

---

# Implementing the EU Pact for the Mediterranean in the Levant with Local Actors

## Workshop Report



## Executive Summary

---

As the Pact for the Mediterranean moves from policy design to implementation, ensuring that regional priorities translate into tangible benefits for communities across the Levant will require approaches that are locally grounded, adaptive and inclusive.

The discussions held in Amman on 8 June 2026 highlighted four interconnected recommendations for its effective implementation:

**1. Adopt an ecosystem approach to livelihoods.** Employment and skills programmes cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader economic, social and institutional environments in which people live. Sustainable livelihoods require investments that address structural barriers such as informality, care responsibilities, mobility constraints and weak labour market absorption capacity.

**2. Build bridges through co-creation and partnerships.** Effective implementation requires stronger connections between policymakers, local organisations, communities, academia and the private sector. Programmes are most effective when they are designed through continuous dialogue and informed by local evidence and labour market realities.

**3. Advance inclusion and localisation.** Communities should not only benefit from programmes but also help shape them. Meaningful participation requires ensuring that vulnerable groups are represented in programme design, feedback mechanisms throughout implementation and in dialogue mechanisms. Local organisations should move beyond implementation roles to become partners in programme design and decision-making.

**4. Enable flexibility in fragile contexts.** The Levant cannot be approached as a homogeneous region. Implementation frameworks must be able to adapt to rapidly changing realities and be supported by flexible funding mechanisms, strong local partnerships and responsive decision-making processes.

# Introduction

---

On 8 June 2026, Anera and the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa (SDI) convened an event in Amman, Jordan, bringing together representatives from European institutions, government representatives, international organisations, civil society organisations, academia, and the private sector to discuss the implementation of the European Union's Pact for the Mediterranean in the Levant. Thematically, the focus was on employability, livelihoods, and investment in education and skills, including vocational training and skills development aligned with labor market needs. Geographically, the focus was on Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, with a couple of participants coming from Türkiye and Qatar.

The discussions came upon a rapidly evolving regional landscape, marked by protracted conflicts, economic uncertainty, displacement, and growing pressures on labour markets. Across Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, unemployment, limited access to decent work, and widening inequalities continue to undermine prospects for economic inclusion, particularly among young people and women. The launch of the Pact for the Mediterranean has created an opportunity to rethink partnerships and discuss how a regional policy framework can effectively meet local realities and needs.

The event created a space for dialogue between policymakers and practitioners on how the EU Pact for the Mediterranean's priorities related to livelihoods, employability, vocational training, entrepreneurship and economic inclusion can be translated into sustainable and context-sensitive action on the ground. Participants reflected on implementation challenges, identified opportunities for stronger collaboration, new ways to respond to greater needs in the region, and shared lessons from existing successful initiatives. Discussions explored how local knowledge, community ownership, private sector engagement and regional cooperation can contribute to the successful implementation of the Pact.

This report captures the main themes, insights and recommendations that emerged from the discussions. While experiences differed across countries and sectors, four interconnected themes emerged throughout the day: the **need for an ecosystem approach to livelihoods, stronger co-creation and partnerships, deeper inclusion and localization, and greater flexibility in fragile contexts.**

# 1. Adopting an Ecosystem Approach to Livelihoods

---

Participants agreed that improving access to education, vocational training and skills development is essential but warned that they alone do not create sustainable livelihoods.

Across the Levant, many young people complete education or training programs only to encounter labor markets unable to absorb their skills. This disconnect between training systems and economic opportunities emerged as a central concern.

“ Training alone is not enough. We need pathways to decent work. ”

Discussions highlighted how barriers to employment are often deeply rooted in structural and interconnected challenges. This is particularly relevant for women, youth, refugees and other vulnerable groups. They may complete training programs but remain unable to participate in the workforce because of care responsibilities, social norms, unsafe transportation, lack of social protection or unsupportive social environments. Informal labor and weak institutions also continue to constrain opportunities across the region.

