



# SKILLS, SYSTEMS, OPPORTUNITIES

**COSV's work in TVET & Employability  
in MENA Region**

# From Training to Systems Change: COSV's Ecosystem Approach to TVET and Youth Employment in fragile contexts

This document outlines COSV's integrated approach to TVET and employability in the MENA region, designed for fragile and crisis-affected contexts where education systems, labour markets, and community structures are severely disrupted.

COSV addresses these challenges through a model that combines **governance reform, market-relevant training, and structured employment pathways** into one coherent system. The approach is anchored in **demand-driven planning**, informed by youth-led Labour Market Observatories; **Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)** principles that strengthen inclusive local development; and **multi-actor collaboration** linking ministries, vocational institutes, chambers, SMEs, CSOs, universities, and community groups.

COSV operationalises this vision through three pillars:

- ❖ **Integrated Governance** via PPP platforms, social innovation hubs, school–enterprise models, and Community Education Networks;
- ❖ **Integrated TVET Offer** delivering competency-based, inclusive and future-oriented training through local partners; and
- ❖ **Integrated Employment & Self-Employment Pathways** that enable apprenticeships, job placement, enterprise incubation, SME support, and value chain development.

Applied in Syria and Lebanon, this model has rehabilitated training centres, expanded youth entrepreneurship, improved social cohesion, strengthened MSMEs, and created scalable local economic mechanisms. With more than €20M mobilised and thousands of beneficiaries reached 55% women, 73% youth—COSV demonstrates how TVET, when embedded in community governance and social economy frameworks, becomes a driver of livelihood recovery and sustainable local development.

# COSV SYRIA

*Twenty Years, Standing with Communities to Uphold Heritage,  
Strengthen Cohesion and Livelihoods Across all of Syria*

**Since 2004**, COSV has been engaged in intercultural dialogue and peacebuilding across all of Syria. **Between 2004 and 2010**, COSV collaborated with local NGOs to protect and promote both tangible and intangible heritage, while supporting intercultural dialogue and improving livelihood conditions in rural areas.

**From 2010 to 2024**, through strong networks of local partners and continuous field activities, COSV maintained its presence and programming throughout Syria — even during the civil war — combining CSO resilience, protection, and social cohesion initiatives. During this period, **COSV operated under a non-disclosure framework to ensure the safety of partners and communities.**

**In 2023, COSV became officially registered in Damascus**, marking a new phase focused on early recovery interventions, while continuing to operate across the whole country to support humanitarian response and the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

**Today, COSV is regularly registered with the new Syrian authorities** and continues to implement programmes aligned with national priorities, maintaining its commitment to socio-economic recovery, education, TVET, entrepreneurship, cultural heritage, and community resilience



# COSV LEBANON

From Emergency Response to Sustainable Impact: Strengthening Communities Through Social Economy in Lebanon

**COSV has been operating in Lebanon since 2004**, initially engaging in emergency response within the context of regional conflicts. Over the years, COSV has maintained a strong focus on protecting **social cohesion** and **human rights**, leveraging tangible and intangible cultural heritage as key tools for peacebuilding and community resilience. This has included programmes in communication, arts, film festivals across the region, and interventions in vulnerable and sensitive contexts such as penitentiary systems.

**Starting in 2015, COSV began investing in sustainable economic models** by integrating social **economy principles** and **social entrepreneurship** into various policy programmes, including Higher Education, TVET, livelihoods, and governance.

**Since 2017, COSV has become a key player in strengthening the social entrepreneurship ecosystem at the micro, meso and macro levels.** This has been achieved through incubation programmes, pilot social enterprise models for the management of public assets, agriculture, and TVET governance through the school-enterprise model, as well as research initiatives, support to policy frameworks, and the facilitation of self-representation processes for social entrepreneurs—culminating in the establishment of the Lebanese Social Enterprise Association.

Today, COSV continues to support sustainable development and social justice. As part of the COSV Group, we have recently registered a sister company—**Co.Profit ME SARL**, a social benefit corporation—dedicated to promoting sustainable economic models, ESG practices, and market research in Lebanon and the wider region..



