

## MAIN SECTION

# An Action Plan for the Mediterranean: a Case of EU Policy Transfer to the Mediterranean Basin

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## ABSTRACT

Although for millennia the Mediterranean has facilitated the exchange of goods and people, in recent decades, it has been treated as a border between continents, nations and supranational institutions, with the European Union on one side and MENA region on the other. Yet pressing issues related to migration, climate change and pollution reveal problems with the border approach. In 1995, the Barcelona Process culminated in the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the UfM Urban Agenda in an attempt to better connect countries around the Mediterranean. To concretise this agenda, TU Delft and the authors of this text were invited to work with DG-Regio, UNESCO, the EIB (European Investment Bank), and the ministries in charge of spatial planning in Member States, to draft the UfM Strategic Action Plan for Sustainable Urban Development. The goal of the Action Plan is to enhance the strategic and integrative value of spatial planning interventions in each country. Based on the personal reflections of the authors and the detailed communication with the institutions involved in the making of the plan, the article presents the history and the conceptual framework of the making of the UfM Strategic Action Plan. It concludes by highlighting the hurdles that the UfM Strategic Action Plan faces as a new transnational policy framework for the transfer of policy from the European Union to the MENA region (Middle East and the North of Africa). Such challenges are not only based on content, but they are also related to the frames and structures within which policy is developed and exchanged.

## KEYWORDS

*Policy Transfer; New Institutionalism; Transnational Policy Framework; International Relations; Mediterranean Integration; EU Neighbourhood Policy; Integrated Urban Development.*

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## Introduction

Migration, shipping, and climate change are just a few of the reasons the Mediterranean Sea has become a focus of contemporary debates. Political and economic interests in facilitating shipping, governing water change, and controlling pollution require reconnecting the shores of the Mediterranean – North and South, East and West. This dialogue has been triggered by pragmatic concerns about security and resources, but the shared Mediterranean heritage in all its facets also plays a key role in integration efforts. A comprehensive approach to connecting the multiple countries around the Mediterranean and the tools to facilitate exchange have been emerging in recent decades. The creation of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in 1995, resulting from the Barcelona Process, provides an instrument promoting coordination, integration, and convergence in urbanisation standards. The UfM Urban Agenda served as the foundation for developing the UfM Strategic Action Plan for Sustainable Urban Development, which is aimed at enhancing the strategic and integrative value of spatial planning interventions in each country.

Following a brief history of the Barcelona Process and the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean, this article explains the structure of the UfM and the mandate to create a Strategic Action Plan for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean (henceforth, the Action Plan). It then explores how the UfM Urban Agenda came to be and analyses its contents and its role in the UfM Urban Agenda and other transnational frameworks. The authors of this article have worked on the Union for the Mediterranean Strategic Action Plan for Sustainable Urbanisation<sup>1</sup> as an instrument aimed at providing a platform for integration and collaboration in a wide variety of national realities. The article explores the two-year-long process of drafting and reviewing the Strategic Action Plan drawing on desk research and based on the detailed communication between the authors and DG-Regio, UNESCO, the EIB (European Investment Bank) and the ministries in charge of spatial planning in the Member States. Establishing a transnational policy framework requires an understanding of the varying degrees of coordination capacities and the diverse planning cultures in the European Union and the MENA region (the Middle East and the North of Africa).

In this article, we reflect on the UfM Action Plan as an example of meta-governance<sup>2</sup> and constructivist institutionalism.<sup>3</sup> Both dimensions play a role in how we understand the institutions involved in this endeavour, how

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1 Rocco, Hein, and Rooij, *Union for the Mediterranean Strategic Action Plan for Sustainable Urbanisation in the Mediterranean*.

2 Louis Meuleman, *Metagovernance for Sustainability: A Framework for Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals* (London: Routledge, 2020).

3 Colin Hay, "Constructivist Institutionalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, ed. Sarah A. Binder, R. A. W. Rhodes, and Bert A. Rockman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

the policy is conceived and how the legitimacy of the policy is construed. By analysing these aspects, we hope to provide the reader with an understanding of how political discourses expressing values shape the UfM and its mission, how consensus around norms and values guiding the institution developed, and how policy has been conceived, transferred and translated. We conclude by considering the foreseeable hurdles involved in implementing the UfM Action Plan and ensuring compliance. We also ponder policy translation challenges and opportunities.

### **Institutional values and objectives: The Barcelona Process and the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean**

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an attempt to better connect countries around the Mediterranean by building on shared values with the goals of initiating a long-term process of cooperation, promoting democracy, good governance, and human rights, and achieving mutually satisfactory trading terms for the region's partners. Its creation has followed a lengthy process of political and economic articulation between European countries and their southern Mediterranean neighbours in view of their shared geography, history, and heritage, as well as their common challenges, interests, and objectives, resulting in the EU's Global Mediterranean policy (1972–1992) and the Renovated Mediterranean Policy (1992–1995). These policies might appear unidirectional and reproducing colonial patterns, since it is European countries that are setting the tone of the dialogue (which they very much do). There is also eagerness from MENA countries to access knowledge, expertise, and funding from the EU and to strengthen planning capacity in the region. It is important to recognise the profound imbalance in levels of development and capacity that characterises the opposite shores of the Mediterranean.

The UfM institutional environment is shaped by its historical context, political and economic issues outside the institution. This context includes an evolution of European interests and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the shifting interests of Member States, and to the crises that have galvanised political action, including the conflict between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus, the Arab Israeli conflict, the Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria, the refugee crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Political scientist Federica Bicchì aptly asks: "Why, how and when does an issue become a European interest and a European priority?"<sup>4</sup> There is no simple answer to this question. Maria Elena Guasconi, international relations scholar, points out that "two of the founding members of the European Community, France and Italy, both Mediterranean countries, for the his-

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4 "Defining European Interests in Foreign Policy: Insights from the Mediterranean Case, Arena Working Paper 13," UiO, 2003, accessed 10 September, 2020, [https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2003/03\\_13.html](https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2003/03_13.html).

torical and military legacy of their colonial past, have always looked at the Mediterranean basin as an area in which to exert their influence. She notes that, according to a well-known thesis, “it was a crisis which broke out in the Mediterranean in 1956, the Suez Canal crisis, which gave new impetus to the last phase of negotiations, leading to the signature of the Treaties of Rome in March 1957”.<sup>5</sup> Both Bicchi and Guasconi implicitly recognise Europe’s protagonist role in this process. In other words, it has been Europe that has dictated the agenda. However, as we shall see, its southern neighbours have a myriad of reasons to be just as enthusiastic about Mediterranean integration.