## Example

ILO has highlighted that a young woman in the Levant today can have completed higher education, completed a Vocation Education and Training programme, be eager to contribute to her community and yet months after completion of her studies still be looking for work. The challenge is often not a lack of skills, but the accumulation of structural barriers such as limited links between training and labor market opportunities, lack of social protection, or care responsibilities. Her experience reflects a wider regional reality: youth unemployment in the Levant is almost double the global average.

Therefore, participants stressed the importance of understanding livelihoods as an ecosystem composed of capabilities, institutions, infrastructure, markets, social relationships, mindsets and opportunities, rather than simply employment or cash assistance. Interventions should focus not only on preparing individuals for work but also on strengthening the economic ecosystems so they can support and absorb those skills. This means that skills development and vocational training must be accompanied by support for enterprises, SMEs,

entrepreneurship ecosystems and sectors capable of generating employment. This systemic approach rooted in a strengthening of partnerships and dialogues helps mitigate the risk of a mismatch between skills acquired and labor market needs.

### **Good practice example**

The Middle East Investment Initiative's model combines financial literacy support for small medium and micro businesses with loan guarantee facilities for local banks and platforms linking businesses to sources of finance. By doing so, it creates the conditions for businesses to grow and strengthen the systems and relationships that make the generation of sustainable livelihoods possible.

This approach should be translated when it comes to measuring the impact of projects. There should be caution against reducing it to outputs such as the number of people trained, the number of workshops delivered, or of short-term placements created. While these interventions remain important, they often fail to address the broader factors that determine whether people can access and sustain decent work.

It was also highlighted that, when designing training programs and projects, it is crucial to put emphasis on adaptability, lifelong learning and continuous reskilling. Indeed, the rapid growth of sectors such as artificial intelligence and new technologies means that skills are becoming obsolete quicker than before.

This perspective applies at the regional level. Issues such as migration, displacement, labor mobility, supply chains, climate pressures and skills development transcend national borders. Stronger regional coordination and knowledge exchanges across institutions and programs were therefore identified as essential components of effective implementation. The European Union can bring an outside perspective and connect local markets with broader national and regional economic projects, such as the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor or the recent Strategic Partnership Agreement with Jordan.

### **Key takeaways and recommendations:**

- Livelihoods should be approached as part of broader economic ecosystems, and projects to support them designed and evaluated with this in mind.
- Local economies should be supported alongside individuals. A stronger economic participation and more sustainable livelihood opportunities require addressing structural barriers, creating pathways for

employment.

- Greater exchange between countries can accelerate learning and innovation.
- The EU can play an important convening and coordinating role.

## 2. Building Bridges Through Social Dialogue, Co-Creation and Partnerships

---

If livelihoods are shaped by complex ecosystems, participants argued that implementation cannot be driven by any single actor. There is a clear need to strengthen the connections between local civil society organizations (CSOs), communities, governments, donors, international organizations and the private sector.

A consistent message was that effective implementation requires moving beyond consultation towards genuine co-creation and implementation with local communities and organizations.

“ Do not let co-creation and co-ownership remain words on paper ”

While localization has become a common principle across development frameworks, participants called for greater involvement of local organizations at local voices at the design stage of programs, not only during implementation. Participants stressed that programs are most effective when they are designed through continuous dialogue between those developing policy and those delivering support on the ground, with local knowledge informing choices from the outset.

### Good practice example

GIZ shared experiences from the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, highlighting how consultations with youth in Jordan revealed that mental health was their primary concern, before unemployment, demonstrating the importance of listening before designing interventions that would not have focused on mental health support.

Evidence-based and demand-driven approaches are critical to ensure interventions respond to actual needs, will be adapted to the local contexts and be sustainable. Participants called for greater investment in labor market assessments, community consultations and local evidence generation. The role of universities, research institutions and academia in generating this evidence, anticipating future skills needs and supporting innovation was also highlighted.

