



**European Committee
of the Regions**



Version of 25 September 2023

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL AND LOCAL ASSEMBLY

Recommendations for 2024

Adopted at the 14th ARLEM Plenary session in Alghero, Italy, on 24 October 2023

Multiple challenges and tensions continue to mark the Mediterranean landscape, among them climate change with resulting natural disasters taking enormous human tolls, economic crisis, geopolitical tensions and the need to manage supply chains, migration, wars, the urgent need for an energy transition, environmental conflicts, employment, tourism, and environmental risks, and the consequences of the pandemic, etc. The Mediterranean area is facing multiple issues that can hardly be addressed without comprehensive co-operation.

Representing the territorial dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) can both support cooperation between the EU and its southern neighbouring partners on a local and regional level and bring the voice of cities and regions from around the Mediterranean to the fore at the highest political levels.

ARLEM is an assembly of local and regional representatives from the three shores of the Mediterranean, gathering, on equal footing and representation, all 27 countries of the European Union and 16 countries of the Southern and the Eastern Mediterranean shores. ARLEM is a two-way communication channel bringing the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation to the governance level closest to the citizens while conveying messages from the ground to the institutional fora of cooperation that would otherwise mainly rely on the state level.

Since its creation, ARLEM has worked in close cooperation with the Union for the Mediterranean. After a decade of cooperation and the signature of a declaration of intent between the UfM and ARLEM, 2024 will be a timely moment to reflect on this cooperation, assess its achievements and think about future perspectives.

The ARLEM Action Plan for 2023-2025, adopted at the plenary session on 8 November 2022, defines the three following priorities for ARLEM, where the assembly can bring the greatest benefit to local and regional authorities, with the overarching aim to build resilient Mediterranean cities and regions:

- inclusive cities,
- climate action in the Mediterranean,
- energy and food security.

In line with the ARLEM recommendations for 2023, ARLEM adopted two thematic reports this year, on *Cities' and regions' potential role in Mediterranean civil protection* and on *Urban health and sustainable urban mobility in the Mediterranean*, which covered the priority areas of building inclusive cities and taking climate action in the Mediterranean.

In 2024, ARLEM will continue shaping the local and regional dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, in line with the three priority areas. As no single action can meet these three ambitious priorities, ARLEM will put a stronger emphasis to further interlinking the areas of action described above, to increase efficiency and impact, as well as relevance of its action.

ARLEM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2024

Climate action in the Mediterranean

1. ARLEM underlines that the impacts of climate change, together with growing demand and unsustainable use, have aggravated the water security challenge. Water scarcity has always been a constant factor to cope with in the history of Mediterranean societies. However, the degradation of the situation could further increase the demographic and socio-economic gap between the northern and southern Mediterranean and exacerbate tensions and conflict and constitute a driver for migration. Water has been one of the first topics on which ARLEM started to work after its creation¹. The UfM will continue to work on the implementation of its Water Agenda adopted in 2018 (*Water Policy framework for Actions 2030*), to enhance regional cooperation towards sustainable and integrated water, and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (in particular SDG 6 on availability and sustainable management of water). Water is also a key priority for the EU, both for its internal and external action². The European Commission has recently announced the launch of a *water resilience initiative*³ as a key priority for 2024, under the European Green Deal.
2. In 2024, ARLEM could prepare a thematic report on water challenges, to take stock of the actions taken so far and elaborate recommendations to strengthen water resilience, which could in particular contribute to the continuous evolution of the UfM's water agenda, the UfM annual Conference on Water Finance & Investments and possibly to the 5th Mediterranean water forum which will take place in 2024 in Tunisia. Synergies with the issue of climate change and food security will be looked at as a follow up to the 2021 ARLEM report on Agriculture and food security in the context of climate change in the Mediterranean⁴. Special attention will be given

¹ ARLEM report on *Local water management in the Mediterranean*, 2011 (rapporteur: Mr Valcárcel Siso (ES)). ARLEM report on *The link between desertification and climate change in the Mediterranean*, 2012 (rapporteur: Mr Vendola (IT)).

