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EuroMed Clusters Policy Seminar Mashreq Edition

Policy Dialogue for Cluster-Driven Innovation
Regional Value Chains

Agenda



16 September 2026
Cairo, Egypt



FEMISE
FORUM EURO-MEDITERRANÉEN DES
INSTITUTIONS DE RECHERCHE ÉCONOMIQUE

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Introduction and Context

Clusters are increasingly recognized as an effective tool for supporting industrialization, fostering innovation, and strengthening value chains in emerging economies. Countries across the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean are seeking to harness cluster development to improve competitiveness, expand export potential, strengthen integration into regional and global value chains, and generate employment in sectors where they have comparative advantages.

Across the Southern Mediterranean, clusters operate at different stages of development and maturity and under diverse institutional arrangements. Common challenges include limited legal recognition, fragmented policy frameworks, underdeveloped innovation ecosystems, financing constraints, skills mismatches, and weak links between public policy and private-sector dynamics. These constraints can limit clusters' ability to scale up, align with broader industrial and trade strategies, integrate into regional and global value chains, and contribute to the green transition.

Against this backdrop, the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Science (FEMISE) and the Economic Research Forum (ERF) have launched a flagship series of high-level policy seminars under the EuroMed Clusters Forward (ECF) project.

These policy seminars bring together policymakers, cluster leaders, private-sector representatives, and international experts to examine the challenges and opportunities associated with developing regional value chains, share successful policy experiences and lessons, and identify actionable approaches to cluster development. Their main objective is to generate practical, tailored policy recommendations that support cluster development, industrial cooperation, and innovation across Euro-Mediterranean countries.

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Three seminars form part of the Euro-Mediterranean policy seminar series:

- Maghreb Seminar — Tunisia, March 25, 2026
- Mashreq Seminar — Egypt, September 16, 2026
- EuroMed Regional Seminar — Fall 2026

Each seminar contributes to the development of a comprehensive Policy Package, including synthesis reports, expert interviews, national policy briefs, and broader recommendations to inform longer-term strategies.

The Mashreq Context

The Mashreq is navigating a period of profound economic transformation amid persistent geopolitical, economic, and social pressures. Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine are seeking to strengthen industrial competitiveness, accelerate innovation, create quality employment, and build more resilient economies while adapting to evolving regional and global value chains.

Within this context, clusters can serve as strategic platforms for SME development, collaboration between industry, academia, and public institutions, technological upgrading, and stronger integration into regional and global value chains. While approaches to cluster development differ across countries, there is a shared interest in leveraging clusters to support sustainable growth, entrepreneurship, innovation, and job creation.

Cluster ecosystems across the Mashreq, however, remain at different stages of maturity and face a number of common structural challenges. These include fragmented governance frameworks, limited legal recognition of clusters, insufficient coordination among public institutions, weak research–industry linkages, limited access to sustainable financing, and persistent skills shortages. In several countries, prolonged economic pressures and regional instability have

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further constrained private-sector investment and innovation, while underscoring the importance of more resilient and collaborative industrial ecosystems.

At the same time, the region offers significant opportunities and valuable experience. Egypt is advancing industrial modernization through its network of industrial zones and organic clusters; Jordan has developed strong capabilities in ICT, pharmaceuticals, and knowledge-intensive services; Lebanon continues to demonstrate the resilience of privately led cluster initiatives despite a difficult economic environment; and Palestine has developed dynamic entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems that support SMEs and technology-based enterprises under particularly challenging conditions. Together, these experiences provide useful lessons for strengthening cluster policies and promoting deeper regional cooperation.

Mashreq Policy Seminar Objectives

The Mashreq Policy Seminar provides a dedicated platform for policymakers, cluster managers, private-sector representatives, researchers, and international experts to engage in a structured dialogue on strengthening cluster ecosystems and regional value chains across the Mashreq.

The seminar aims to:

1. Examine the key policy and institutional challenges affecting cluster development in the Mashreq, including governance, legal recognition, innovation ecosystems, sustainable financing, and research–industry collaboration.
2. Share successful policy experiences and cluster initiatives from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Europe, with a focus on approaches that can be adapted to strengthen cluster development and industrial competitiveness.
3. Identify practical and actionable policy recommendations to strengthen cluster governance, enhance innovation and competitiveness, improve access to finance, and promote deeper integration into regional and global value chains.