If the need for a stronger link between policy-making spaces and the realities experienced by communities on the ground is clear, participants raised the question of the kind of “bridge” that is missing: who should hold this role? What

kind of mechanisms would nurture and ensure genuine participation?

The private sector was consistently highlighted as an essential partner for the success of the Pact. Rather than viewing businesses solely as beneficiaries or funding sources, discussions emphasized their role as co-designers, employers, investors and partners in skills development. Speakers highlighted examples where employers were involved in designing training curricula, identifying skills gaps and supporting pathways into employment, approaches seen as essential for reducing the persistent mismatch between training programs and labor market opportunities.

### **Good practice example**

The partnership between Mövenpick and Anera is an example of private sector engagement where employers are involved from the outset in designing training programmes and identifying the practical and soft skills needed by the hospitality sector. When young people finish their training, their skills easily match with Mövenpick's needs as an employer.

However, the private sector shouldn't be seen as homogenous. Strengthening partnerships also requires understanding the different actors' incentives. Bigger companies need clear value propositions and pathways to participation, while SMEs often require support themselves before they can absorb additional workers.

A successful implementation ultimately lies in strengthening partnerships and relationships: between policy and practice, donors and implementers, and training and employment.

### **Key takeaways and recommendations:**

- Local actors should participate in all stages of programs' lifecycles: design, implementation and evaluation.
- There is a need to create stronger bridges between local communities and policymakers. This cannot happen without strengthening partnerships between donors and academia, CSOs and the private sector.
- Continuous learning and feedback between stakeholders should be ensured.

### 3. Advancing Inclusion and Localization

---

Inclusion must be understood both in terms of who participates in decision-making and who programs serve. Pushing for localization also means asking the question ‘who participates?’ and ensuring that local participation doesn’t reproduce existing inequalities but rather challenges them.

Participants argued that economic inclusion requires creating spaces where people feel represented, heard and able to contribute.

“

*People do not want to be counted as numbers.  
They want a place where they belong*

”

Several participants emphasized that meaningful inclusion begins with listening. Needs assessments, consultations and program design processes should be structured around community voices, with a heightened focus on ensuring that the most vulnerable and excluded, such as women, youth or refugees, get a seat at the table.

#### **Good practice example**

In Palestine, Ibtikar creates spaces where women can network, learn skills and develop businesses. This reportedly boosts their confidence, strengthen community ties and help those women regain agency in contexts marked by exclusion and instability.

To foster this participation, it is crucial to equip communities with the tools needed to participate effectively. Financial literacy, entrepreneurship support and leadership opportunities were cited as examples of interventions that strengthen agency, specifically when it comes to livelihoods programming.

The discussions on localization repeatedly returned to the question of trust. Participants noted that strengthening the role of local actors requires commitments from both sides.

Local CSOs must continue investing in governance, transparency and accountability systems. Building credibility and demonstrating impact are essential for establishing themselves as long-term, expert and reliable partners. At the same time, participants argued that many local organizations have already demonstrated their capacity to deliver results in some of the most complex operating environments in the region. Yet, too often, they remain

confined to implementation roles while strategic decisions continue to be made with little consultation.

“

*Trust us to design, not only to implement*

”

A shift is needed towards relationships built on mutual trust. This means involving local actors earlier in program design, providing opportunities to shape priorities, and creating funding mechanisms that enable local organizations to lead rather than simply execute.

#### **Good practice example**

ARDD presented the Jordan National NGOs Forum (JONAF) as an example of efforts to move localisation from a policy commitment to a practical agenda through interactions between civil society actors, collective advocacy and evidence generation.

#### **Key takeaways and recommendations:**

- Create mechanisms for meaningful community participation, including the most vulnerable.
- Localization is a shared responsibility, requiring both robust governance and accountability safeguards on the part of local organizations, and a willingness from donors and international actors to share ownership and leadership.

