



*European Economic and Social Committee*

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**Education and training in Euromed**

## **INFORMATION REPORT**

Section for External Relations

**Education and vocational training in the Euro-Mediterranean region**

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## **Introduction**

The EESC Euromed Follow-Up Committee has decided to focus its attention on the state of Education and Vocational Training (EVT) in the Euromed region, and to present a preliminary analysis of the subject that could be used to deepen the dialogue and interregional exchange in its forthcoming activities.

A preliminary analysis was presented at the 2018 Euromed Summit of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (Turin, 17-18 December) aimed at deepening the dialogue and interregional exchange in its forthcoming activities.

The present document (which has been enriched with several comments and recommendations by the summit participants) does not intend to provide a description or exhaustive evaluation of the education and vocational training situation in the Euromed region, which other institutions have already carried out (in particular the European Training Foundation – ETF – and academics, researchers, and other European bodies and research centres). The purpose of this document, rather, is to:

- stimulate a joint analysis and debate to deepen mutual knowledge and to prevent the reproduction of stereotypes that may hinder positive discussions among labour representatives and civil society in the Euromed region;
- highlight the strategic role that EVT can play, if it is accessible to all, guaranteed by quality public services, with qualified and well-paid staff, and in close contact with all stakeholders, the social partners, and the community. This will make an essential contribution to the consolidation in the region of strong democracies, societies with less inequalities and solid economies, which could enable a successful Euromed partnership, with respect for diversity, and recognition of the value of the contributions that each country could make;
- encourage Euromed partners to pursue common tools and good practices, in order to address the challenges they face in achieving a better and more efficient EVT. Among others: the mutual recognition of skills and capabilities, the improvement of employability and professional development of workers and EVT staff, increasing mobility opportunities for educators, students and workers, and ensuring that women and young people also from rural areas can access quality EVT, providing career guidance and counselling; and
- affirm that investment in EVT, oriented (primarily but not exclusively) to young people is one of the best responses to the challenges of unemployment/underemployment, which is one of the main reasons for increasing migration flows from these countries, and of closing the mismatch between supply and demand in the Mediterranean world of work. An effective way of preventing differences, inequalities and conflicts, and working for a coherent and targeted investment plan in the region in key productive sectors in order to encourage a sustainable co-development of the Euromed region.

### **1. Conclusions and recommendations**

- The right to quality and inclusive education, to training and lifelong learning is recognised as a key element for the development of a country; the consolidation of an EVT system in all Euromed

countries should be part of a project aimed at consolidating strong democracies, solid economies and societies with less inequalities.

- Investing in human capital is essential for the sustainable development of countries, but also in order to ensure Euromed stability and security. Data show that rates of access and retention in education and training are very imbalanced in the region, with early school leaving of children, mainly girls, still at high percentage rates in some areas.<sup>1</sup>
- EVT systems should be accessible to all, and provide people with a solid foundation of shared values and knowledge and be supported by quality public services.
- A low activity rate in almost all southern Mediterranean countries is a matter of concern, with the average rate of informal employment reaching 50%; the participation rate of women is around 25% and 30% are NEETS.
- Vocational training remains unattractive for young people in several Mediterranean countries, either because working conditions are very poor, or because jobs are poorly paid and under-professionalised; a negative image of EVT in all countries persists because of a lack of quality investments in this area. A major challenge is how to make both EVT itself and therefore the job opportunities which can be created attractive. New and more updated content is strongly recommended. Also, better cooperation with the social partners in order to update EVT and link it to the changing world of work. It is also important to encourage enterprises to learn through making better and more positive use of apprenticeships and more cooperation to encourage the school-work/enterprise transition.
- Youth education and training are a major challenge and represent a strong instrument to resist the pressure by groups seeking to focus attention on differences and promote divisions, and to prevent radicalisation.
- Women's equal rights and opportunities should be guaranteed as a contribution to inclusive development and equal access to the world of work.
- Apprenticeship programmes within enterprises should be encouraged and make better and more accessible use of Erasmus Plus for young workers and apprentices. It is necessary to prepare young people to use their skills transnationally and to be able to work in different environments and countries.
- Public institutions should be responsible for ensuring the quality of EVT and its accessibility, recognising and validating formal and non-formal education and providing qualified and well-paid staff.
- There is a lack of reliable data and a great disparity of data and conditions between the national and regional level; some data are out of date. Data should serve to orient targeted policies and programmes.
- The social partners and CSOs in every country should play a major role in analysing the needs and planning the targeted training programmes in a consistent national strategy to avoid mismatches and evaluate the EVT policies.
- The EU should contribute to promoting and ensuring a quality EVT system in Euromed countries, encouraging exchanges with different stakeholders, research networking, and facilitating the circulation of best experiences and mobility of teachers, workers, students, and researchers.

