



EuroMeSCo Annual Conference 2022
Towards more social justice and inclusiveness in the Mediterranean

CALL FOR PAPERS: Addressing vulnerabilities, mainstreaming inclusiveness in public policy reforms in Tunisia

In a context of economic recession and structural imbalances which have been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the political deadlock since July 25, 2021, Tunisia has witnessed a rise in poverty and structural inequalities. The livelihoods of the most vulnerable social groups, such as informal workers and NEETs, youth, children and the elderly, as well as women, people with disabilities, and rural populations, have been extremely impacted. The living conditions of both displaced persons within Tunisia and migrants have likewise worsened. The pandemic has also unveiled new forms of vulnerability that call for a rethink of the definition/measurement of vulnerability for more effective and inclusive social responses and has uncovered previously invisible forms of vulnerability in some of the most marginalised regions of the country.

The double crisis of the pandemic and the more recent Ukraine war has revealed the shortcomings of Tunisia's social protection system, paired with the crisis' repercussions on all aspects of life (from health and education to housing and the rising risk of food insecurity) to which vulnerable groups are the most susceptible. Moreover, if not addressed through an optic of inclusion, the digital transformation which peaked amid the pandemic could further widen the gender gap and exacerbate educational inequality and inequalities between rural and urban areas. It could also increase the precarity of gig workers who became more prominent in the aftermath of the pandemic.

It is therefore timely and necessary to devise inclusive public policies for a short and medium term recovery, and to think of both pragmatic and sustainable solutions for a structurally reformed social protection system in Tunisia, while taking into consideration the context of rising digitalisation, carework (paid and unpaid), and food insecurity. In light of this, the EU highlights the need for enhanced support to the deployment of a modern and just social protection system in Tunisia in its [Joint Staff Working Document](#) on a "Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours", with a view to improving the resilience of the most vulnerable people.

To that end, EuroMeSCo calls for researchers and think tankers to analyse and discuss some of the following questions, which can offer a basis for submitted papers:

- 1) How to expand social protection to informal labour and vulnerable communities, and build a sustainable universal social protection system in Tunisia?





- 2) Who are the most vulnerable groups, the new vulnerable groups that arose amid the pandemic, and the invisible vulnerable groups across the different ecosystems of Tunisia's marginalised regions, who should be put center stage while building a universal social protection system?
- 3) What forms of resilience (coping mechanisms, informal social protections) might these vulnerable communities have developed for themselves during the crisis? What are the lessons learned from them? Should any of their community-based initiatives be scaled-up to the national/state-led level, and why?
- 4) What particular considerations should be given to the rise of digitalisation, the gig economy, the care economy, and food insecurity risks while thinking of social protection reforms?
- 5) What is the political economy behind the anti-universality discourse around social protection in Tunisia?
- 6) In a context of a political deadlock and a closed policy sphere, how could the gap between politics and policies be bridged to incrementally make the desired social protection reforms?
- 7) What opportunities does EU-Tunisia cooperation offer to mitigate the impact of the recent crises and build back better towards a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive society? What role can inter-governmental organizations, especially the EU, and international financial institutions play to help Tunisia mitigate the impact of the recent crises and build back a better social protection system for a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive society? What form/s should the development financing scheme take to that end?

In this context and with the same objective, we invite think tankers and researchers to participate in the country event (priority will be given to researchers affiliated to institutes which are members of the EuroMeSCo network).

HOW TO SUBMIT PAPER PROPOSALS?

Please submit your paper proposal of no more than 350 words with the subject line of "Application for EuroMeSCo Annual Conference Call for Papers - Tunisia" to euromesco@iemed.org **and** fill in the online [APPLICATION FORM](#).

Deadline for applications is 26 April 2022, 23:59hrs CET.

The selection process will be completed by **29 April 2022**. All applicants will be notified by e-mail of the results of their application.

Selected authors will be asked to elaborate on the proposal.