## 4. Flexibility as a Condition for Success in Fragile Contexts

---

While countries can share common challenges, the Levant cannot be approached as a homogeneous region. Implementation takes place in environments characterized by uncertainty, volatility and rapid change. Conflict dynamics, displacement patterns, economic shocks and political developments can alter needs and opportunities within months or even weeks and vary significantly from one country or region to another.

In such contexts, rigid programming approaches risk becoming quickly disconnected from reality. Participants stressed that flexibility should be applied not only to project activities but also to funding mechanisms, partnership structures and monitoring frameworks.

“

*Best practice is not a fixed model. It is the capacity to stay honest about what the context is.*

”

Humanitarian needs across the Levant remain significant, but in parallel there is also growing demand for recovery-oriented approaches that support economic resilience. Many participants argued that development and humanitarian interventions should not be viewed as separate tracks. Instead, they called for approaches capable of responding simultaneously to urgent needs while creating pathways towards longer-term recovery and livelihoods. Several highlighted the importance of adaptive management, iterative learning and long-term partnerships that allow organizations to adjust their approaches as circumstances evolve.

Discussions relating to Syria highlighted the importance of avoiding assumptions about recovery trajectories. Return, reconstruction and economic recovery cannot be approached as purely technical processes detached from the reality on the ground marked by casualties, lack of support systems and infrastructure destruction. In contexts where public systems are weak or under strain, partnerships among civil society, private sector actors and international organizations become even more critical.

### **Good practice example**

BAHAR stressed that recovery and livelihoods projects cannot be designed for Syria through a standard model because the conditions underpinning economic

participation and returns differ dramatically from one location to another, depending on the state of access to services, housing, displacement, etc. Different communities require different entry points, interventions need to be diverse and flexible.

In rapidly changing contexts, it is crucial to maintain regular dialogue between stakeholders, to avoid as much as possible overly bureaucratic processes that slow responses to needs. Local organizations are often best positioned to understand these changes as they occur. Their proximity to communities and place in local support ecosystems allows them to identify emerging needs, opportunities and risks, and respond to them quickly. Partnerships with local actors should therefore be seen not only as an objective within the localization agenda, but also as a practical necessity for adaptive programming.

**Key takeaways and recommendations:**

- Adaptive approaches, strong local partnerships, continuous dialogue and flexible funding mechanisms were identified as essential for ensuring that the Pact remains relevant and effective in the region.
- In fragile contexts, flexibility is what enables ecosystem and co-ownership approaches to flourish.
- Recovery and development programming must be grounded in local realities and work in synergy with humanitarian relief support.

## 5. Implications for the Pact for the Mediterranean

---

The workshop suggested that the Pact, through its regional perspective and ambition to strengthen cooperation across the Mediterranean, offers an opportunity to foster new ways of working between European, regional and local actors. Participants expressed a clear willingness to engage with this framework, but also called for greater clarity regarding implementation modalities, partnership mechanisms and governance structures. Which specific body within the EU will be overseeing the implementation? Is there a specific point of contact for CSOs to contribute? Clarifying these elements as new actions are developed under the Pact would help strengthen ownership, coordination and participation.

Key implications for the Pact's implementation are the following:

First, **implementation should move beyond sectoral interventions towards integrated approaches**. Participants consistently highlighted that livelihoods outcomes are shaped by a wider ecosystem of social, economic and institutional factors. Investments in skills development, vocational training or entrepreneurship are unlikely to achieve sustainable impact unless they are connected to labour market opportunities, social protection systems, private sector development, foreign direct investments, and broader economic recovery efforts.