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<sup>1</sup> According to reports from the **UNESCO Institute for Statistics**.

- The available funding for EVT is very low in several Mediterranean countries. Without stable financing it is very difficult to plan long-standing, sustainable and ambitious EVT systems. New and innovative ways of programme-funding should be explored and envisaged.
- Better coordination and joint work with other international donors on developing cooperation are necessary to avoid duplication. Working on country programmes on EVT systems should become more frequent and common practice.

## 2. **Challenges and opportunities**

- 2.1 Education and training are of paramount importance for Europe's future. It is because of that that the EU has chosen as one of the key principles of its European Pillar of Social Rights "the right to a quality and inclusive education, to training and life-long learning". As the EESC has underlined in several opinions, reports and declarations, education (in its various forms) is a human right and a public good, which must be guaranteed and available to everybody. Data show that early school-leaving in some areas is still quite high, especially among girls, not only because of cultural reasons, but also due to lack of infrastructure and monitoring mechanisms. The right to basic education for all should be duly implemented and monitored.
- 2.2 The EESC has emphasised that one of the main objectives of education is to provide people with a solid foundation of values and knowledge that enables them to become active and critical citizens within their societies. The EESC has also affirmed that quality education and professional training (EVT) enables workers (men and women) to more easily access and perform better in the various jobs and professions, in a largely globalised working world that is changing dramatically, and where the future of work is under debate. The EESC has already recommended working together with the social partners at all appropriate levels and with wider civil society organisations to develop proper provisions on decent working conditions and the protection required to take account of new forms of work (such as online work, the gig and sharing economies).
- 2.3 The EESC has underlined that economic, labour and social rights are essential for economic development and a democratic society. These rights include free enterprise, freedom of association and of industrial action, collective bargaining, and social protection. The full implementation and respect of the ILO international labour standards are critical tools to this end. And education is an essential and strong instrument for the tangible achievement of these rights. Those values and rights are facing difficult moments in their implementation in some European and Mediterranean countries. The civil society organisations from both sides, supported by EU and national governments, should build strong partnerships and could make a major contribution to the Euromed project if they exchange and share experiences and knowledge on these matters, better understanding mutual needs and addressing new challenges in different contexts.
- 2.4 Investing in human capital is a key issue for the sustainable development of countries and for regional stability and security. Mediterranean countries are experiencing rapid growth in their working-age populations. Almost 60% of the regional population is today under the age of 30 and the number of young people under the age of 15 is forecast to increase by over 18% by 2020. Some 2.8 million young people enter into the labour market each year in the region. With an average of about 30% youth unemployment and around 50% for young women, the region has one of the highest youth unemployment/underemployment rates in the world. If the youth

unemployment rate were reduced by half, it is estimated that the region's gross domestic product could increase by USD 25 billion in 2018.