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Mashreq Policy Seminar Structure

Following the opening session and keynote addresses, the seminar is organized around three thematic challenges that reflect the main policy priorities for strengthening cluster ecosystems in the Mashreq:

1. Strengthening Cluster Governance, Legal Recognition and Policy Coordination
2. Strengthening Innovation Ecosystems, Research–Industry Collaboration and Cluster Competitiveness
3. Financing Innovation and Building Sustainable Cluster Ecosystems

Each thematic session combines policy makers and practitioners from Mashreq countries and Europe, followed by an interactive discussion and a short digital questionnaire designed to engage participants and identify the most important reform priorities.

The seminar concludes with thematic focus group discussions, where participants will build on the outcomes of the three sessions to further explore common challenges, identify transferable policy and institutional approaches, and formulate concrete recommendations tailored to the Mashreq context. The outcomes of these discussions will directly feed into the ECF Policy Package, including synthesis reports, country-specific policy briefs, expert interviews, and broader regional policy recommendations.

Translation service (English to Arabic) will be provided.



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08:30 – 09:00 **Registration & Coffee**

09:00 – 09:15 **Welcome & Opening Remarks**

- Raed Safadi, Economic Research Forum (ERF)
- Emmanuel Noutary, ANIMA Investment Network (*Online*)

09:15 – 09:45 **Keynote Speech:**

- H.E. Dr. Ahmed Rostom, Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Egypt

09:45 – 10:00

Setting the Scene:

Understanding Clusters and the Evolution of Regional Value Chain

- Raed Safadi, Economic Research Forum (ERF)

10:00 – 10:15

Lessons from Maghreb Policy Seminar

- Maryse Louis, FEMISE

Challenge 1:

**Strengthening Cluster Governance, Legal Recognition
and Policy Coordination**

Moderator:

- Mohammed Makki, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik & COSV Group, Lebanon

10:15 – 11:15

Session 1.1. Policy Dialogue:

Governance Fragmentation and the Legal Framework

Effective governance and coherent institutional frameworks are essential for enabling clusters to serve as strategic platforms for industrial development, innovation, and integration into regional and global value chains. Across the Mashreq, however, clusters often operate within fragmented institutional environments, with limited legal recognition and weak coordination among public institutions. These constraints can limit their ability to access public support, align with national industrial and innovation strategies, and develop into sustainable platforms for economic development.

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Policy Dialogue for Cluster-Driven Innovation Regional Value Chains

This session will address the following questions:

- What forms of legal and institutional recognition are needed to support effective cluster development?
- How can cluster policy be better integrated into national industrial and innovation strategies, and which public institutions should lead coordination?
- Which governance models are most relevant for Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine?
- How can stronger governance and coordination frameworks help clusters integrate more effectively into regional and global value chains?

- *Regional:* Jessica Hajjar, Berytech
- *Jordan:* Majdi Haj Khalil, EDEVIN
- *Palestine:* Mohammad Yaser, Investment Promotion Agency (Online)
- *Lebanon:* Nisrine Haddad, Sader Law
- *Europe:* Alberto Pezzi, ACCIÓ (Online)

11:15 – 11:30

Session 1.2.

From Institutional Gaps to Actionable Policy Priorities

- Open discussion and Q&A and digital poll

11:30-11:45

Coffee Break

Challenge 2:

Strengthening Innovation Ecosystems, Research–Industry Collaboration and Cluster Competitiveness

Moderator:

- Mohammed Aljafari, Investment Consultant and Sustain MENA Partner, Jordan

11:45 – 12:45

Session 2.1. Policy Dialogue:

Strengthening Innovation Ecosystems and Industry–Research Linkages

Innovation is a key driver of industrial competitiveness and value-chain upgrading. Across the Mashreq, however, collaboration among firms, universities, research centers, and innovation-support organizations remains uneven. This limits technology transfer, productivity growth, and firms' ability to move into higher-value-added activities. Strengthening cluster-based innovation ecosystems is therefore important for accelerating digital transformation, improving industrial competitiveness, and supporting deeper integration into regional and global value chains.