During the 1960s, the European Economic Community (EEC) established a series of bilateral agreements with countries South and East of the Mediterranean. Still, these agreements did not respond to a common logic or policy.<sup>6</sup> The beginning of the 1970s saw the realisation of the need to work towards regional stability and on strengthening the European position in the region in view of the continuing tensions triggered by the Cold War. The “Global Mediterranean Policy” was launched at the Paris Summit of 1972 and for the first time addressed the Mediterranean countries as a region within a single policy framework. The Euro-Arab Dialogue, launched after the Yom Kippur War of 1973, involved the members of the Arab League, and was developed in the newly established framework of European Political Cooperation. Guasconi estimates that, from a European perspective, the Mediterranean represented “a link with the Middle East and North Africa, a link to the oil and raw materials that were fundamental for [Europe’s] stability and their energy security”<sup>7</sup> and further lists the threat of terrorism, transatlantic disagreements over the Middle East and the leading role of France, a Mediterranean country, in European institutions as driving European attention to the region.

The UfM was created in response to various challenges that concern the emergence of the European Union (EU), its extensions—notably to the East—and its relationship with former colonies and other nations around the Mediterranean. The UfM emerged in 1995 as a result of the Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Barcelona on 27 and 28 November of that year, under the Spanish presidency of the EU, with its mission “to enhance regional cooperation, dialogue and the implementation of projects and initiatives with tangible impact on our citizens, with an emphasis on young people and women, in order to address the three strategic objectives of the region: stability, human development

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5 Maria Eleonora Guasconi, “Europe and the Mediterranean in the 1970s: The Setting Up of the Euro-Arab Dialogue,” *Les Cahiers Irice* 1, no. 10 (2013): 163.

6 Bicchi, “Defining European Interests in Foreign Policy: Insights from the Mediterranean Case,” Arena Working Paper 13.”

7 Guasconi, “Europe and the Mediterranean in the 1970s: The Setting Up of the Euro-Arab Dialogue,” 165.

and integration".<sup>8</sup> As an intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation, it brings together 43 countries from all sides of the Mediterranean. Along with the 27 EU Member States and the UK, 15 Southern Mediterranean countries are members of the UfM: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (suspended), Tunisia and Turkey. Libya is an observer.

In the Barcelona Declaration (1995), the aim of the Barcelona processes was summarised as: "turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability, and prosperity".<sup>9</sup> Three main objectives were established for the new partnership, namely the definition of a shared area of peace and stability through the strengthening of political and security dialogue; the construction of a zone of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the gradual establishment of a free-trade area; and the rapprochement of peoples through a social, cultural, and human partnership aimed at encouraging understanding between cultures and fostering exchanges between civil societies. Interestingly, in 1995, the idea of a "clash of civilisations" between a liberal democratic West and an insurgent Islamic Middle East was taking shape, thanks in part to American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington. In a 1992 lecture at the American Enterprise Institute and in a 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article titled "The Clash of Civilizations?" that future wars would be fought not between countries, but between cultures. This "clash of civilizations" was mentioned by Javier Solana, then Spain's minister of Foreign Affairs, in his opening statements at the conference at which the Barcelona Declaration was adopted. Solana referred to the clash as something to be overcome.

More specifically, the Barcelona Process aimed to promote security and stability in the Mediterranean; to reach an agreement on shared values; to begin a long-term process of cooperation in the Mediterranean; to encourage democracy, good governance and human rights; to achieve mutually satisfactory trading terms for the region's partners (the "region" consisting of the countries that participated); and to establish a policy that would complement the United States' presence in the Mediterranean.<sup>10</sup> In 2005, the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona Process was celebrated with a new Euro-Mediterranean summit held in Barcelona, where the original intentions of the Barcelona process were re-affirmed and updated. However, the process was criticised at the time as too dependent on the Eu-

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8 "How does the UfM contribute to regional stability, human development and integration?" UfM, 2020, accessed 10 September, 2020, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/>.

9 "Barcelona Declaration," European Commission, 1995, accessed 8 September, 2020, [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/euromed/docs/bd\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/euromed/docs/bd_en.pdf). n.p.

10 European Commission, "Barcelona Declaration."

ropean Commission and the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>11</sup> According to Youngs, “Despite many well-meaning policies and some islands of achievement in Euro-Mediterranean relations, on most vectors conditions in the southern Mediterranean have worsened since 1995. Relations between Europe and Arab states, Turkey and Israel have become more fractious.”<sup>12</sup> Youngs does note some progress in economic agreements and heritage preservation measures.

In 2007, the countries involved in the Barcelona process embarked in a new round of negotiations that aimed to revive the process with the proposal for a “Mediterranean Union,” an idea defended by then candidate to the French Presidency, Nicolas Sarkozy. For Sarkozy, the aim of this Union was to relaunch cooperation among the countries of the Mediterranean, outside the framework of the EU. “In the opinion of the then candidate for the Elysée, it was about the Mediterranean countries taking the initiative and, on the basis of cooperation in specific areas, advancing at a quicker pace towards the goals of peace, security and prosperity”.<sup>13</sup> Lecha reports that this was once a “star project” of the Sarkozy presidency,<sup>14</sup> which speaks to France’s historic role in the region as a colonizer, its deep connections to several southern Mediterranean countries, and its envisioned leadership in the region.