- 2.5 EVT has a strategic importance which should exceed the sole purpose of producing results in economic terms, and should contribute to reinforcing social cohesion, consolidating ever more solid and open democracies, and enabling the full exercise of citizenship and the positive recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity, in order to continue building a Euromed project on good economic, social, cultural and political foundations: a project that could help to resist the pressure exerted by groups which, on both sides of the Mediterranean, seek to focus attention on differences and promote divisions, a project that can build mutual trust and respect. To a large extent, the acceptance and positive appraisal of a common Euromed project by the area's inhabitants will depend on the real capacity to expand the opportunities for EVT, because this could improve living and working conditions and represent a tangible proposal to the working world for the future in order also to promote the entrepreneurial spirit.
- 2.6 The EESC, on several occasions, has called for joint efforts to improve the quality of primary and secondary education, and higher education and vocational training through the exchange of experience on curriculum development and innovative methodology. Furthermore, it considers it essential to close the knowledge gap between the two shores of the Mediterranean and to this end, encourage the promotion of joint knowledge and research networks, and facilitate the transfer and circulation of best experiences and know-how and the mobility of teachers, students, workers, academics and researchers, while also supporting the translation of their work in the different languages.
- 2.7 It should be recalled that following the Copenhagen Process (2002), European education ministers signed the Bruges Communiqué aimed at increasing their cooperation, during the period 2011-2020, in developing more attractive and effective EVT systems and of better quality. They also recognised the importance of ensuring the full participation of trade unions and employers, educational authorities, and civil society organisations, in the design, implementation, and evaluation of EVT policy at national and regional levels as an imperative that requires further progress and more resources. They affirmed that EVT should continue to be available and accessible throughout people's entire working lives, providing knowledge and training that will enable people to keep their skills and professional competences up to date. All these aspects should and could be integrated in joint programmes at Mediterranean level.
- 2.8 Women's equal rights and opportunities are an essential contribution to inclusive development and regional stability. The main fields of Euromed action here should include education and vocational training, equal access to the world of work and entrepreneurship and equal access to leadership and decision-making positions.
- 2.9 Several Euromed countries have developed EVT systems, and this has helped to improve their employment rates, especially among young people, and they have also been able to cope better with the economic crisis. However, despite satisfactory results and benefits, EVT systems have not always received the necessary recognition, appreciation and resources in this region. Unfortunately, in some countries the economic policies pursued since the outbreak of the economic and financial crisis have included cuts and budgetary adjustment measures that have

affected EVT systems. Vocational training remains unattractive for young people in several Mediterranean countries, either because working conditions are very poor, or because jobs are poorly paid and under-professionalised; a negative image of EVT in all countries persists because of a lack of quality investments in this area. A major challenge is how to make attractive both EVT itself and therefore the job opportunities which can be created. New and more updated content and regular analysis of shortages of vocational specialists in key sectors per country are strongly recommended. Also, better cooperation with the social partners in order to update EVT and link it to the changing world of work.

- 2.10 It is also important to recognise that EVT systems in Europe and the Mediterranean countries are very diverse: initial vocational education and training can begin during the compulsory education phase, or afterwards, can be full-time in institutes, schools/institutions, and in enterprises. It can be based on professional practices with part-time learning in schools/EVT institutions. There are countries that combine these systems. Nevertheless, a system of professional education and training of good quality, with resources, infrastructure and trained and well-remunerated staff, depends on the balance between the various elements:
- (a) general education;
  - (b) theoretical vocational training;
  - (c) practical professional training.

These aspects must form a holistic system, capable of building the foundations for a successful working life supported by lifelong learning, as well as allowing a transition to higher education, if desired.

- 2.11 The different traditions and education systems, both in Europe and in the Mediterranean region, require the establishment of common rules to ensure recognition of skills and competences. It is important to continue designing and launching practical and effective mechanisms that enable people to be active members of the societies where they live, providing them with knowledge and skills in different jobs and professions. Public institutions should be responsible for ensuring the quality of EVT, monitoring its implementation, recognising and validating formal and non-formal education and evaluating its results with the participation of, among others, the social partners, education institutions and their professional staff, and organised civil society.

