



7 February 2022

ARLEM Activity Report

2021

2021 remained a year characterised by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the entire world. Therefore, most of the meetings that took place were held via video conferences or in a hybrid mode, and while many of them focused on fighting the effects of the pandemic – on health, social systems or the economy – in the societies around the Mediterranean, others focused on future challenges the area is facing. Despite the odds, in 2021, the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) continued its work on the following priorities as per the ARLEM action plan 2020-2022.

1. Sustainable economic development

- **22 February, Brussels (via videoconference):** the third *ARLEM Award – Young local entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean* ceremony took place at the 12th ARLEM plenary session. Erilda Krasi of 1001 Albanian Adventures, a tour operator based in the city of Berat (Albania), won the award, beating contenders from nearly two dozen other young, small businesses from around the Mediterranean. The work of [1001 Albanian Adventures](#) is considered an example of sustainable and responsible tourism that helps to regenerate the local economic fabric and urban environment. The company promotes walking and cycling tours and camping, and since 2017 has developed a number of projects focused on eco- and agro-tourism and on environmental protection, including running clean-up campaigns and installing litter bins. The company's strong commitment to the local community is reflected in its *Solidarity Shop Berat*, which sells products made by people with special needs and other disadvantaged groups, as well as goods produced by local farmers and artisans. The city of Berat has several projects through which it seeks to support small enterprises in the tourism sector, with activities such as workshops, fairs, and shows. It also works with schools and young people to develop an interest in the tourism sector. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in Albania and the EU delegation to Albania announced, based on the outcome of the award, that the 1001 Albanian Adventures could join the EBRD's Tourism-Led Model for Local Economic Development Support Programme in Albania. The programme, which is partly funded by the EU, is currently running pilot projects in four locations, including Berat.
- **25 May, Barcelona (via videoconference):** the ARLEM secretariat attended the launch of the [Progress Report 2021 on Regional Integration](#) in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).
- **12 October, Brussels (via videoconference):** the ARLEM workshop during the European Week of Regions and Cities focused on *Funding for local and regional authorities in Mediterranean partner countries*. Chaired by Nikola Dobroslavić, President of Dubrovnik-Neretva Region (Croatia) and ARLEM member, the workshop, at the beginning of the EU's new long-term budget period (MFF 2021-2027), provided an update on the funding available to local and regional authorities in Mediterranean partner countries ahead of the publication (in English, French and Arabic) of the [practical guide](#) by the European Committee of the Regions on this important topic. The workshop was attended by representatives of the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and the author of the publication.
- **19-21 October, Tel Aviv:** Christophe Rouillon, Mayor of Coullaines Municipality (France) and ARLEM member, took part in the [MUNI WORLD](#) Conference organised by the Federation of

Local Authorities in Israel to discuss the key challenges and threats facing Smart Cities around the Mediterranean.

- **26 October, Brussels (via videoconference):** José Enrique Millo Rocher, Secretary-General of External Action of the Government of Andalusia (alternate to the ARLEM rapporteur, representing the Association of European Border Regions), presented the draft report on *Innovation ecosystems and start-ups in the Mediterranean as a means to recover from the COVID-19 crisis* at the 7th meeting of ARLEM's Commission for Sustainable Territorial Development.
- **26 October, Brussels (via videoconference):** ARLEM rapporteur Mohamed Boudra, Mayor of Al Hoceima (Morocco) of the Mediterranean Partners Group, presented his draft report on *Service sector reorientation: transferring skills from the tourism sector* at the 7th meeting of ARLEM's Commission for Sustainable Territorial Development.