Despite receiving support from several countries, the project faced hard opposition from Turkey and the European Commission itself. Turkey feared that a Mediterranean Union would be a poor substitute for the country’s envisaged EU membership. For the European Commission, with Germany as its most vocal member, instead of building a new entity alongside the EU, countries in the region should try to build upon existing institutional structures<sup>15</sup> to avoid duplicating institutions and legislation. Due to widespread criticism, France began to shift its position from a “Mediterranean Union” to a “Union for the Mediterranean” that would complement the EU’s policies in the Barcelona Process, and later on, the ENP.<sup>16</sup>

At the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean in 2008, 43 heads of State

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11 “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: from the Barcelona Process to the Union for the Mediterranean,” Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2018, accessed 10 September, 2020, <http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/en/PoliticaExteriorCooperacion/Mediterraneo/Paginas/Asociación-Euro-Mediterránea.aspx>.

12 “20 Years of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership,” Carnegie Europe, 2015, accessed 10 September, 2020, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2015/05/18/20-years-of-euro-mediterranean-partnership-pub-60337>. n.p.

13 Eduard Soler i Lecha, “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean. Genesis, evolution and implications for Spain’s Mediterranean Policy,” *Observatorio de Política Exterior Española* Doc. de Trabajo 28/2008 (2008), <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/92408/Barcelona%20Process.pdf>. p.7.

14 Lecha, “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean. Genesis, evolution and implications for Spain’s Mediterranean Policy.” p.5.

15 “Merkel criticises Sarkozy’s Mediterranean Union plans, EU Observer,” EU Observer, 2007, accessed 5 August, 2020, <https://euobserver.com/news/25284>.

16 “European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP),” EU, 2016, accessed 10 September, 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp_en).

from the Euro-Mediterranean region launched the “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean”, which aimed “to enhance multilateral relations, increase co-ownership of the [Barcelona] process, set governance on the basis of equal footing and translate it into concrete projects visible to citizens”.<sup>17</sup> At the Marseille Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Affairs held in November 2008<sup>18</sup> and attended by all member countries’ foreign affairs ministers, it was decided to shorten the name of the initiative from “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean” to “Union for the Mediterranean”. This meeting concluded with a new joint declaration, which complemented the Paris Declaration by defining the organisational structure and the principles on which the UfM would run. A rotating co-presidency was set up, held jointly by one EU member country and one non-EU Mediterranean partner. France and Egypt were the first countries to hold this co-presidency. The presence of the Arab League was established in the rules of the new organisation to boost its legitimacy among Arab members. A secretariat with a separate legal status and its own statutes was created and its headquarters were established in Barcelona.

The Union for the Mediterranean was therefore launched as a new phase of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and a continuation of the Barcelona process. The four chapters of cooperation developed in the framework of the Barcelona Process remained valid for thirteen years and were re-named “fields of cooperation”, namely, political and security dialogue, maritime safety, economic and financial partnership, and social human and cultural cooperation. The Economic and Financial Partnership has been fleshed out in the Marseille Declaration<sup>19</sup> as including many areas of cooperation, including energy, transport, agriculture, urban development, water, the environment, the information society, and tourism. This should lead to the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area, increased economic dialogue and industrial cooperation.

The Marseille Declaration<sup>20</sup> is at the origin of the “Union for the Mediterranean Urban Agenda”.<sup>21</sup> The item concerning urban development specifically recognises shared needs for sustainable metropolitan and urban development, stating that

Sustainable Metropolitan and Urban Development are at the heart

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17 “Joint declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, Council of Europe, Paris, 13 July 2008,” EC, 2008, accessed 5 August, 2020, [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/er/101847.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/er/101847.pdf).

18 “Final Statement, Union for the Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Summit, Marseille, 3-4 November 2008,” UfM, 2008, accessed 8 August, 2020, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/dec-final-Marseille-UfM.pdf>.

19 UfM, “Final Statement, Union for the Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Summit, Marseille, 3-4 November 2008,” 10.

20 UfM, “Final Statement, Union for the Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Summit, Marseille, 3-4 November 2008.”

21 UfM, “*Union for the Mediterranean Urban Agenda: Second Ministerial Conference of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) on Sustainable Urban Development*,” ed. UfM (Cairo: Union for the Mediterranean, 2017).

of the major issues of the Mediterranean. Population growth and uncontrolled urban sprawl, concentrated mainly on the coasts, are significant and have a negative impact on the Mediterranean region's development. Sustainable Urban Development implies that governments, developers, and financiers to better anticipate future urban growth, need to better meet the basic needs of populations (housing, transportation, access to water, electricity and telecommunications) and integrate environmental constraints. This challenge implies the involvement of regional authorities to define appropriate planning through an integrated approach.<sup>22</sup>

Recognising the different interests, powers, and planning tools set up with and for the UfM sets the stage for spatial planning and shared policymaking, including for the UfM Urban Agenda.

## The UfM Urban Agenda and the Making of the UfM Action Plan

On 21 and 22 May 2017, during the second UfM Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Urban Development held in Cairo, Egypt, the ministers in charge of sustainable urban development of UfM member countries ratified an Urban Agenda for the Mediterranean.<sup>23</sup> This ratification followed to the New Urban Agenda<sup>24</sup> and the Urban Agenda for the EU, also known as the Pact of Amsterdam.<sup>25</sup> The UfM Urban Agenda specifically aims to be

[...] a coherent set of actions of its Members States in coordination with other Mediterranean key actors. It is a form of multilevel cooperation where Member States' representatives in charge of urban matters, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the Union's Advisory Bodies (CoR, EESC), the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly, the EIB, EBRD and other relevant institutions work in thematic working groups in the context of the UfM Regional Platform on Sustainable Urban Development.<sup>26</sup>

The UfM Urban Agenda aimed at "addressing the multi-faceted challenges of the region, both at local and regional levels, through an integrated and holistic approach, as well as at ensuring urban sustainability and re-

22 UfM, "Final Statement, Union for the Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Summit, Marseille, 3-4 November 2008," 10.