² [Council conclusions on Water in external relations \(19 November 2021\)](#)

³ President of the European Commission's State of the Union 2023 - Letter of intent

⁴ ARLEM report on *Agriculture and food security in the context of climate change in the Mediterranean* (2021) (rapporteur: Agnès Rampal (FR))

to the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus (WEFE Nexus) approach, which highlights the interdependence of water, energy and food security and ecosystems (water, soil, and land) that underpin that security and to a special report of the Network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC), expected for 2023 on this issue⁵.

3. ARLEM could also work with its partners on the issue of water scarcity, such as the UN Cities Alliance, which is running a project on water with a specific focus on gender in the MENA region⁶.
4. ARLEM continues to stress the importance of subnational climate diplomacy and of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in order to amplify the voice of local and regional governments on a global scale and achieve the recognition of the local and regional authorities within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Cities and regions prepare and implement detailed adaptation and mitigation plans that take into account local environmental conditions, socio-economic requirements, energy and climate justice. They can drive climate actions that surpass national targets without compromising growth and territorial cohesion.
5. Mayors and regional representatives from the three shores of the Mediterranean and across the globe coordinated their actions and played an active role in the 27th UN Climate Change Conference (COP 27), in Sharm el Sheikh (Egypt), in November 2023. The upcoming COP28 (Dubai, December 2023) constitutes once more an important opportunity for local and regional authorities in the Mediterranean to step up their efforts, taking into account the UfM ministerial declarations adopted in 2021 on the environment and climate change, on energy and on the blue economy, with a view to strengthening the role of local and regional authorities in global governance to improve the implementation of the UN SDGs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and raise climate ambitions.
6. ARLEM eagerly anticipates the Special report of the Network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC), on Climate and Environmental Coastal Risks, expected for publication in 2023⁷. It aims at identifying and assessing environmental and climate change hazards in the coastal zone of the Mediterranean Basin, related risks, adaptation options and solutions. ARLEM could discuss the results of this publication in one of its meetings.

Energy and food security

7. With the effects of climate change at our doorstep, it is essential to address the issue of energy in the Mediterranean. Geopolitical tensions, clean energy, decarbonization, alternative energies, and financing of energy transition are key challenges that need to be tackled in a concerted manner, in order to build resilient territories and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 7 ("ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all").

⁵ <https://www.medecc.org/medecc-reports/medecc-special-reports-2021-2023/>

⁶ <https://www.citiesalliance.org/regional-programme-women-and-sustainable-cities>

⁷ <https://www.medecc.org/medecc-reports/medecc-special-reports-2021-2023/>

8. ARLEM emphasises the need to explore ways to step up the Euro-Mediterranean energy cooperation and accelerate the energy transition. The energy transition is as much about security as it is about climate ambitions. Investments in the Mediterranean energy sector, and notably in renewables, will also boost employment and develop economies. The EU's search for greater strategic autonomy can benefit its close Mediterranean partners in terms of potential partnerships and investments around energy and related infrastructure (linked also to the [EU's Global Gateway](#)). In this regard, the Mediterranean region holds a strategic position near main energy markets. The southern Mediterranean region has one of the youngest populations in the world. Through its partnerships, the European Union stands ready to support the Mediterranean countries in their efforts to provide a better life for their youth through job creation in the energy sector.
9. ARLEM has adopted two reports on Energy and food security in the context of climate change in the past six years⁸. The acceleration of climate change and Russia's war in Ukraine have aggravated the situation in the region, leading to energy supply issues in Europe and food supply problems in the southern Mediterranean countries. Some countries had to revert to highly polluting energy production in order to meet their energy needs.
10. ARLEM could prepare a report on the challenges and opportunities of the Euro-Mediterranean energy cooperation, which could explore the various challenges related to energy transition in the context of the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement but also the opportunities (e.g. new jobs, sustainable growth, etc.) and new initiatives (e.g. the development of Green Partnership Agreements between the EU and its Mediterranean partners). This report could also explore the relations between energy transition and food security and follow up on the ARLEM report on *Agriculture and food security in the context of climate change in the Mediterranean*, adopted in 2021.