# TVET & Employability in MENA:

Building Pathways to Opportunity  
and Social Cohesion



# Vision and Guiding Principles in TVET and Employability Programs

COSV's TVET and employability work in MENA (Syria, Lebanon and the wider region) aims to **bridge the gap between learning and decent work** in fragile and crisis-affected contexts by:

- **Aligning TVET with labour market demand**, using a data-driven Labour Market Observatory (LMO) model and structured dialogue with enterprises and Chambers.
- **Embedding Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)** and social entrepreneurship as a cross-cutting approach to livelihoods, social cohesion and local development.
- **Promoting inclusive and gender-responsive TVET**, with clear targets for women, youth at risk, and persons with disabilities, and tackling horizontal/vertical segregation in the labour market.
- **Operationalising multi-stakeholder governance** through PPPs, school-enterprise models, social innovation hubs and community education networks.
- **Supporting green and digital transitions**, including renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and digital entrepreneurship.

# The Integrated TVET & Employability approach

**COSV's TVET & Employability Approach connects governance, skills development and access to work into one integrated pathway.** We strengthen public-private-community partnerships, deliver market-relevant training through local partners, and support both employment and self-employment opportunities.

This integrated model leverages **intercultural and cross-sector competencies**, ensuring that youth, women and vulnerable groups gain the skills, confidence and connections needed for decent and sustainable livelihoods in the MENA region



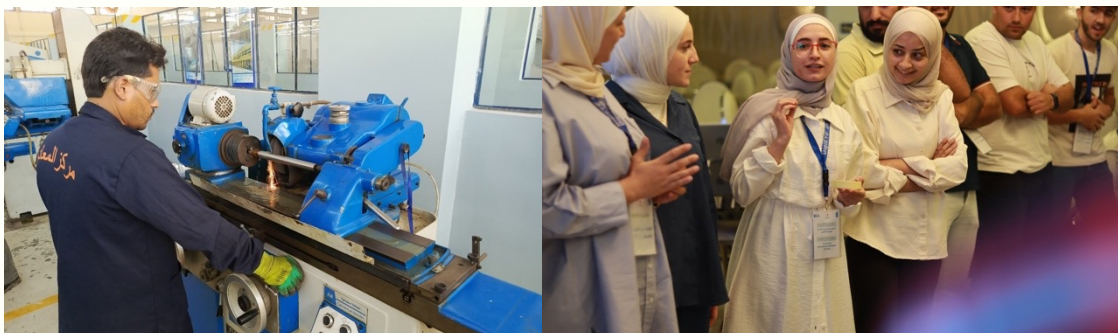


# Integrated Governance

## Coordinated, data-driven and participatory leadership for skills and employment systems

COSV strengthens the governance of the TVET and employability ecosystem by connecting public actors, private sector partners, civil society, youth and educational institutions in structured collaboration. **The goal is reduce fragmented systems into coherent skills-to-work pathways.**

- ❖ **Public–Private–Community Partnerships (PPPs):** COSV facilitates multi-stakeholder mechanisms where ministries, VTIs, municipalities, Chambers, SMEs, and CSOs co-design skills solutions and employment pathways. These platforms enhance accountability, relevance and joint ownership.
- ❖ **Social Innovation Hubs (University Level):** Hubs where students, youth, professors, enterprises and community actors design solutions to local economic and social challenges. They act as engines of open innovation and social entrepreneurship.
- ❖ **Labour Market Observatories (LMO):** A youth-led system producing real-time labour market intelligence through enterprise surveys, dashboards and analytical reports. LMOs feed curriculum updates, career guidance and economic planning, ensuring a demand-driven TVET supply.
- ❖ **School–Enterprise Models:** VTIs and SMEs co-manage production units where students learn in a real work environment. Profits are reinvested in the school, creating a sustainable, high-quality TVET ecosystem.
- ❖ **Community Education Networks:** Local coordination spaces connecting families, schools, TVET centres, CSOs and economic actors to ensure education and skills development become a shared community responsibility.