A few examples of the state of play in EVT are included in Appendix I and better show the diversity that prevails in the region. It is also important to underline that the ETF provides updated analyses of the EVT systems in the whole Euromed region which represent a fundamental reference in this area.

- 2.12 It is important to mention the need to tie vocational training to apprenticeships/traineeships in enterprises. Enterprises should play an active role in workers' training and recruitment. Employers should actively participate in and contribute to analysing the needs and planning the targeted training programmes in a consistent national strategy. An example here can be seen in Jordan, where a pharmaceutical company trains young workers – with the support of a public contribution – who are ultimately hired by the company.
- 2.13 As is well known, today more than in the past, it is not possible to acquire all the necessary skills, knowledge and competences for a whole working life before starting to work, due to fast and

frequent changes in the world of work. Therefore, EVT must prepare for the acquisition of key competences in particular entrepreneurship<sup>2</sup> and digital competences<sup>3</sup>, that enable people to enter the labour market and make them aware of the need to continue to improve and refocus their skills and knowledge throughout their life. To do so, workers and employers depend to a large extent on the degree of development and available resources for EVT that exist in each country. Competition in foreign languages should be one of the education priorities, for workers (women and men) to be able to successfully participate in a fast-changing international and regional labour market.

- 2.14 Apprenticeships and traineeships represent a valuable tool enabling young workers (men and women) to access the specific and practical realities of the working world. Exchanges of experiences in the Euromed area can be very positive and facilitate people's participation in the labour market with greater possibilities of success, provided that some essential conditions are established and respected, among others: a clear contractual definition of the objectives to be attained, the duration, the remuneration allocated and the recognition/certification that they will get at the end. One example to be mentioned, among others, is the "Global business line" that the Italian enterprise ENI explained at the summit, aimed at training young people to be employed in different countries and building a positive supply chain mechanism as multipliers of best practices.
- 2.15 The new technologies play an important role in the development of innovative EVT initiatives and are already a useful tool in many European programmes for developing cooperation; they will be even more important in the near future, and should be part of the proposals for a Euromed cooperation programme. Online training programmes and e-learning are a very valuable complement to EVT teaching but should not be considered a substitute for face-to-face classes in direct contact with EVT professionals.
- 2.16 A culture of institutional self-evaluation should be an integral part of the measurement and evaluation of the quality of an EVT programme. The EU has implemented instruments such as:
- the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) that acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe, promoting workers' and learners' mobility between countries and facilitating their lifelong learning;
  - the European Training Credit system for EVT (ECVET) that aims to give people greater control over their individual learning experiences and make it more attractive to move between different countries and different learning environments; and
  - the European Quality Assurance Framework for EVT (EQAVET), that provides a European-wide system to help Member States and stakeholders to document, develop, monitor, evaluate and improve the efficacy of their EVT system and their practices of quality management.
- 2.17 This is one of the differences and asymmetries to consider when developing joint initiatives, since several countries in the Mediterranean region have not yet sufficiently developed similar

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<sup>2</sup> EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework

<sup>3</sup> DigComp 2.1: The Digital Competence Framework

instruments. Without trying to mechanically transfer experiences that are very marked by the national reality, it is important to support the development of appropriate and suitable mechanisms to measure and evaluate the quality of EVT systems.