23 UfM, "Union for the Mediterranean Urban Agenda": Second Ministerial Conference of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) on Sustainable Urban Development.

24 UN-Habitat, New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat (Nairobi, 2016), <http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>.

25 "Urban Agenda for the EU: Pact of Amsterdam," European Commission, 2016, accessed 20 November, 2019, [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/pact-of-amsterdam.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/pact-of-amsterdam.pdf).

26 UfM, "Union for the Mediterranean Urban Agenda": Second Ministerial Conference of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) on Sustainable Urban Development, 9.



silience with a greater socio-economic impact on the ground, thus improving the quality of life of the peoples of the Mediterranean region". It builds upon a number of international and regional policy frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, highlighting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) SDG 11, the UN-Habitat New Urban Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean.

The UfM Urban Agenda aims to "enable urban authorities to work in a more systematic and coherent way towards achieving overarching goals".<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, it established policy priorities, including a focus on urban rules and regulations, accompanied by a reiteration of the role of urban planning, underscoring balanced urban and territorial development, and the relationship between rapidly urbanising coastal areas and rural hinterlands affected by depopulation. The document addresses the environment, and climate in particular, with an emphasis on urban resilience and green infrastructures. The document also refers to means of implementation that include several measures concerning capacity building, financing, data collection and management.

To activate the UfM Urban Agenda, the UfM leadership called on TU Delft and the authors of this article to lead a two-year iterative process of research, drafting, editing and review of the Action Plan, coordinated by UfM and DG Regio, and a number of stakeholders: various Directorate Generals in the European Commission, UNESCO, the European Committee for the Regions, the European Investment Bank, other financing institutions, public interest groups, universities, NGOs and most crucially, the ministries in charge of spatial planning in each member country. Several rounds of reviews meant that stakeholders had the opportunity to influence the text considerably. Assigning leadership to university partners from outside the Mediterranean reflects both the need for independent, science-led advice and the desire to bring the full knowledge of European spatial planning to the fore for shared development of the urban spaces of the Mediterranean.

The UfM Strategic Action Plan for Sustainable Development as imagined by the authors and developed in collaboration with all partners turns the declarative intentions expressed in Urban Agenda for the Mediterranean into coordinated actions that aim to enhance the strategic and integrative value of spatial planning interventions in each country. The UfM Action Plan is a transnational policy framework that is not legally binding, but its force resides in voluntary adherence. Adherence depends upon several factors connected to the procedural make-up of the plan and the institutional framework in which it is conceived. A clear mandate to put the

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27 UfM, "Union for the Mediterranean Urban Agenda": *Second Ministerial Conference of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) on Sustainable Urban Development*.

Action Plan together, resulting from a long process of supranational engagement and negotiation in the Barcelona Process, and engagement of a broad range of stakeholders in conceptualising and drafting the Action Plan aims to give it legitimacy and to increase compliance in the implementation phase. This institutional environment is shaped by diverse values and worldviews among the very large number of institutions and national authorities that regulate how stakeholders interact, how decisions are made and how formal and informal rules and procedures influence the process of transnational policy formation.

The UfM Strategic Action Plan for Sustainable Development was kicked off at a meeting in Brussels in September 2019. It was initially conceived as a document to promote urban regeneration, but rapidly evolved to become a more comprehensive document dealing with sustainable urbanisation, with the understanding that the resources and time employed to conceive an action plan for urban regeneration would be better employed in a document with a wider scope and a more strategic approach to integrated urban development. As a result of this strategic integrated approach, it was also decided to develop a UfM Strategic Plan for Housing alongside the main Action Plan and laid out in a separate action plan.

The UfM Action Plan operationalises the directions established by the UfM Urban Agenda for the Mediterranean (discussed in the previous section). It sets up a strategic action agenda for the period 2020-2040, promoting policy that follows three principal directives. Policy designed under the aegis of the Action Plan should be integrative, bringing together several sectors of urban development in coherent long-term visions; it should be evidence-based and science-led, making ample use of local and international knowledge partnerships, with a marked role for universities and research institutes; and finally, it must be participatory, with a focus on citizen engagement.

While these policy directions may seem generic, they follow a number of international and European policy frameworks that guide the more specific actions proposed in the Action Plan, including notably the European Commission Better Regulation Framework,<sup>28</sup> the Charter for Multilevel Governance in Europe<sup>29</sup> and EU Cohesion Policy,<sup>30</sup> all European frameworks for good governance. These and many other frameworks used in the UfM Action Plan reveal a European bias in international policy making

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28 "Commission Staff Working Document: Better Regulation Guidelines," EC, 2017, accessed 20 March, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/10102/2017/EN/SWD-2017-350-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>; "Better Regulation: taking stock and sustaining our commitment," European Commission, 2019, accessed 10 December, 2019, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/better-regulation-taking-stock\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/better-regulation-taking-stock_en_0.pdf).

29 "Charter for Multilevel governance in Europe," EU, 2014, accessed 10 January, 2020, <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/mlgcharter/Pages/MLG-charter.aspx>.

30 "Cohesion Policy 2014-2020: Integrated Sustainable Urban Development," European Commission, 2014, accessed 12 December, 2019, [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/urban\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/urban_en.pdf).

that is underscored by the sheer strength of the European Union as an organisation that has invested heavily in understanding how it can improve all levels of governance in its jurisdiction.

Even if the degree of European coordination is arguably not ideal, the EU has produced a vast array of tools to improve and enhance territorial coordination. Integrated territorial investment is one of the main instruments for European integration.<sup>31</sup> These notions were integrated in the Action Plan, although the lack of specific investment mechanisms (these are connected to donors and to the EU) makes this Action Plan fundamentally different from the European Cohesion Policy structured around several sectoral investment funds (the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)). Cohesion Policy is an exercise in metagovernance, a concept we explore further, in which coordination, integration and rationalised results are guaranteed through a series of steps in which objectives are set by Member States in shared management with the European Commission. Member States also establish implementation and oversight mechanisms, involving a huge number of stakeholders at various levels and sectors, fueling a process of multi-level governance that combines elements of market governance, networked governance and hierarchic governance<sup>32</sup> with concrete territorial outcomes.