# Integrated TVET Offer

**Demand-driven, competency-based and delivered through diverse local partners**

COSV structures its training portfolio to be market-relevant, inclusive and practical, ensuring learners gain the skills needed to succeed in local labour markets. This offer is co-delivered with vocational institutes, chambers, CSOs, universities, and community hubs—leveraging intercultural and cross-sector competencies.

- ❖ **Demand-Driven Training:** Course selection is based on labour market analysis, enterprise consultations and LMO-generated data.
- ❖ **Competency-Based, Modular Curriculum:** Training integrates technical skills, soft skills, entrepreneurship, digital competencies and green skills. It follows occupational profiles and national standards.
- ❖ **Delivery Through Local Partners:** COSV partners with VTIs, SMEs, social enterprises, community centres and chambers to guarantee contextualization, ownership and sustainability.
- ❖ **Entrepreneurship Education:** Incorporates ideation, design thinking, market validation, business modelling, financial planning, branding and marketing—drawing on COSV's extensive entrepreneurship curriculum.
- ❖ **Inclusiveness and Protection:** Training environments and methodologies ensure participation of women, youth at risk and persons with disabilities, with tailored support and flexible modalities.
- ❖ **Future-Oriented Skills:** Emphasis on renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, digital innovation, fabrication labs, and emerging professions.

# Integrated Employment & Self-Employment Pathways

**Transition-to-work mechanisms that connect training to real economic opportunities**

## **Work-Based Learning (WBL):**

- ❖ Apprenticeships and on-the-job training co-designed with enterprises. Includes mentoring, structured evaluation tools and performance tracking.

COSV goes beyond supporting formal and non-formal TVET centres by **expanding VET into the real economy**. Workshops, factories, farms, cooperatives and small businesses become **distributed training spaces**, where employers act as co-trainers. This creates a **win-win model**: **SMEs receive targeted support** (tools, equipment, small rehabilitation) to restore or expand operations in early recovery contexts. In return, they **host apprentices and OJT trainees**, offering structured learning, mentoring and real work exposure.

- ❖ **Job Matching & Career Services:** Support with CVs, interviews, professional portfolios, digital employment platforms, and orientation based on LMO insights.
- ❖ **Entrepreneurship & Self-Employment Pathways:**
  - Business ideation, market validation, prototyping and financial planning
  - Incubation and acceleration programmes
  - Access to seed funding, toolkits and mentorship
  - Support to family businesses, agricultural enterprises and micro-enterprises.
- ❖ **Responsible business ecosystems** by supporting social enterprises and value-chain actors creating local jobs and reinvesting value into communities.