Inclusive cities

11. Civil protection is a key aspect to reinforce the resilience of societies by reducing and mitigating the risks they face. Cities and regions play a key role in preparedness and responses to natural and man-made disasters, by establishing well-functioning civil protection mechanisms contributing to their resilience. Once again, this summer 2023 marked by calamitous earthquakes, devastating floods, raging fires and heat waves in many Mediterranean countries that have highlighted the essential role of cities and regions in offering protection and support to the citizens in emergency situations.
12. Aware of civil protection as one of the five renewed priorities of the Barcelona Process, ARLEM will continue to work in 2024 in this area, following up on its report on the *Role of Cities' and regions' potential role in Mediterranean civil protection*⁹ adopted in 2023. ARLEM

⁸ ARLEM report on *Energy and climate change (2017)* (rapporteur: Mohamed Sadiki (MA))

ARLEM report on *Agriculture and food security in the context of climate change in the Mediterranean* (2021) (rapporteur: Agnès Rampal (FR))

⁹ ARLEM report the *Role of Cities' and regions' potential role in Mediterranean civil protection* (rapporteur: André Viola (Aude/FR))

will bring the voice of regions and cities to the national level by contributing to the preparation of the UfM Ministerial Meeting on Civil protection to be held in 2025 and to its Ministerial Declaration. Stressing the role of local authorities in the prevention, preparedness and response to natural and man-made disasters¹⁰ or in the exchange of knowledge, ARLEM could participate to the definition of the action plan and roadmap to be adopted at a meeting of the Directors-General for Civil Protection of the UfM in October 2023 in Valencia.

13. The cross-cutting nature of the themes covered by ARLEM (urban development, energy, climate action, water, environment, etc.) should contribute to improving the resilience of societies by reducing/mitigating risks within the broader scope of civil protection.
14. ARLEM will also follow up on its report on *Urban health and sustainable urban mobility in the Mediterranean*, adopted in 2023, through which ARLEM contributed to the UfM ministerial debate¹¹. Synergies will be looked for with the new ARLEM reports to be prepared in 2024, for example the report addressing water scarcity. Potential discussions and actions addressing sustainable solutions will be explored and promoted.
15. Building inclusive cities also means building cities where citizens, especially young people, women, and vulnerable groups are not left behind. Regional and local authorities are actively involved in economic development and investment and ARLEM can contribute to activating their potential in this regard. ARLEM will therefore continue to promote youth entrepreneurship by organising the 6th edition of the ARLEM Award – Young local entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean. Youth entrepreneurship is a vector for economic development in the Mediterranean region. The assembly helps to showcase successful examples of young entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean region as an inspiration to others. This initiative also aims to demonstrate the positive impact that local and regional authorities in Mediterranean partner countries can have on the entrepreneurial ecosystem and to highlight how young entrepreneurs in Mediterranean partner countries actively take their future into their own hands and create jobs for local economic development.

Intercultural dialogue

16. In addition to its three key policy priorities, ARLEM will continue to promote intercultural dialogue, in order to promote the diversity and shared identity of the Euro-Mediterranean region and contribute to a better mutual understanding of its peoples.

The Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue

17. In 2024, ARLEM will continue to be a key partner of the UfM and the Anna Lindh Foundation in designing and organising the first edition of the Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue, which will take place in 2025. After having been associated to the first call for applications and selection of applications in 2023, as one of three institutions forming the MCCD's Advisory Committee, ARLEM will continue to support the preparation of the first

¹⁰ The ARLEM rapporteur participated at the 3d UfM Ministerial meeting on Urban development in Zagreb, on 4 May 2023

¹¹ ARLEM rapporteur participated at the 3d UfM Ministerial meeting on Urban development in Zagreb, on 4 May 2023

edition in 2024. It will support together with the UfM and the Anna Lindh Foundation, the two capitals through their respective communication teams, for example by strengthening the overall coherence of the initiative and disseminating the results of the initiative through their wide audiences. Calls for applications for the second edition in 2026 will be launched in January 2024, with the aim of nominating the two 2026 MCCDs in November 2024. With this joint initiative, ARLEM will particularly enhance its partnership with the UfM in 2024.

The Day of the Mediterranean

18. The 4th edition of the Day of the Mediterranean, on 28 November 2024, will provide again an opportunity to promote intercultural exchanges, celebrate cooperation, embrace diversity and strengthen ties between the two shores. ARLEM will continue to support this initiative, in partnership with the UfM and other actors celebrating the Day. ARLEM encourages once more its members to hold cultural events in their local areas with a view to strengthening ties, promoting intercultural exchanges and dialogue and embracing the diversity of the region.
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