Despite a lack of direct financial mechanisms, the Action Plan seeks to bring about the convergence of territorial development values and standards around the Mediterranean by using urbanisation as a motor for action, in line with SDG 11. It does so through a spatial planning perspective, complemented by the adoption of common definitions and vocabulary (alongside local definitions), collection of comparable data, common efforts in capacity building and education and the formulation of comparable policy frameworks at national (National Urban Plans) and local levels (Integrated City Development Strategies), with respect for national trajectories, traditions, and path dependencies. However, the idea of convergence itself is controversial. Despite some shared history, the countries in the Mediterranean have markedly distinct levels of economic and human development and a history of colonisation by European powers that makes any effort to “converge” be seen with caution.

The notion of convergence used to draft the Action Plan is well explained in the momentous report by the World Bank aptly titled “Convergence: Five Critical Steps toward Integrating Lagging and Leading Areas in the Middle

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31 “Integrated Territorial Investments as an effective tool of the Cohesion Policy,” European Parliament, Policy Department D for Budgetary Affairs, 2019, accessed 10 January, 2020, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2019/636472/IPOL\\_IDA\(2019\)636472\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2019/636472/IPOL_IDA(2019)636472_EN.pdf).

32 Meuleman, *Metagovernance for Sustainability: A Framework for Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*.

East and North Africa”.<sup>33</sup> This powerful and eloquent document advances the idea that territorial convergence counteracts rising spatial disparities and that “governments can take the lead by tackling the economic and institutional causes of spatial exclusion”, claiming that “opportunities for your citizens are shaped by accidents of where they were born—much more so than in any other part of the world”. Territorial convergence here means integrating lagging and leading areas of the region, both nationally and regionally, and making opportunities more widely available for citizens. The report proposes a set of five actions that would engender a “convergence machine” in the MENA region: strengthening coordination complementarities across sectoral interventions; redistributing roles and responsibilities across tiers of government; enabling greater mobility of people between lagging and leading areas; building dense and connected cities; and finally enhancing market access for lagging areas, nationally and regionally.<sup>34</sup>

The notion of convergence is supported in the Action Plan by the adoption of principles of territorial metagovernance, inspired by work by Louis Meuleman,<sup>35</sup> policy and governance advisor for the European Commission and member of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA), described by economist Predrag Bejakovic as

Metagovernance or the governing of governing is a means by which a society attempts to establish some degree of coordinated governance. The goal is to achieve the best possible outcome from the viewpoint of those responsible for the performance of public sector organisations. The intention is to establish values in such a way that they become accepted norms. The fact that norms can be established at any level and can then be used to form the governance process as a whole means that metagovernance is part of both the input and the output of the governing system.<sup>36</sup>

For Meuleman, metagovernance means a situational, context-specific, and dynamic coordination of three different styles of governance taking place in different sectors and across scales: hierarchic governance, networked governance, and market governance. These three “styles” of governance are more or less common in different countries and cultural contexts, and more or less effective in different sectors, but are all useful and necessary for integrated territorial development.

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33 World Bank, “Convergence: Five Critical Steps toward Integrating Lagging and Leading Areas in the Middle East and North Africa.”

34 World Bank, “Convergence: Five Critical Steps toward Integrating Lagging and Leading Areas in the Middle East and North Africa,” 18.

35 Meuleman, *Metagovernance for Sustainability: A Framework for Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*.

36 Predrag Bejakovic, “Book Review of Metagovernance for Sustainability: A Framework for Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, by Louis Meuleman,” *Public Sector Economics* 43, no. 1 (2019): 110.

Meuleman reminds us that “Governance is not the content of policies (what to do?) or about the vision behind policies (why do it?) but concentrates on how to achieve objectives. [...] Governance therefore includes polity (the institutions and instruments) and politics (the processes)”.<sup>37</sup> These ideas are central for the UfM Action Plan, a governance framework that addresses the realities of so many different countries with varying degrees of economic development, public sector capacity and degrees of civic engagement. The actions proposed in the Action Plan are therefore not focused on specific policies, which ought to be formulated at the national level, but focused on creating the conditions for the coordination and convergence of capacities, values, and visions, in hopes of creating territorial cohesion via increased cooperation and institutional learning.

These ideas are expressed in the mechanics of the plan through the interaction of six mutually reinforcing actions happening simultaneously (Fig. 1), relatively independently and organised according to local capacity and political culture.



FIG. 1 Action Wheel, UfM Strategic Action Plan for Sustainable Urbanisation. Credits: the Authors.

The Action Plan adopts the concept of metagovernance and expands it to “territorial metagovernance”, in which networked multi-level governance is connected to spatial planning to create the conditions for the adop-

<sup>37</sup> Meuleman, *Metagovernance for Sustainability: A Framework for Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*, 22.

tion of common values and norms both within countries and across the Mediterranean. In other words, the Action Plan is conceptualized from the point of view of spatial planning, in which different governance styles are combined in an explicit spatial perspective. The objective is to create conditions for cities, regions, and countries to converge in terms of development objectives, indicators and actions. It seems self-evident to us that such convergence, if carried out with respect and regard for national traditions and historical path dependencies, might prove beneficial in helping the MENA region to move towards sustainable, democratic, inclusive urban and regional development, addressing the UN SDGs and the specific objectives of the UfM and its Urban Agenda.