LMO students – Syria 2025



School-Enterprise Lebanon 2023



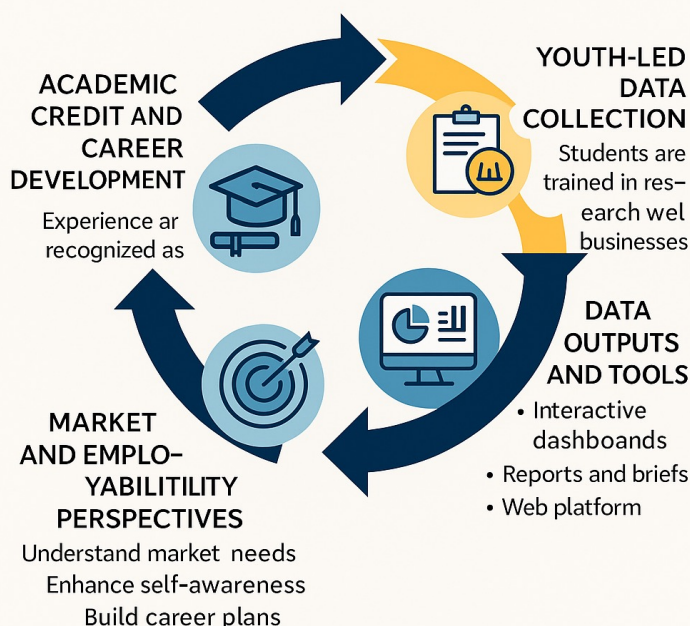
Impact Tech Start-up Program Syria 2024

# Labour Market Observatory

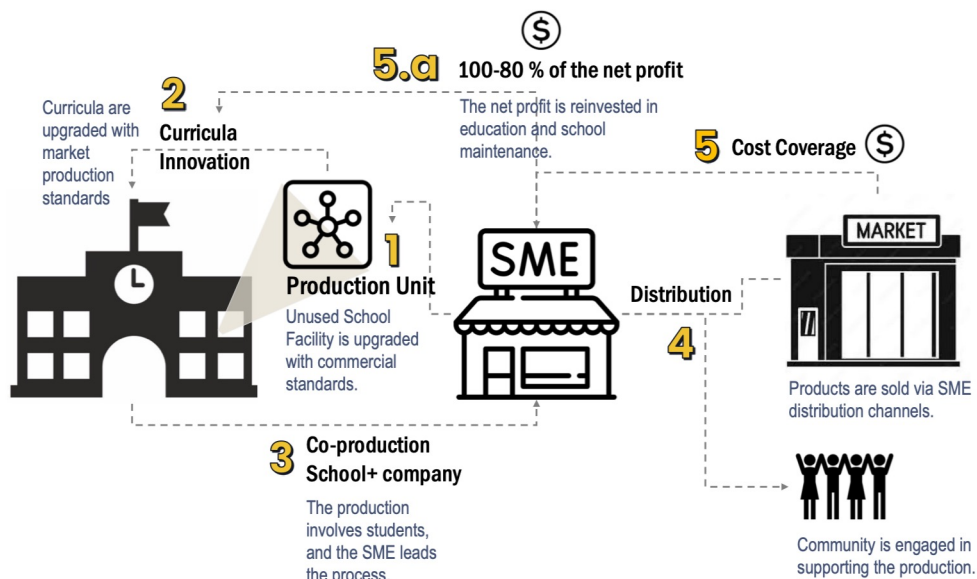
The **Labour Market Observatory (LMO)** is an innovative methodological and digital model developed by COSV to address structural challenges in fragile and low-income contexts, particularly in Lebanon and Syria, where reliable labour market data is scarce and education systems often lack effective links with the economic sector. **By engaging students as trained youth researchers, the LMO generates actionable labour market intelligence while strengthening participants' research skills, career awareness, and employability.** Its outputs—including interactive dashboards, analytical reports, and policy briefs—support evidence-based training, programme design, and policy-making, with data collected through large-scale surveys such as **2,277 youth questionnaires in North Lebanon, 411 enterprise interviews in the LEB INC pilot, and 519 employer surveys under SEERS.** Building on these achievements, COSV has outlined a four-year roadmap to refine the methodology, enhance technological tools, and establish scalable, sustainable governance models in collaboration with universities, TVET providers, businesses, and youth organisations, positioning the LMO as an ecosystem-level tool for skills development and improved youth–labour market linkages

## LABOUR MARKET OBSERVATORY

A SUSTAINABLE AND PARTICIPATORY MODEL



# School-Enterprise Model



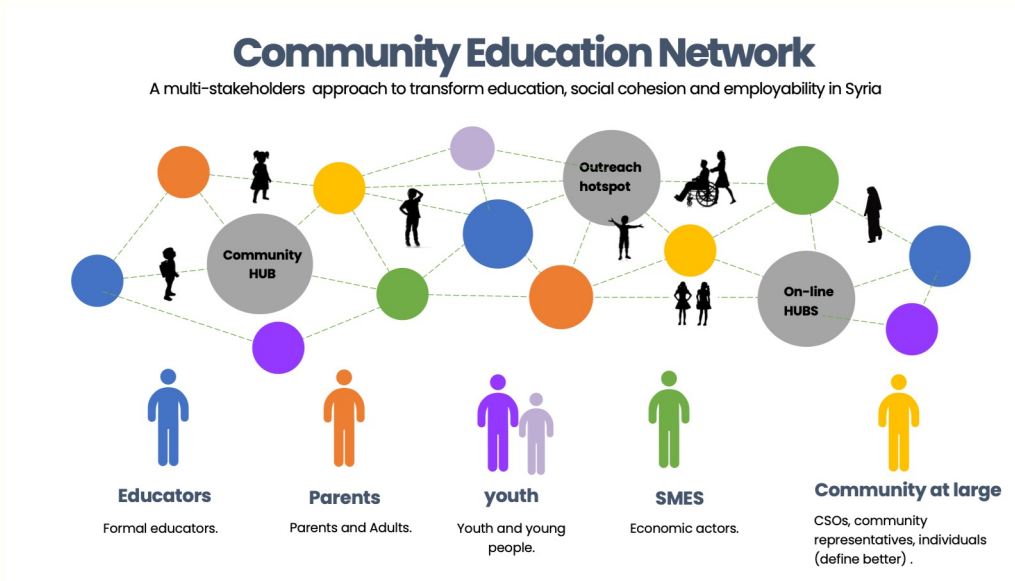
The **school–enterprise model** is an innovative partnership in which a public TVET school and one or more SMEs co-create a production unit serving both **training** and **market** needs.

