional Hub, Jordan Case study: **Khouloud Ben Mansour,** Program Officer, African Women Leaders Network Program	RT Facilitator: **Reem Turkmani**, Syria Research Director & Senior Research Fellow Conflict and Civicness Research Group (LSE) United Kingdom Case study: **Tutku Ayhan,** Postdoctoral Fellow in International Security, IBEI, Turkey

Reporting back from the RT facilitators

13:40 – 14:45 | Lunch Break

14:45 – 16:00 | Policy Lab 3. **Women's leadership and inclusive participation: Representation, institutional influence and shared decision-making**

Framing presenter
Hala Barakat, Director, Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, AUC - Cairo, Egypt

Lab Facilitator
Gemma Aubarell, Director of the Culture, Gender and Civil Society Department, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

RT1 — Governance	**RT2 — Funding and Instruments**	**RT3 — Cooperation and Networks**
RT Facilitator: **Juliane Marie Neiiendam**, rapporteur for the EESC opinion SOC/866 – Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030, Denmark Case study: **Ikram Ben Said**, Founder, Aswat Nissa, Tunisia	RT Facilitator: **Chaymaa Ramzy,** Executive Director, SHELTER Art Space, Egypt Case study: **Melinda Holmes,** Program Director, International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)	RT Facilitator: **Giulia Sostero,** Coordinator of the Africa, Southwest Asia and Türkiye Department, European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA), France Case study: **Marta Suero**, International Projects and Development Cooperation Service, Diputació de Barcelona

Reporting back from the RT facilitators

16:00 – 16:30 | **Shaping the Future of Cooperation: Gender Equality and Civil Society Engagement**

Anne-France Wittmann, Programme Officer, DG MENA, European Commission
Andrea Costafreda, Director General for Development Cooperation, Generalitat de Catalunya

Conducted by
Gemma Aubarell, Director of the Culture, Gender and Civil Society Department, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)
Anna Dorangricchia, Programme Manager Gender Equality, Social and Civil Affairs Division, Union for the Mediterranean

16:30 – 19:30 | **Stakeholders Dialogue on Women Empowerment**

EUROMED CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE ON GENDER AND RESILIENCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

UfM Regional Platform on Women Empowerment

IN THE FRAMEWORK OF
11th UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL FORUM

23 NOVEMBER 2026
BARCELONA

IN THE FRAMEWORK OF
DAY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
NOVEMBER 28

*please refer to the detailed agenda

ORGANISED BY

IEMed.
European Institute of the Mediterranean

Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط

aecid
Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo

Generalitat de Catalunya