Second, the Pact provides **an opportunity to strengthen the connection between regional policy frameworks and local realities**. This requires creating stronger feedback loops between communities, local organisations and policymakers, ensuring that implementation remains informed by evolving realities on the ground. Local actors are often the first to identify emerging challenges, risks and opportunities, yet they remain underrepresented in programme design and strategic decision-making. Creating pathways for meaningful participation and shared ownership within the Pact's design and implementation mechanisms would strengthen both the relevance and sustainability of interventions. Stronger partnerships would also enhance the Pact's ability to adapt to rapidly evolving contexts, particularly in the Levant, where a highly volatile political environment can adversely impact the region's economic stability.

Third, and as implementation begins, the challenge is to **ensure that**

**implementation mechanisms are sufficiently inclusive, adaptive and locally grounded to respond to the realities** they seek to address. As the design and publication of new actions unfolds, incorporating these lessons would help ensure that future actions are better aligned with local realities, more responsive to community needs, and ultimately more sustainable in their impact.

# Conclusion

---

Across all discussions, participants called for implementation approaches that are holistic, inclusive, collaborative and adaptive.

The four themes coming out of this workshop (ecosystem thinking, co-creation, inclusion and flexibility) should not be seen as separate but mutually reinforcing priorities. An ecosystem approach requires co-creation, co-creation depends on inclusion, and all three require flexibility to respond to rapidly evolving realities.

**As the Pact moves from policy to implementation, ensuring these principles guide future programming will be essential to delivering meaningful and sustainable impact for communities across the Levant.** The workshop demonstrated strong interest among local, regional and international actors in ensuring that the Pact for the Mediterranean translates into tangible benefits for communities across the Levant. Existing partnerships, local expertise, private sector engagement and successful innovative partnership approaches already provide foundations upon which the Pact can build.

The discussions in Amman demonstrated that **there is political momentum for the Pact and a clear willingness among local, regional and international actors to contribute to this effort.** Building on that momentum, and embedding these lessons into future actions, can help ensure that the Pact becomes more than a policy framework. The success of the Pact is likely to be measured by its ability to connect regional objectives with local realities, creating pathways towards decent work, economic inclusion and resilience for communities across the region. The workshop served as a first step in that process, creating a platform for dialogue, mutual learning and collective reflection on how the Pact can be implemented in ways that are locally grounded, inclusive and responsive to the ground realities.

---

## Participants – *Country of Origin:*

- Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) – *Jordan*
- Arab Trade Union – *Jordan*
- Bahar Organization – *Syria*
- Berytech Foundation – *Lebanon*
- Business and Professional Women Association (BPWA) – *Jordan*
- Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies – *UAE*

- Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon – *EU, Lebanon-based*
- Delegation of the European Union to Jordan – *EU, Jordan-based*
- French Embassy – *France, Jordan-based*
- Swedish Embassy – *Sweden, Jordan-based*
- German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) – *Germany, Jordan-based*
- Ibtikar - *Palestine*
- International Blue Crescent – *Türkiye*
- International Labour Organisation (ILO) – *Jordan*
- Issam Hashwi Bakery School – *Lebanon*
- Lutheran World Federation (LWF) – *Palestine*
- Middle East Investment Initiative (MEII) – *Jordan*
- Mövenpick Hotels and Resorts – *Lebanon*
- Safadi Foundation – *Lebanon*
- Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) – *Syria*
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – *Jordan & Syria*
- United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) – *Lebanon*

#### **Introductory Remarks By:**

- H.E Pierre-Christophe Chatzisavas – Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Union to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- H.E Dr. Ibrahim Saif – Former Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Managing Partner with EFT Solutions and Scholar at Jordan Strategy Forum.

#### **Organizers contacts**

Anera

- Derek Madsen, Chief Development Officer - dmadsen@anera.org
- Ema Fournier, EU Representative - brussels@anera.org

Swedish Dialogue Institute

- Ann Mawe, Director - ann.mawe@gov.se
- Maria Chalhoub, Deputy Director - maria.chalhoub@gov.se
- Aseel Sha'ban, Programme Officer - aseel.shaban@gov.se