- 2.18 A well-developed public career guidance service, with enough resources allocated, and qualified staff is a strong indicator of the good performance of an EVT programme. Information, advice, accompaniment, evaluation, collection of good practices, research into innovative initiatives and their dissemination and promotion all contribute to the achievement of better results. All educational and vocational training systems should include an accessible public service for professional guidance and development. Services should promote gender-sensitive equity, social cohesion and active citizenship, as well as increased creativity and innovation, and could additionally include entrepreneurship as a career option. This is another area where joint Euromed initiatives could be suggested.
- 2.19 One element that emerges from an analysis of work practices in vocational training is that due to equipment-related requirements, for educational reasons and health and safety reasons, the ratio between teachers/trainers and students should be lower than in a traditional classroom. This requires proper investment in infrastructure and in hiring qualified and well remunerated staff, with opportunities for constant updating of their knowledge and skills.
- 2.20 Several countries of the Med region, which still suffer from situations of political instability, armed conflict and economic crisis, face a real challenge because they struggle to allocate enough resources to their vocational training programmes, which, however, would help them to alleviate the high levels of unemployment/underemployment, and increase their competitiveness.
- 2.21 There is an increasing tendency to base educational programmes on an economic analysis of the skills and competences needed by the labour market and too often to foresee those needs in the short term. Forecasts may neglect the social and political context in which people develop their activities and the fact that people are increasingly forced to change professions and jobs during their working lives and need to periodically update their qualifications and reorientate with a view to their entire working life. There is a danger that EVT will become excessively focused on a short-term vision of the labour market situation, instead of on a medium-term strategy able to anticipate change and enable people to receive a quality education and vocational training, which provides the basis for lifelong learning, and which, at the same time, enables enterprises and workers (women and men) to face the structural changes that are taking place, and will continue to take place in the future.
- 2.22 One of the biggest challenges faced by many Mediterranean countries is to identify adequate financing mechanisms for sustainable skills development and EVT systems. Given the shortages of resources, it is essential to try to coordinate aid and programmes with other international donor organisations and work jointly on "country programmes".

- 2.23 The EESC has expressed on many occasions its position on the migration phenomenon that Europe – and not only Europe – has been facing in the last decade<sup>4</sup>. The EESC and the 2018 Euromed Summit participants stressed once again their concern regarding the lack of an EU system based on a common, “robust, solidarity-based system” for asylum seekers arriving to the shoreline of European countries.
- 2.24 The EESC has underlined that Europe needs legal channels of migration from third countries to fulfil labour needs, to reduce pressure on the asylum system and efficiently combat the irregular migration. The EVT strategy for the Euromed region can:
- a) help to stabilise the neighbouring societies by reducing youth unemployment and creating potential for economic growth; and
  - b) open legal pathways to European labour markets for young people who could have access to vocational training institutions fully or co-financed by the EU and get the necessary skills and qualifications.

### 3. **Proposals for joint action**

- 3.1 Some key issues to be considered by Euromed partners when designing and executing joint actions, among others:
- the context of political and economic instability that could hinder medium- to long-term programming;
  - the low capacity or sometimes lack of political possibilities to decide on a national strategy or to invest enough resources in education and especially in vocational training;
  - the need to support the development of national strategies for education and vocational training with the involvement of authorities, the social partners and civil society organisations, starting at territorial and regional level. This should be an objective of developing cooperation in Euromed.
- 3.2 Considering that EVT is of paramount importance to all, youth and adults, employed and unemployed, for women who often enter the world of work with greater difficulties and obstacles and for the members of the most vulnerable groups of society, migrants and refugees, minorities, people with different levels of abilities, all these social groups are highly relevant to the Euromed cooperation and should be considered when designing joint initiatives and proposals.
- 3.3 To better coordinate efforts to promote and improve EVT at regional level it will be necessary to increase networking, e-learning, NTIC training, peer-learning and cooperation between providers

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<sup>4</sup> *The EESC believes that the current situation requires the EU to establish a truly common European asylum system based on harmonised procedures throughout the EU. This includes uniform asylum status and mutual recognition of asylum decisions, shared responsibility and efforts with respect to relocation and resettlement, and a revised Dublin Regulation. There is a need for robust, solidarity-based systems of burden-sharing, especially a permanent, fair and binding system for allocating those seeking protection between all EU countries. In addition, long-term solutions for the event that mass migrations continue or occur again in the future must also be sought. [...] Europe has an ageing population and faces a skills shortage, which can be addressed through migration. However, the EU must have a more effective immigration policy in place. The EU should design a comprehensive legal migration policy aimed at welcoming newcomers that is transparent, predictable and just. At the same time, it has to be recognised that immigration is not the only response to labour market shortages and demographic challenges, and that Member States may consider other, more appropriate solutions. Opinion of the EESC on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A European Agenda on Migration, Official Journal of the European Union, 24/02/2016.*

(public and private), to create training opportunities for young school-leavers, low-skilled workers and migrant workers without neglecting digital literacy.

