

## BUSINESS AND TECH PARTNERSHIPS BYPASS THE COVID-19 CRISIS!

THE NEXT SOCIETY relaunches its mentoring programme between 13 cluster practitioners from both shores of the Mediterranean



Marseille, 22 January 2021 – After a successful first edition led by France Clusters, the Cluster Mentoring Reloaded programme is managed by ACCIÓ (Catalonia Trade & Investment) as part of THE NEXT SOCIETY action plan initiated by ANIMA Investment Network and co-funded by the European Union. It will support the development of cluster management practices and provide inspiration to foster cooperation between Mediterranean and European countries.

On January 20, 2021, the kick-off event of the Cluster Mentoring Reloaded programme was held online with the 13 pairs matching cluster managers and practitioners from Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia, the mentees, with 13 mentors from France, Italy, Palestine, and Spain. The pairs will work hand-in-hand for the next ten months, until October 2021.

During this period, they will hold three joint meetings and will benefit from bilateral and group mentoring sessions. COVID-19's current travelling limitations has turned the programme into the fully online modality, but this challenge has been a driver to make the most of available online tools for exchange and communication. It is expected that the programme, understood as a learning journey for all the participants, will have an impact on improving key management competences to provide more added value services to the clusters' members and to start concrete collaboration relationships amongst the participant clusters.

### THE NEXT SOCIETY's community newcomers!

In Morocco, 6 cluster practitioners have joined the Cluster Mentoring Reloaded Programme. They represent the Maroc Numeric Cluster, the Moroccan Technical Textile Cluster (C2TM), the Cluster Electronique, Mécatronique & Mécanique (CE3M) and the Agrinova Competitiveness Pole.

Furthermore, 7 clusters from Egypt, the Egyptian Renewable Energy Cluster; Palestine, the House of Furniture and the Hebron Leather and Shoe clusters; Tunisia, the Mechatronic Cluster, the North-West Olive Oil Cluster

and the Marble Cluster; and Jordan, the ICT Association of Jordan – int@j, have been selected to benefit from THE NEXT SOCIETY tailor-made cluster support.

To know more about the profiles, [download the portfolio](#).

## **A throwback to MENA clustering framework and emergence**

In Morocco, the commitment to the development of innovation has mobilised both public authorities and private decision-makers since June 2009, when the collective awareness was consecrated by the "Morocco Innovation initiative" and the creation of clusters through public support, tenders and collaborative projects emerged as one of its tools. Today 11 clusters exist under a national label and 6 of them received a Bronze Label of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative in 2014.

In Egypt, since 2016, the government has made cluster-based industrialisation a key pillar of Egypt's sustainable development strategy until 2030 and developed the establishment of 22 industrial clusters all over the country. Furthermore, the Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center (TIEC) from the Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA), partner of THE NEXT SOCIETY in Egypt, also launched the Innovation Cluster Initiative (ICI) in 2016.

Between 2012 and 2016 in Palestine, the Private Sector Development Cluster Project (PSDCP) was implemented by the Ministry of National Economy and the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture and aimed at providing a foundation for sustainable economic development with a cluster approach. It started with 5 pilot clusters, 4 in the West Bank and 1 in the Gaza strip.

The clustering approach in Tunisia has been supported by public authorities since the beginning of 2010s and clusters have emerged in the framework of technopoles and competitiveness as a result of the commitment of local actors and the support of international funding. Since then, 10 technopoles and competitiveness poles in Tunisia emerged and a clustering policy was implemented in 2013.

In Jordan, there are no clusters in the sense of a regional ecosystem of related industries and competences featuring a broad array of inter-industry interdependencies. However, in 2014, the National Innovation and Competitiveness Council was reactivated to identify and further respond to the challenges facing the development of a knowledge economy sector based on innovation and excellence. The strategy focused on six priority clusters, the same ones as those identified by the Jordan 2025 Vision and the Jordan Economic Growth Plan (medical services and pharmaceutical industry; information and telecommunications technology; clean technologies; architecture and engineering services; education and career guidance services; banking and financial services). That is the reason why the ICT Association of Jordan – int@j and OASIS500 are considered the two reference clusters within THE NEXT SOCIETY community.

## **THE NEXT SOCIETY Cluster Booster Track: a complete action plan for MENA cluster managers and their members!**

The Cluster Mentoring Reloaded programme is launched in the context of the Cluster Booster Track, an exciting peer-to-peer learning and booster programme which helps cluster managers from the MENA region improve their management skills, multiply their business opportunities, and open new channels of inter-clustering collaboration at national, regional and international level.

The programme combines peer training and capacity building with business development missions giving MENA clusters international visibility. All actions help develop the strategic cooperation between EU & MENA clusters, supporting the creation of a strong cluster community. In order to sustain and support regular exchanges among this community, the online collaborative network [i-Community](#) has been created and welcomes cluster members from both regions.

### **Press and communication team**

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## About THE NEXT SOCIETY

THE NEXT SOCIETY is an open community of changemakers, entrepreneurs, investors, corporates, NGOs, public and private innovation, research and economic development hubs from Europe and 7 Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. Led by ANIMA Investment Network, it aims at mobilising, promoting and reinforcing innovation ecosystems and economic development in the MENA region. To reach these goals, THE NEXT SOCIETY launched an action plan in 2017-2020, co-funded by the EU up to 90% for a global amount of EUR 7.8 million budget. It supports the emergence of talents and innovative leaders who will drive the next trends and usages by targeting start-ups, clusters and technology transfer offices to accompany their development. [www.thenextsociety.co](http://www.thenextsociety.co)

## About ACCIÓ

ACCIÓ-Catalonia Trade & Investment is the Catalan Government's public agency for business competitiveness. It has a network of 40 Foreign Trade & Investment offices that cover over 100 markets. The agency helps Catalan companies grow through innovation and internationalization, as well as supporting them when looking for funding and though clusters, among others. It also works to attract foreign direct investment to Barcelona and Catalonia, promoting the area as an attractive, innovative and competitive business location.

[www.accio.gencat.cat/en](http://www.accio.gencat.cat/en)

## About ANIMA Investment Network

ANIMA Investment Network is a platform for economic cooperation between Europe, the Middle East and Africa. It engineers and implements initiatives to develop investment and business ecosystems favouring an attractive, sustainable and inclusive economy.

Organised as a network, ANIMA brings together 70 member organisations in 20 countries and more than 400 experts and partners who can be mobilised, coordinated by a team based in Marseille, France. It associates government and regional investment promotion and economic development agencies, entrepreneurs' associations, innovation clusters, international investors and research institutes.

ANIMA offers expertise in economic development and cooperation, investment promotion and impact management, territorial marketing, development of innovation and mobilisation of expatriate talent resources.

[www.anima.coop](http://www.anima.coop)