Beyond the UfM Urban Agenda, the Action Plan builds upon several policy frameworks. A non-exhaustive list of 45 main frameworks, declarations and pacts were used in the making of the plan (see annex 1), from a total of roughly 125 policy documents used in the drafting process. These documents underscored, structured and justified parts of the text. From the 45 documents, 21 (47%) are global in scope, 14 (31%) are European in scope, 6 (13,5%) are transnational/ regional (Mediterranean) and only three (6,5%) originate in the MENA region or have it as the main object. The sources of most global scope documents are the UN, UN-Habitat, OECD, and UNESCO (see Annex 1). European documents are mostly conceived by the European Commission. The Commission and UfM itself are the sources of most documents with a transnational or regional scope. The documents originating in the MENA are the Cairo Declaration on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development,<sup>38</sup> a second Cairo Declaration: Development Challenges and Population Dynamics in a Changing Arab World<sup>39</sup> and the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030.<sup>40</sup>

There is a notable prevalence of European frameworks that are central to the Action Plan, such as the ENP;<sup>41</sup> the Charter for Multilevel Governance for Europe,<sup>42</sup> European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage,<sup>43</sup> the EC "Better Regulation Framework" included in the document "Better Regulation: taking stock and sustaining our commitment" and the European Green Deal. This prevalence is due to several intertwining factors, including most notably the influential role of Europe in innovative policymak-

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38 "Cairo Declaration On Housing, and Sustainable Urban Development," UN-Habitat, 2015, accessed 10 July, 2020, [https://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/Cairo%20declaration\\_EN.pdf](https://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/Cairo%20declaration_EN.pdf).

39 "Cairo Declaration: Development Challenges and Population Dynamics in a Changing Arab World," UNFPA, 2013, accessed 15 July, 2020, [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/Cairo\\_Declaration\\_English.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/Cairo_Declaration_English.pdf).

40 "Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030," League of Arab States, 2017, accessed 15 July, 2020, <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2017/05/Arab-Strategy-English.pdf>.

41 European Commission, "European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)."

42 European Committee of the Regions (CoR), "Charter for Multilevel governance in Europe."

43 "European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage," EC, 2019, accessed 10 March, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/culture/content/european-framework-action-cultural-heritage\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/culture/content/european-framework-action-cultural-heritage_en).

ing. We can list a wealth of policy frameworks created by the European Commission, including strategic frameworks that are ground-breaking and unique, such as the European Pillar of Social Rights,<sup>44</sup> the Better Regulation Toolbox<sup>45</sup> and the Just Transition Mechanism.<sup>46</sup> These and other frameworks are exceptional because of their innovative focus and scope, and because they strongly incorporate notions of social sustainability and social justice. This is a welcome shift away from policy focused on growth and competitiveness or on environmental preservation in a way that is disconnected from social sustainability. We cannot discount the authors' own cultural biases and linguistic limitations.

Although documents in French and Spanish were used in the making of the Plan, the list of 44 main policy frameworks contains only documents that are available in English, even if some of them were originally written in other languages. Further study is necessary to assess the effects of linguistic bias in policy making. Marc-Lluís Vives, M. Aparici, and Albert Costa<sup>47</sup> discuss how language affects decision-making, but there seems to be little written about the effects of a language domain in policy formation. This is different from studies of the predominance of Anglo-Saxon literature in planning and policy making and the influence of culture on decision-making. Most policy frameworks used in the SAP are the result of multi-state engagement, but we cannot discount bias resulting from a lack of knowledge of Arabic, for instance. In fact, the language landscape may have had a considerable effect on policy formation. In addition, UNESCO had a significant role in the drafting of the plan, as a vocal partner in the drafting and review process. It has made sure the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape<sup>48</sup> and other UNESCO frameworks permeate several aspects of the plan. An updated version of the Leipzig Charter<sup>49</sup> has had an impact as well.

The UfM Action Plan inscribes itself in the recently increasing number of policy frameworks, which have also influenced the writing of the UfM Action Plan. Sixteen documents (35.5%) were published in 2019-2020 and 35 (77.5%) were published in the period 2015-2020). The only two doc-

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44 "European Pillar of Social Rights," European Commission, 2017, accessed 20 January, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/european-pillar-social-rights-booklet\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en).

45 "Better Regulation Toolbox," EC, 2019, accessed 15 July, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/better-regulation-toolbox\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/better-regulation-toolbox_en).

46 "The Just Transition Mechanism: Making Sure No One Is Left Behind," EC, 2020, accessed 10 June, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs\\_20\\_39](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs_20_39).

47 Marc Lluís Vives, Melina Aparici, and Albert Costa, "The limits of the foreign language effect on decision-making: The case of the outcome bias and the representativeness heuristic," *PLoS ONE* 13, no. 9 (2018).

48 "Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape," UNESCO, 2011, accessed 1 January, 2019, <https://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-638-98.pdf>.

49 "The New Leipzig Charter: The transformative power of cities for the common good," Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat, 2020, accessed 10 March, 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new\\_leipzig\\_charter/new\\_leipzig\\_charter\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new_leipzig_charter/new_leipzig_charter_en.pdf).

uments published in the 20th century are the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage<sup>50</sup> and the Barcelona Declaration<sup>51</sup> is the trigger document for the whole process leading to the Action Plan. The degree to which such policy frameworks have impact in the diverse nations around the Mediterranean remains to be seen. Even though the plan benefitted from scientific knowledge and carries scientific authority, that has not necessarily made it possible to translate into political action. Challenges in translating recommendations into action result from the particular structure of the UfM as an intergovernmental organization with a mission to promote dialogue and cooperation, but without concrete political power.

## Challenges in implementing the Action Plan

Internal contradictions and challenges involved in implementing the UfM Action Plan and ensuring compliance are connected to the Eurocentric nature of many of the frameworks used in the Plan. Factors not efficiently addressed include the following: the divergent planning traditions and capacities that make it unlikely that countries will be able to implement measures consistently, the impact of informal institutions that vary widely across the countries of the Mediterranean, and the lack of a financial mechanism underscoring the actions of the Plan, which make it somewhat “toothless” and reliant on voluntary adhesion and compliance. Here, the notion of metagovernance is crucial because it presumes flexibility and adaptability to local conditions and local governance styles, which means that a further step must be taken by Member States to translate the principles of the Plan to local contexts and local capacities. Below we list the hurdles systematically.