- 3.4 Women's equal rights and opportunities are an essential contribution to inclusive development and regional stability; the developing cooperation could consider:
- increasing and facilitating Euromed dialogue and activities among women (workers and employers);
  - promoting specific Euromed projects and initiatives to mainstream gender equality in EVT activities, including changes in curricula, apprenticeships and traineeships in "non-traditional jobs for women" among others.
  - building regional networks, focusing on gender-related issues that address the regional challenges and ensure coherence and complementarity.
  - promoting exchanges at enterprise level with pilot projects (e.g. ENI).
- 3.5 A key issue to be considered is supporting the development or improvement of national qualification frameworks (NQFs): to plan or modernise them, to set up rules for comparability and to promote working in partnerships.
- 3.6 Another area where joint Euromed initiatives could be suggested is support for the establishment of accessible public services for professional guidance and development. Services here should promote access to quality vocational training, which is linked to the realities and needs of the world of work, gender-sensitive, builds social cohesion and active citizenship, and increases creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial spirit.
- 3.7 Action research is an important aspect in the development of effective, updated EVT systems capable of facing present and future challenges. The promotion of a greater number of joint investigations, which link education authorities, universities, vocational training centres, the social partners and organised civil society can help to make a qualitatively important leap in Euromed cooperation. This is quite relevant in the Mediterranean countries where very often, the response to the challenges faced by education and vocational training is often greatly affected by the political, economic and social situation. It is prudent therefore to decide on actions based on specific data extracted from the reality of these countries and avoid applying to such different realities, tests, measurement mechanisms and analysis that are very marked by the European reality.
- 3.8 Besides the EU, a number of major international organisations and national public cooperation institutions work in the Mediterranean region (UN, UNHCR, UNICEF, IMF, World Bank, ILO among others). Coordination and joint work in order to avoid duplication or overlaps on the same subject on cooperation programmes with existing education and vocational training systems, with shared objectives and a defined strategy involving all stakeholders should be considered a priority.
- 3.9 In this framework, the EESC encourages the Commission to propose to set up, in coordination with the ILO, a "country programme strategy", with the involvement of the other international donors active in the Euromed area, which sets out activities as well as principles, general guidelines and different approaches.

3.10 The future of work is an essential topic which should have a key place in the political debate and in social dialogue on education and vocational training. Tectonic shifts are re-shaping the ways in which work is performed. The result is that those changes that could open up new opportunities to turn innovations into new jobs are, at the same time, introducing high levels of unpredictability for both workers and businesses. Initiatives, proposals and projects in Euromed countries should strive to have a forward-looking perspective and encourage innovation, entrepreneurship and research to address future challenges and promote co-development initiatives in the region.

Brussels, 20 March 2019

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**N.B.:** Appendix overleaf.

## APPENDIX 1

A few examples of the EVT situation in Mediterranean countries, according to reports from the World Bank, UNESCO and the European Training Foundation (ETF)