It addresses structural challenges—unused facilities, outdated equipment, weak resources, and limited industry linkages—particularly acute in **rural and peri-urban areas**. By combining school assets (workshops, land, trainers, students) with SME capacities (technical expertise, production management, market access), idle spaces become **fully operational labs** where real goods and services are produced.

Students gain hands-on, market-relevant skills; SMEs access trained local labour, modern labs they could not build alone, and a safe environment to innovate. Revenues are reinvested to upgrade the school’s offer, strengthening value chains, supporting small businesses, reducing youth out-migration, and anchoring local economic activity.

In Lebanon, COSV—together with GIZ —has piloted three such initiatives: **Ajaltoun Technical School with Ratracc**, revitalising unused facilities; **Arts & Crafts Technical School with MDCN**, creating a carpentry production unit; and **Batloun Technical Institute with La Belle Blanche**, establishing a dairy enterprise. Although still **experimental**, the model has already been **recognized by the EU external evaluation as a best practice**, reflecting its strong potential for systemic impact and scalability.

# Community Education Network



A **Community Education Network (CEN)** is a structured, community-based learning ecosystem that connects educators, parents, youth, SMEs, TVET providers, and local organisations to deliver integrated formal, non-formal, and experiential learning. In Syria, **12 networks** created under SEERS form the backbone of this model.

A CEN transforms existing community spaces into **multi-purpose learning hubs**, where all age groups access education, protection, life skills, digital literacy, vocational training, and employability services. Its governance is shared among key local actors, supported by a social-economy framework that ensures sustainability through community participation, capacity building, and income-generating activities.

Depending on context and internal maturity, a CEN can **transition into a Community Enterprise**, supported by an **ad hoc pathway** on social business modelling, community governance, financial sustainability, and service/product development. This enables the network to evolve into a locally owned socio-economic actor capable of reinvesting resources and expanding its educational and social impact.

By embedding learning in community life, aligning skills with labour-market needs, and strengthening social cohesion, CENs act as drivers of **education quality, community resilience, and inclusive local development** in fragile contexts.

# Portfolio MENA

## TVET & Employability

| project                                | Title                                                                                                                               | Budget                                                   |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SVET – SYRIA</b><br>(2017-2021)     | Working towards inclusive business and social cohesion in Syria                                                                     | <b>3.332.450, 00 euro</b><br>co-funded by EU<br>COM      |
| <b>CCS – SYRIA</b><br>(2019-2021)      | Change for Stability - Supporting local governance through civil society.                                                           | <b>5.000.000,00 euro</b><br>co-funded by EU<br>COM       |
| <b>AICS AID – SYRIA</b><br>(2020-2021) | Nahda – Sustainable Economic Development Pathways for Vulnerable Women in Northwest Syria.”                                         | <b>519.000,00 euro</b><br>Co-funded by AICS              |
| <b>CCS II – SYRIA</b><br>( 2021-2023)  | From local to regional: Community cohesion as a driver for sustainable development                                                  | <b>5.000.000, 00 euro</b><br>co-funded by EU<br>COM      |
| <b>ILO – SYRIA</b><br>(2023)           | Promoting Work-based Learning programmes for EIIP beneficiaries in Aleppo, Syria                                                    | <b>50.000,00 euro</b><br>implemented with ILO<br>Syria   |
| <b>LIVE-ON Aleppo</b><br>(2024)        | Empowering Crisis-Affected Communities in Aleppo: Advancing Livelihoods Through Inclusive Skills Development and Employment Support | <b>150.000,00 euro</b><br>Implemented with<br>UNDP Syria |
| <b>DIGI EYE SYRIA</b><br>(2024)        | Enhancing youth entrepreneurship and freelancing through Digital Skills.                                                            | <b>150.000,00 euro</b><br>Implemented with<br>UNDP Syria |
| <b>SEERS- SYRIA</b><br>(2021-2025)     | Supporting the Education Ecosystem for Recovery in Syria                                                                            | <b>5.000.000, 00 euro</b><br>Co-funded by<br>EU COM      |
| <b>NABTA</b><br>(2025)                 | Entrepreneurs training to women and youth smallholders to enhance and design micro and small agricultural business.                 | <b>250.000,00 euro</b><br>Implemented with<br>FAO        |