### Eurocentrism

We have addressed some of the causes of the prevalence of European policy frameworks in the Strategic Action Plan. The effects of this prevalence are less clear. These policy frameworks rely on the existence of stable liberal democracies, with strong rule of law, strong institutions, and active civil societies. Several countries in the MENA region struggle with weak democratic institutions and several have autocratic or repressive regimes, where the rule of law is weak and where civil society organisations are commonly suppressed.

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50 “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,” 7th Session UNESCO General Conference UNESCO, 1972, accessed November, 2019, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>.

51 European Commission, “Barcelona Declaration.”



## Divergent planning traditions

Urban and regional planning traditions<sup>52</sup> diverge in important ways in the region, with anecdotal evidence suggesting the prevalence of an “urbanism/design” tradition around the Mediterranean basin. The French *École des Ponts et Chaussées* technical/design approach to urbanism has influenced many of the countries in the MENA region, while the UK’s policy-based tradition has influenced others. Several countries exhibit strong market-based approaches, and several countries have very weak capacity for coordinated territorial planning and design.

## The lack of financial incentives

At UfM’s inception, Member States ministers agreed to set a structured framework for cooperation, through the creation of a UfM Regional Platform on Sustainable Urban Development, its thematic platforms and working groups, as well as through the organization of the UfM-IFIs (International Financial Institutions) Urban Development Project Committee Meetings. This resulted in enhanced policy dialogue among UfM Member States, financial institutions, regional organisations and stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, and it resulted in several concrete projects and initiatives.<sup>53</sup> Along with the UfM Regional Platform, the UfM Secretariat organises the UfM-IFIs Urban Project Committee, which is aimed at exchanging views with the IFIs and key partners of the UfM region concerning the funding of the labelled and potential projects for future labelling in the field of urban development, particularly by exploring innovative, coordinated financing approaches and mechanisms, as well as cooperative multi-donor strategies and partnerships at the regional level. Nonetheless, the financial mechanisms underscoring most proposals in the SAP are unclear and are the object of further negotiation. Implementation of the SAP can become difficult if no structural funds are associated with it.<sup>54</sup>

## The need for thematic approaches

The UfM Action Plan has been refined through an axis on housing. Other specific axes are needed, such as a focus on the shared challenges of sea and land, and of ports, port cities and their forelands and hinterlands around the Mediterranean. This is particularly important as water sites, port and industrial areas lack multi-level and multi-stakeholder public

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52 Nadin, V., & Stead, D. (2008). European Spatial Planning Systems, Social Models and Learning. *disP: The Planning Review*, 44(172), 35-47.

53 “The UfM launches the First Platform on Sustainable Urban Development,” UfM, 2017, accessed 10 September, 2020, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/first-platform-sustainable-urban-development/>.

54 UfM, “The UfM launches the First Platform on Sustainable Urban Development.”

representation and are often determined by select corporate and public actors.<sup>55</sup> The Action Plan needs to recognize existing initiatives of the EU to establish ports as engines of growth<sup>56</sup> and to develop policy recommendations for the integration of urban nodes in European transportation networks.<sup>57</sup> The Action Plan should recognize the importance of infrastructural connectivity; it also should focus on sea-land intersection and emphasize port-city integration, fore-and hinterland connection and the role that ports can play in sustainable and just development.

## The bearing of informal institutions

The ensemble of relationships and interactions that define planning practice can only exist in legal (formal) frameworks, in which laws, regulations, rules and contracts are established. Formal rules and regulations define forms of policymaking and policy performance; forms of association and cooperation between public, private and civic actors; forms of attribution of responsibility, accountability and control. However, there is another realm that must be considered next to formal rules: informal institutions and practices.

North<sup>58</sup> claims that one reason colonisers failed to implement significant societal change in the direction they desired when they sought simply to change existing institutions or to establish new institutions in colonised societies was their “disregard of conventions, norms, mores and traditions commonly followed by members of these societies”.<sup>59</sup> “Formulated differently: the informal institutions prevalent in a society might constitute a binding constraint on attempts to reform a society’s formal institutions”.<sup>60</sup> In other words, it is not just formal institutions that matter in policy transfer: informal institutions matter too, as they can have an enormous bearing on governance arrangements. Furthermore, informal institutions interact with formal institutions in a myriad of ways, and not always to the detriment of change.

Informal institutions influence policy goals and tools, as well as the procedures and outcomes of planning practice. This is relevant because Informal institutions are likely to have a strong bearing on governance arrangements and might influence any attempt of coordination, increasing transaction costs and disrupting implementation. These informal institutions and practices are rather interwoven with formal practices, with

55 “European ports: an engine for growth,” 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/infographics\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/infographics_en).

56 EU Commission, “European ports: an engine for growth.”

57 “Methodology,” 2020, <https://vitalnodes.eu/>.

58 D. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

59 Stefan Voigt, “How to measure informal institutions,” *Journal of Institutional Economics* 14, no. 1 (2018): 1.

60 Ibid.

which they establish relationships of collaboration and conflict, action, and reaction, with expected and unexpected outcomes. Formal rules and regulations are therefore important in terms of what relationships they encourage or discourage. Formal rules also define the conditions and forums of discussion and negotiation between different actors, but they do not always define how actors interact. It is obviously not possible to map and describe all informal institutions having an impact on governance failure or success around the Mediterranean, but it is crucial to acknowledge that informal institutions vary across countries in the region, with informal arrangements ranging from religion-based organisation to traditionally organised social networks. Examples of informal arrangements and institutions are not confined to the MENA region, but have a significant bearing on Europe as well, with challenges to successful policy transfer arising on both shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Informal institutions are notoriously difficult to map and characterise, which puts even more emphasis on a governance style that is adaptive and locally bound and that can negotiate differences. Again, and at the risk of repeating ourselves, a further translation step is necessary when implementing a transnational policy framework to adapt it to local conditions and local governance environments.