2. Climate action in the Mediterranean

- **2 February, Barcelona (via videoconference):** ARLEM rapporteur Vincenzo Bianco (IT/PES) presented key recommendations of his report on the blue economy in the Mediterranean to the UfM co-presidency, ministers and other representatives of UfM member states at the [2nd UfM ministerial conference on sustainable blue economy](#).
- **25 February, Brussels (via videoconference):** the ARLEM secretariat participated in the meeting of the UfM ad hoc Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on the Blue Economy.
- **28 April, Brussels (via videoconference):** the ARLEM secretariat took part in the UfM Working Group on Water.
- **29 April, Brussels (via videoconference):** ARLEM rapporteurs Agnès Rampal (FR/EPP) and Vincenzo Bianco (IT/PES) took part in the meeting of the [Green Deal Going Local working group](#) to stress the importance of expanding the European Green Deal to the EU's Southern Neighbourhood.
- **27 May, Barcelona (via videoconference):** the ARLEM secretariat participated in the 5th Meeting of the UfM Task Force on Environment.
- **14 June, Lisbon (via videoconference):** Vincenzo Bianco (IT/PES), CoR rapporteur on the *Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean* participated in the UfM Ministerial Conference on Energy to present ARLEM's work in the field of energy. The Conference was the occasion to adopt the [3rd UfM Ministerial Declaration on Energy](#) where local and regional authorities are mentioned as actors in the implementation and follow-up of its measures.

- **15-16 June, Brussels (via videoconference):** the European Committee of the Regions had a digital stand at the [European Development Days](#) with members actively participating. The focus of the 2021 edition was on *The Green Deal for a Sustainable Future*.
- **23 June, Brussels (via videoconference):** the ARLEM secretariat took part in the UfM ad-hoc SOM on environment and climate action to prepare the incoming UfM Ministerial Conference on the topic.
- **30 June (Brussels):** the European Committee of the Regions 145th plenary adopted its opinion entitled [Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean](#) drafted by Vincenzo Bianco, member of Catania Municipal Council (Italy). This opinion is the CoR contribution to the Joint Communication by HR/VP Borrell and Commissioner Várhelyi adopted on 9 February and focuses on the important role that LRAs can play in the implementation of this ambitious agenda as drivers for territorial development close to the public, in particular on topics such as the green transition but also women's empowerment or economic development. It therefore calls for the involvement of local and regional authorities as key factors for sustainable development and partners in planning and implementing the new Agenda.
- **6 July (via videoconference):** following up the ARLEM report on *agriculture and food security in climate sensitive areas in the Mediterranean*, ARLEM rapporteur Agnès Rampal (FR/EPP) spoke at the first meeting of the AGRIMED TaskForce on *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Sovereignty* coordinated by the Intermediterranean Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (IMC-CPMR) in collaboration with the Région Sud (France) to develop an observatory and a specific label for the Mediterranean diet.
- **4 October, Egypt:** ARLEM and CoR rapporteur Vincenzo Bianco, member of Catania Municipal Council (Italy) took part in the [UfM ministerial meeting on environment and climate change](#).

Other activities

- **5 February, Brussels:** the [16th ARLEM Newsletter](#) was published.
- **25 February, Brussels (via videoconference):** the ARLEM secretariat participated in the UfM's senior officials meeting.
- **26 March, Strasbourg (via videoconference):** Christophe Rouillon, Mayor of Coullaines Municipality (France) and ARLEM member took part in the Bureau of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.
- **27 May, Brussels:** the [17th ARLEM Newsletter](#) was published.

- **17 June, Brussels (via videoconference):** the ARLEM secretariat participated in the UfM's senior officials meeting.
- **2 July, Strasbourg (via videoconference):** Christophe Rouillon, Mayor of Coulines Municipality (France) and ARLEM member took part in the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.
- **19 October, Brussels:** the [18th ARLEM Newsletter](#) was published.
- **21 October, Brussels (via videoconference):** the ARLEM secretariat participated in the UfM's senior officials meeting.
- **22 October (via videoconference):** Béatrice Taulègne (on behalf of ARLEM) sat on the international evaluation jury to assess cities' entries for the Anna Lindh Foundation's 2021 Euromed Capital of Dialogue Award.
- **27 October, Barcelona:** together with the UfM, Medcities and other partners, ARLEM joined in the organisation of the workshop *City to city cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region – successful practices and promising frameworks*.
- **12 November, Valencia:** Christophe Rouillon, Mayor of Coulines Municipality (France) and ARLEM member attended the IX meeting of [MCA Foundation](#) (*Mediterranean Citizen's assembly foundation*), participating in the conference on *From a divided Mediterranean to a shared Mediterranean: a decade of citizens' resistance*.
- **29 November 2021, Barcelona:** ARLEM vice-president André Viola, member of the Departmental Council of Aude (France), addressed the co-presidency of the Union for the Mediterranean and ministers of foreign affairs at the [UfM Sixth Regional Forum](#) held in the framework of the celebrations of the Day of the Mediterranean of 28 November. The meeting was an opportunity to share an overview of the progress made since the adoption of the UfM Roadmap for Action in 2017, and within the priorities decided last year, in 5 areas of action where the UfM can play a crucial role in achieving an inclusive and sustainable post-pandemic recovery, namely environmental and climate action, sustainable and inclusive economic and human development, social inclusiveness and equality, digital transformation and civil protection. Mr Viola highlighted ARLEM's role in these different fields, mentioning for example the ARLEM Award which since 2019 had made it possible to showcase successful examples of youth entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean region as an inspiration to others. He also mentioned the Nicosia Initiative which since 2015 had been helping improve public services in Libya but also helping them to enter the international community through peer-to-peer cooperation, a model that had now been extended to other areas of the neighbourhood. In the concluding statement, the UfM co-presidency stated explicitly that ARLEM had to continue to play its role in amplifying the voices of local and regional authorities and promoting an area-based approach to Euro-Mediterranean sectoral policies.