# Portfolio MENA

## TVET & Employability

| project                                  | Title                                                                                | Budget                                           |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>FURSA – Lebanon</b><br>(2017-2018)    | Supporting Livelihoods and Social Stability for Syrian refugees and host populations | <b>4.453.447, 00 euro</b><br>co-funded by EU COM |
| <b>LEB INC- Lebanon</b><br>(2019-2021)   | Promoting Inclusive Business in Lebanon.                                             | <b>1.933.469 euro</b><br>co-funded by AICS       |
| <b>SEE CHANGE Lebanon</b><br>(2020-2024) | Social Enterprise Ecosystem Change                                                   | <b>2.317.826 euro</b><br>Co-funded by EU COM     |
| <b>HARETNA Lebanon</b><br>( 2023-2027)   | HARETNA: community –led recovery of urban neighbourhood in Lebanon                   | <b>1.100.580 euro</b><br>co-funded by AFD        |



**€20M+**

**Mobilised for  
Skills &  
Economic  
Opportunities**



**70+ Partners**

**Building an  
Integrated Skills  
Ecosystem**

**80+**

**Curricula  
Delivered  
Across  
Sectors**



**6 Integrated  
Governance**

**Models advanced**



**50+ Start-up  
with Social Impact  
supported**



**8,500**

**Beneficiaries  
Reached**



**26+  
Locations**

**300+ Micro &  
Small Enterprise  
strengthen**

**20+ new  
model of SSE &  
social enterprise in  
PPP promoted**



**55% Women  
73% Youth  
81% Displaced  
& Vulnerable  
Groups**

**84% Rural  
& Peri-Urban  
areas**

**37+ Social  
Enterprise  
enhanced**



**25-30%  
Observed  
employment rate**



COSV GROUP is a strategic platform that integrates field experience, vision, and applied tools to accelerate social transformation in fragile and emerging contexts.

Rooted in the legacy of COSV, an international NGO active since 1968, COSV GROUP brings together the power of **non-profit action**, **social entrepreneurship**, and **profit-with-purpose** into a unified ecosystem for change.



# COSV GROUP PILLARS



## *The Foundations*

**COSV** – Established in Milan in 1968, COSV is a **non-governmental organization** committed to human-centred international cooperation. COSV designs and implements **inclusive socio-economic development** programmes across the Balkans, Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa.



## *The Business Arm*

**CO-PROFIT srl** is a benefit corporation co-founded by COSV in 2021, acting as the platform's operational and consulting partner. It specialises in: **ESG strategies, Public-private partnerships Context and market analysis, Sustainable internationalisation** for purpose-driven enterprises and institutions.