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This session will address the following questions:

- Strengthen collaboration among industry, academia, and research institutions;
- Promote innovation, technology transfer, and digital transformation within clusters;
- Support firms in upgrading technologically and improving productivity;
- Strengthen the competitiveness of strategic sectors, including ICT, manufacturing, and high-tech industries; and
- Facilitate clusters' integration into higher-value-added regional and global value chains.

- *Egypt:* Sameh Hammad, GIZ Egypt
- *Jordan:* Ziad Al-Masri, Information and Communication Technology Association
- *Lebanon:* Walid Semaan, Data Science & AI Academy
- *Palestine:* Amani Muady, PITA
- *Europe:* Nathalie Jardinier, Team Henri Fabre

12:45 – 13:00

Session 2.2. Interactive Exchange

- Open discussion and Q&A and digital poll

13:00 – 14:00

Lunch Break

Challenge 3:

Financing Innovation and Building Sustainable Cluster Ecosystems

Moderator:

- Yasmine Eissa, The American University in Cairo, Egypt

14:00 – 15:00

Session 3.1. Policy Dialogue: From Donor Dependence to Sustainable Cluster Financing

Long-term cluster competitiveness depends not only on innovation, but also on sustainable financing mechanisms that can support cluster development beyond short-term, project-based interventions. Across the Mashreq, many clusters continue to rely heavily on donor funding, while limited access to public support mechanisms, private investment, and innovation finance constrains their ability to expand, innovate, and generate lasting economic impact. Developing more diversified and sustainable financing models is therefore essential to strengthening resilient cluster ecosystems and mobilizing greater private-sector participation.

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This session will address the following questions:

- Mobilize public and private investment for cluster development;
- Strengthen innovation financing and collaborative investment models;
- Reduce reliance on short-term donor funding;
- Enhance the long-term financial sustainability of cluster organizations; and
- Support stronger participation of Mashreq clusters in regional and global value chains.

- *Egypt:* Radwa Kamouna, General Authority for Investment and Free Zones (GAFI)
- *Jordan:* Nidal A. Al-Dabbas, Ministry of Investment, Jordan
- *Lebanon:* Ramy Bou Jawdeh, Fermendom
- *Palestine:* Khaled Ma. Qalalwa, Higher Council for Innovation & Excellence (HCIE)
- *Europe:* Sébastien Thomas-Chaffange, France Clusters (*Online*)
- *FEIM:* Patricia I. Issa, Mediterranean Forum of Local Governments and Business (*Online*)

15:00 – 15:15

Session 3.2.

Interactive Exchange

- Open discussion and Q&A and digital poll

15:15 – 15:30

Coffee Break & Networking

15:30 – 16:30

Thematic Working Groups

Participants will be divided into three thematic working groups bringing together policymakers, private-sector representatives, cluster organizations, research and innovation actors, financial institutions, and development partners.

The working groups will build on the earlier policy dialogues to:

- Examine the three key challenges discussed during the seminar in greater depth;
- Identify relevant and transferable policy and institutional responses; and
- Formulate practical, actionable recommendations for strengthening cluster development across the Mashreq.

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Group 1: Governance and Legal Recognition

- Moderator and Rapporteur: Mohamed Makki

Focus

- Legal status of clusters
- Institutional anchoring and coordination
- Policy coherence and implementation mechanisms

Group 2: Innovation, R&D and Competitiveness

- Moderator and Rapporteur: Mohammed Aljafari

Focus

- Industry–research collaboration
- Skills and innovation support mechanisms
- Technology adoption and industrial upgrading

Group 3: Financing, Sustainability and Growth Pathways

- Moderator and Rapporteur: Yasmine Eissa

Focus

- Sustainable funding models
- Private sector participation
- Green transition, twinning and value chain integration

16:30 – 17:00

Working Groups Rapporteurs

17:00 – 17:30

Closing Remarks and Presentation of Polls Results

- Yasmine Fahim, Economic Research Forum (ERF)
- Emmanuel Noutary, ANIMA Investment Network (*Online*)
- Maryse Louis, FEMISE



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FEDERATION OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH INSTITUTES IN ARABIC AND MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

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