- a) **Morocco** began a process of critical reflection on its EVT system in 2011. This process culminated in 2014 with the adoption of the Vision for Education 2030: basic education should be guaranteed to all, especially to young girls. Then in 2015 the National Strategy for Vocational Training 2021 was approved, which is being implemented. The new vision emphasises inclusion for all, throughout life. At the heart of the strategy are the links with the economic sector and the participation of the social partners. Greater emphasis is placed on internal efficiency (quality, governance and funding) and social inclusion. Synergies with general and higher education are part of the strategy. The programmes for the implementation of the strategy seek to strengthen cooperation with all stakeholders, but their involvement is very weak and occasional. The great challenge is the availability of human and financial resources to achieve these objectives. Unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is at the centre of the public debate. Although the unemployment rate has recently stabilised (9.5% in April 2018, according to the IMF), first-time job seekers and the long-term unemployed remain vulnerable, reflecting deficits between training and employment. In addition, the rate of activity has been reduced and young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are less involved in the job market. Despite their access to education and training, women's participation in work is still very low, due to the number of women who do not work and the slow development of equality in school enrolment. The proportion of young people who do not study or work is 27.9% on average but amounts to 45.1% among women and 72% of housewives. At the same time, the development of a national qualifications framework (NQF) continues with a significant result achieved in 2016: at the first official meeting of the NQF national commission its structure and the programme for the continuation of the technical work were approved.
- b) Education and vocational training (EVT) play a very important role in **Egypt**. It covers around 50% of secondary students, and is perceived by most stakeholders and policy makers as one of the best tools for addressing unemployment/underemployment. The increasing importance of EVT has been confirmed in recent years by its inclusion in the new Constitution, the (as of yet unsuccessful) attempt to create a specific ministry, and the financial investment by the Egyptian government in reform initiatives (e.g. EUR 67 million was allocated by the European Union, supported by EVT-Reform Programme II, with around EUR 12 million released in 2016). The "paradox" of the "educated unemployment" which has been recognised for a decade as a typical feature of the Egyptian world of work, persists. This indicates a clear need to revise curricula and to better adapt the EVT system to the reality of the world of work. It also implies a need to review the national economic model, which is probably not able to generate enough high-quality jobs that require highly qualified workers.
- Employment in Egypt is facing several challenges. The country is undergoing an economic crisis that has affected employment opportunities at all levels. In 2015, the tourism industry was very affected when an attack killed 200 holidaymakers, shortly after the take-off of a Russian airliner at a Red Sea resort in Sharm-el-Sheikh. Now it is slowly recovering, but many enterprises were closed, and a great number of jobs were lost.

The number of jobs available in the private sector has decreased. The fiscal crisis has seen the government reduce the recruitment of employees into the public sector. National projects have been used to mitigate unemployment, but these cannot be considered a long-term solution.

In June 2018, the Egyptian government raised the wages of approximately five million public sector employees by 10-15% and their pensions by 15% ahead of fuel price hikes and the corresponding increase in transportation tariffs and electricity prices. But poverty rates in Egypt have soared since a USD 12 billion loan deal signed with the IMF in late 2016, intended to quickly cut Egypt's budget deficit by reducing government spending. Poverty rates in 2018 reached as high as 60% in some Egyptian regions, according to the World Bank.<sup>5</sup>

EVT is expected to play a major role in fighting unemployment in Egypt. However, its limited relevance to labour market needs partially prevents it from doing so. Mechanisms to identify the needs of the labour market and to develop relevant qualifications exist in a variety of forms. An example is the National Skills Standards Programme (NSSP), which is run by the Industrial Training Council. However, such mechanisms and tools are often not extended to the overall TVET sector.

- c) According to ILO reports, since 2007 **Lebanon** has been at a relative political standstill, and this has contributed to the lack of improvement in the EVT system and a lack of labour reforms. In addition, the conflict in neighbouring Syria has exacerbated pre-existing political divisions in Lebanon and created increasing reluctance among Lebanese political players to compromise on sensitive issues. Moreover, the country has also experienced reductions in the numbers of available job opportunities, the quality of job types offered, and general salary levels. Such factors have curtailed the expectations of a considerable portion of Lebanese young people, and thus paved the way for increased emigration among those seeking better opportunities outside the country, leading to a real "brain drain". The lack of official updated data makes it difficult to analyse the Lebanese socio-economic situation. No national census has been conducted since 1932 due to political sensitivity over the size of religious communities, which is the basis of the political system. Regarding the national education and vocational training (EVT) vision and strategy, the Lebanese government set out an action plan back in 2012, based on four core objectives:

- to examine and update curricula;
- to review the academic and administrative structure;
- to develop human resources; and
- to strengthen partnerships with the private sector.