## *Stories & Strategies*

**Social2Square** is the research and storytelling tool of COSV GROUP. It curates: **Community narratives and territorial mapping** Networks of young local entrepreneurs Market intelligence and trend analysis Publications and policy notes **that drive dialogue and knowledge exchange.**

[www.cosv.group](http://www.cosv.group)

# WHAT WE DO



Social Solidarity Economy & Social Entrepreneurship



Governance Protection & Social Cohesion



Rural Economies, Agriculture & Cultural Heritage



Digital Innovation & Tech4Good



Impact Research & Innovative Finance



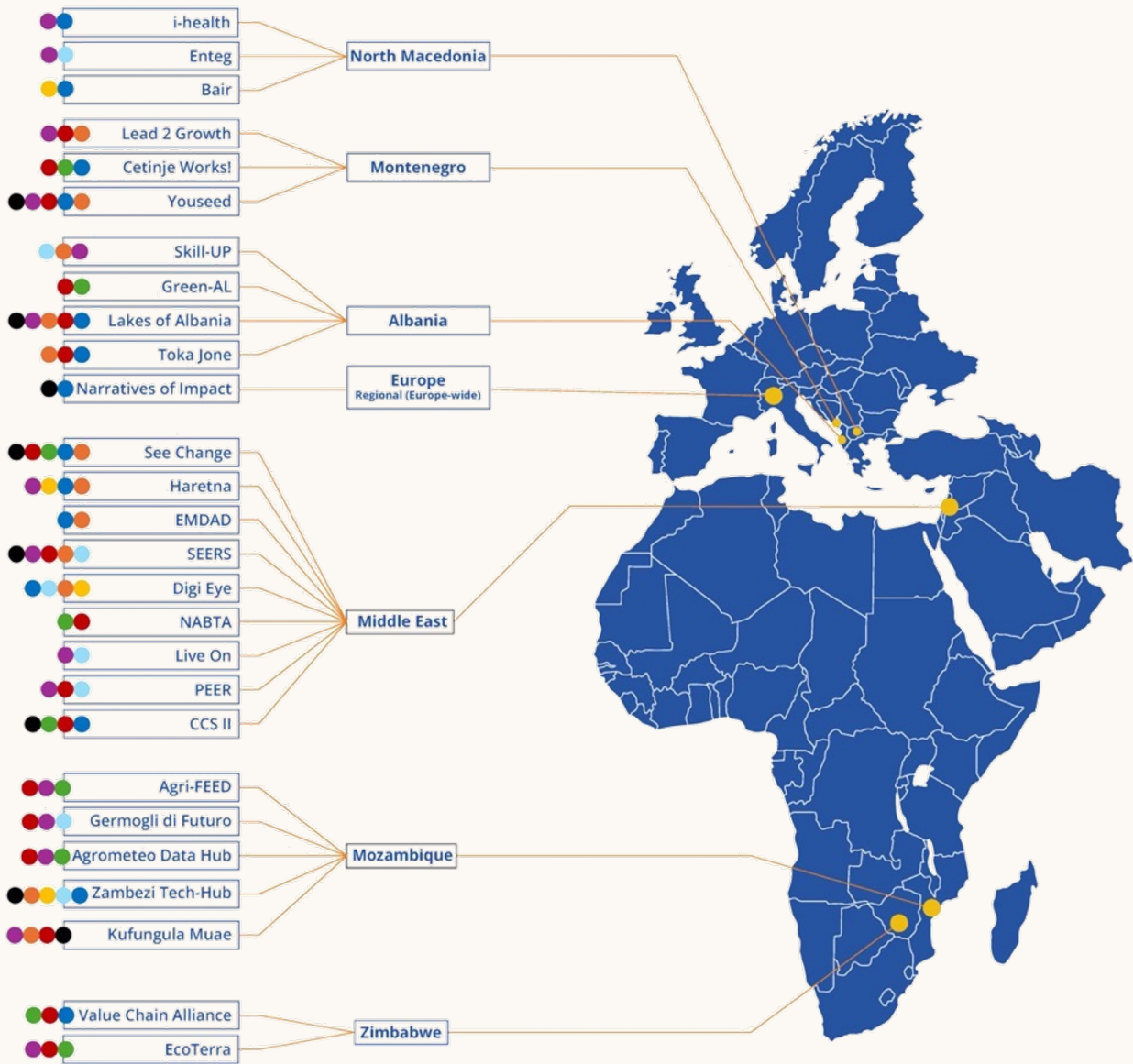
Gender-Sensitive Transformation



Education, Youth Employment & TVET.



Green Economy, Climate Resilience & Energy





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