- **28 November (various locations):** ARLEM members organised different events and initiatives to mark the first International Day of the Mediterranean.
- **30 November (via videoconference):** Béatrice Taulègne (on behalf of ARLEM) participated in the ceremony for the [Anna Lindh Foundation's 2021 Euromed Capital of Dialogue Award](#), where the award winners were announced: Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Limassol in Cyprus.
- **1 December (via videoconference):** Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis participated in the Conference organised by the Standing Committee for the Euro Mediterranean Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities ([COPPEM](#)) and the region of Sicily for the Day of the Mediterranean on the Role of Regions, Governorates and Cities in the geopolitical future of the Euro-Mediterranean area.
- **9 and 10 December, Lisbon:** Christophe Rouillon, Mayor of Coullaines Municipality (France) and ARLEM member participated in the 27th Lisbon Forum of the Centre North-South of the Council of Europe focusing on intercultural dialogue in the infodemic era.
- **9 December, Brussels (via videoconference):** the ARLEM secretariat participated in the UfM's senior officials meeting.

Nicosia Initiative for Libyan local authorities (supported by the Delegation of the European Union to Libya): The Nicosia Initiative is a concrete example of peer-to-peer cooperation which has been helping create trust and keep an internal dialogue open among local authorities.

- **1 January:** the TAMSALL initiative, worth EUR 3 500 000, was launched and will last for 33 months. It aims to strengthen institutional and administrative capacity based on a multilevel governance process.
- **1 April:** the REBUILD initiative, worth EUR 4 200 000, was launched. It will run for a period of four years and will focus on the extension of the continuous learning programme already developed.
- **15-16 June:** the Nicosia Initiative (with both projects) was presented at the European Committee of the Regions' stand at the European Development Days.
- **7 September:** representatives from the European Committee of the Regions participated in the first TAMSALL Project Steering Committee Meeting.
- **27 October, Barcelona:** together with the UfM, Medcities and other partners, ARLEM joined in the organisation of the workshop *City to city cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region – successful practices and promising frameworks*. Representatives from the European Committee of the Regions presented the Nicosia Initiative and several participants responded by highlighting how this could be a model of cooperation.

- **9-10 December, Rome:** the European Committee of the Regions Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX) held its external seminar in Rome on *Building territorial partnerships: The experience of local and regional authorities in the Nicosia Initiative to support Libyan municipalities*, together with the Italian association of local authorities (ANCI).

Cities and Regions for Development Cooperation Forum

- **29-30 November, Brussels (via videoconference):** Seventh edition of the Cities and Regions for Development Cooperation Forum, focusing on sustainable and green recovery, participatory citizenship and good governance.

ARLEM statutory meetings 2021

- 22 February, Brussels (via videoconference): 25th meeting of the ARLEM Bureau
 - 22 February, Brussels (via videoconference): 12th ARLEM plenary session
 - 20 April, Brussels (via videoconference): 26th meeting of the ARLEM Bureau
 - 26 October, Brussels (hybrid format): 7th meeting of ARLEM's Commission for Sustainable Territorial Development
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