Since the last Torino Process round in 2014, there has been no adjustment to the plan. This is mainly due to the country's prevailing situation of insecurity and political instability, which has increased the poverty and vulnerability of the population and hindered economic growth. These factors have put more pressure on the Lebanese government to shift its development priorities and focus or decide on short-term interventions to address the current situation and concentrate its efforts on reducing the impact on the country's social and economic sectors.

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<sup>5</sup> "The World Bank in Egypt" April 2018, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

- d) **Algeria**, which inherited 40 vocational training centres for adults (CFPA) after independence, was able to considerably develop infrastructural capabilities for 1 900 training institutions in 2017 including 715 that are private. The overall teaching capacity in place is close to 80% in residential training. The number of trainees in training in the public sector has reached more than 720 000 and 28 000 in the private sector: women represent nearly 40% of these staff.

Is important to say that the offer has been improved in terms of quality, thanks to partnership agreements signed in preparation for the implementation of the five-year development plan 2015-2019. These conventions deal with inherent areas, particularly, economic diversification and food security. However, a few points highlighted, inherent to the situation of young people, illustrate more margins for improvement where there is yet to be investment in the training of human capital:

- Demographic pressure (15-29 years) is highly sensitive in Algeria, as in most southern Mediterranean countries. This imposes the need for solutions in terms of education and professional and social integration.
- Access to education is almost universal for children from 6 to 15 years, but difficulties related to school failure and drop-out rates are still recurring.
- Algeria shares with the rest of the southern Mediterranean countries the characteristic of a low activity rate. Indeed, on average, less than one in two, aged 15 and up, is active in this region, whereas this rate is close to 60% in the countries of the EU and 65% at the global level. This low level of activity is specially related to women where it is less than 20%, against an average of 52% at the global level.

- e) **Jordan**: EVT policies and provision in Jordan involve various levels of government, multiple ministries, the private sector and a wide range of stakeholders. Aligning these interests demands effective coordinating structures of governance, a policy framework that incentivises cooperation, and strong leadership. The current governance arrangements in the EVT system do not enable that, since they are rather fragmented and allow for little cooperation.

Equipping people with the right skills for current and future needs requires a structured labour market information system that can inform the various stakeholders about these needs. Also needed are well qualified teachers and a rigorous quality assurance mechanism that supports the entire qualifications system. Very few of these requirements are currently being met in Jordan.

To address most of these issues, in September 2016 the government adopted the National Strategy for Human Resources Development 2016–2025.

A key feature of the employment and technical and vocational education and training ecosystem in Jordan is the perpetuation of policies and strategy design together with limited implementation. To date, and prior to the approval of the new human resources development (HRD) strategy, there have been several coexisting strategies that have had an impact on EVT.

The most important strategy is the Jordanian vision for 2025, that charts a path for the future and determines the integrated economic and social framework that will govern the economic and social policies based on providing opportunities for all. Its basic principles include promoting the rule of law and equal opportunities; increasing participatory policy making; achieving fiscal sustainability; and strengthening institutions. Jordan 2025 identifies a set of goals to which Jordan aspires. It sets out how these can be achieved through certain procedures and policies that will be adopted at sector level according to a flexible timetable that takes into account global and regional developments and responses to such developments.

The second strategy is the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020. It precedes Jordan 2025. It focuses on employment generation: improving standards of living for Jordanians through increased employment, wages, and benefits, and productivity improvements. It promotes, among other things, the gradual replacement of foreign workers with (skilled) Jordanians, gives more attention to structural unemployment and focuses on the upgrading of the TVET system.

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