The UfM Strategic Action Plan is a clear example of a transnational policy framework that demands national translation. It is important to highlight that a policy framework is not a policy, but a governance instrument. This is a case of policy diffusion or policy innovation, as conceptualised by Dolowitz and Marsh,<sup>61</sup> encompassing “both ‘voluntary’ and ‘coercive’ forms of practice, noting that the latter can occur when ‘one government or supra-national institution [is] pushing, or even forcing another’ to adopt a set of policy innovations”.<sup>62</sup> While UfM action in the Euro-Mediterranean region might be cynically conceived as an attempt to extend EU influence over the region to ensure political stability and access to resources, the authors believe the issue is more complex than “institutional colonisation” and policy transfer here will happen only through a long process of integration and dialogue via the Barcelona Process.

Policy translation must happen at the national level and that may result in a failure to adopt parts of the plan, especially if flexible and adaptive management and implementation capacity are still need to be developed. An example of the hurdles faced is the lack of a citizen engagement tradition in the MENA region, where decisions are generally taken by authoritative and highly technocratic bureaucracies, in mostly hierarchic governance environments that fail to effectively incorporate market and networked governance styles. This is why training and capacity strengthening are so central in the Plan, in the hopes of triggering a transformation in the

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61 David P. Dolowitz and David March, “Who Learns What from Whom? A Review of the Policy Transfer Literature,” *Political Studies* 44, no. 2 (1996).

62 David Benson and Andrew Jordan, “What Have We Learned from Policy Transfer Research? Dolowitz and Marsh Revisited,” *Political Studies Review* 9, no. 1 (2011): 367.

education of the next generation of MENA managers, spatial planners and policy makers. Such education can be key to creating a better understanding among different stakeholders in the policy process.

The process of drafting the UfM Action Plan also raises questions about the potential impact and contribution of scientific actors, such as the authors of the article, in the political process. While academics can provide independent advice, they may lack access to all relevant political decision-makers. They also may work on different time scales than representatives of governmental and intergovernmental organisations that depend on short-term political support. Facilitating collaboration and ensuring that scientific knowledge is included in policymaking, including in the field of spatial planning, requires consideration of the different temporalities, mandates and power structures of academic institutions, national governments, and intergovernmental organisations.

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## Annex 1

### Non-exhaustive list of policy frameworks used in the elaboration of the UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan

Policy frameworks are listed chronologically.

1. (1972) The 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage
2. (1995) The Barcelona Declaration
3. (2008) Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean
4. (2009) Integrated Urban Water Management: Arid and Semi-Arid Regions
5. (2009) UN-Habitat The Right to Adequate Housing
6. (2011) The 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape
7. (2011) The SWITCH (Sustainable Water Improves Tomorrow's Cities Health) Transition Manual: Managing Water for the City of the Future
8. (2014) Charter for Multilevel Governance for Europe
9. (2014) The policy framework "Cohesion Policy 2014-2020: Integrated Sustainable Urban Development"
10. (2015) Cairo Declaration on Housing, and Sustainable Urban Development
11. (2015) Cairo Declaration: Development Challenges and Population Dynamics in a Changing Arab World
12. (2015) The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (with a focus on Goal 11)
13. (2015) The Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing
14. (2015) The Paris Agreement
15. (2016) European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)
16. (2016) The New Urban Agenda
17. (2016) The OECD Better Policies for 2030: An OECD Action Plan on the Sustainable Development Goals
18. (2016) The Pact of Amsterdam. An Urban Agenda for the EU
19. (2016) Urban Water Agenda
20. (2017) The Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030
21. (2017) The Report "My Region, My Europe, Our Future: Seventh report on economic, social and territorial cohesion"
22. (2017) The Union for the Mediterranean Urban Agenda
23. (2018) Davos Declaration: Towards a high-quality Baukultur for Europe
24. (2018) Policy Guidelines for Affordable Housing in European Cities
25. (2018) Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (COP 15 to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020)
26. (2018) The Housing Partnership Action Plan of the Urban Agenda for the EU

27. (2018) United Nations Secretary-General's Plan: Water Action Decade 2018-2028
28. (2019) An updated version of the Leipzig Charter (in preparation)
29. (2019) European Commission Explanatory Memo: European Urban Initiative- Post 2020
30. (2019) Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
31. (2019) The Discussion Paper on the "UfM Action Plan on Affordable and Sustainable Housing" produced by the UfM Thematic Working Group on Affordable and Sustainable Housing (draft)
32. (2019) The EC "Better Regulation Framework" included in the document "Better Regulation: taking stock and sustaining our commitment"
33. (2019) The European Green Deal <sup>62</sup>
34. (2019) The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development .
35. (2019) The Reflection Paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030"
36. (2019) UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Guiding Principles
37. (2019) Urban Disaster Resilience through Risk Assessment and Sustainable Planning (UD-RASP)
38. (2019) The New Strategic Orientation of UN-Habitat
39. (2020) European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage
40. (2020) OECD Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals
41. (2020) The AIVP (The worldwide network of port cities) Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Port Cities
42. (2020) UN-Habitat Mainstreaming Urban-Rural linkages in National Urban Policies
43. (2020) United Nations World Water Development Report 2020: Water and Climate Change

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63 Initiatives announced in the political guidelines:

Legislative proposals • European Climate Law • Proposal to extend the EU Emissions Trading System to the maritime sector and reduce the free allowances allocated to airlines over time; and to extend this further to cover traffic and construction • Carbon Border Tax • Review of the Energy Taxation Directive \* Strategies and Action Plans • New industrial strategy • Strategy for green financing and a Sustainable Europe Investment Plan • Comprehensive plan to increase the EU emissions reduction target for 2030 towards 55 % • 'Farm to Fork Strategy' on sustainable food along the whole value chain • Cross-cutting strategy to protect citizens' health from environmental degradation and pollution • Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 • New Circular Economy Action Plan; tackling micro-plastics\* Financing instruments • New Just Transition Fund • Proposal to turn parts of the European Investment Bank into Europe's climate bank \* Non-legislative initiatives • European Climate Pact • Lead the world at the 2020 Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.