



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Supporting Youth Employment in the Mediterranean (YEM) through improved skills anticipation systems and TVET promotion

1. Context

The Mediterranean Region is in a state of flux. Countries within the region are subject to intense political and socio-economic challenges, high volatility and instability. The economy and labour market in the region display several common features, including high unemployment, particularly among youth, and economies that are not creating a sufficient number of new jobs to meet the needs of all who want work, resulting in youth disengagement and frustration.

Political instability and security constraints due to conflict, insecurity and post-conflict situations are major challenges, which have had major impact on economic growth and youth employment in the region and which led to major refugees crisis that is affecting countries in the region as well as European countries.

The situation of the education and training systems is also alarming. Many young people in the region do not complete basic education. Of the young people in the region who do, there is evidence that a large number of these students do not acquire basic reading, math and science skills by the time they finish basic education.

In relation to technical, vocational education and training (TVET), the most significant issues for the sector are its relevance, quality and appeal. There is a tendency for the sector to attract low-level achievers. This, coupled with low professionalism of TVET teachers and the sector's lack of relevancy to the labour market (UNESCO, 2014¹) means TVET is seen as residual pathway for young people.

Although countries in the region are far from being homogeneous in terms of their socio-economic, labour market and education and training systems, different evaluations and reports (World Bank, 2008²; ETF/World Bank, 2006³; UNESCO, 2011⁴; UNESCO 2015; ETF, 2017) indicate that there are a number of common challenges relating to TVET facing countries in the region. In particular, countries are:

1. lacking appropriate labour market institutions with capacities to assess and anticipate the demands for skills. - Information on the labor market is neither sufficient nor systematically integrated into the curricula;
2. lacking private sector involvement and intervention, in regards to anticipation and identification of skills needs and matching skills demand and supply;
3. facing major challenges relating to the quality of TVET programmes, including low or unqualified teachers and outdated curricula, often poor infrastructure and resources for teaching and learning and;
4. failing to attract youth to TVET pathways.

¹ UNESCO, Technical and Vocational Training Teachers in the Arab region (2014), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002311/231160e.pdf>

² http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMENA/Resources/EDU_Flagship_Full_ENG.pdf

³ http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1126210664195/1636971-1126210694253/TVET_Knowledge_Economy.pdf

⁴ Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Arab region (2011, unpublished)

In addition, countries affected by the Syrian crisis have additional issues and challenges including offering skills development opportunities to refugees and managing their integration into the labour market.

Policy development and implementation have been impeded by the fact that TVET falls between the areas of responsibility belonging to ministries for education and for employment. Within government, authority for TVET may be divided between agencies with responsibility for secondary and tertiary phases of education. The emergence of coherent TVET strategies have, in many countries in the region, been closely connected to the establishment of a body – either a dedicated agency or a unified government ministry – to formulate TVET policy and lead its implementation. Where such bodies have only been established quite recently (for example, in Jordan) or where the governance of TVET has been relocated on several occasions (for example, in Algeria), this appears to have delayed formulation and implementation of the policy.⁵

The discourse on gender equality in TVET is shared by many different stakeholders, and has been discussed in different settings through the years. It is a major concern in Education 2030 agenda and UNESCO's strategy for TVET. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) estimates that 43% of students worldwide in secondary vocational education were female in 2014 while only 38% of students in vocational secondary education were female in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Women are less likely than men to acquire job-relevant skills outside formal education in MENA region. In Egypt, only 5% of women say that they obtained training from other craftspersons, compared to 46% of men. As a result, women have relatively less diversified and fewer marketable skills than do men. These limitations restrict women's ability to adjust their skills to suit private sector employers.⁶

This is translated in low participation of women in the labour market. For instance, in 2016, the female labor force participation rate (LFPR), in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) was significantly lower (22%) than that of male (75%). Furthermore, while women represent between 23% to 26% of employers across all regions, they comprise only around 5% in MENA region.⁷

2. Strategy of intervention

To address this situation, governments and stakeholders in the region (private sector, TVET providers, civil society / youth organizations, others) need to develop new ways to align TVET with the needs of individuals and the labour market, with a view to promote employment and sustainable development more broadly. There is also a need to increase TVET attractiveness, especially for women, both through

⁵ UNESCO. 2014. *Technical and vocational teachers and trainers in the Arab region*.
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002311/231160e.pdf>

⁶ World Bank. 2013. *Opening doors: Gender equality and development in the Middle East and North Africa*.
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/338381468279877854/pdf/751810PUB0EPI002060130Opening0doors.pdf>

⁷ UNESCO. 2017 (forthcoming). *Opening doors for girls and women*.

advocacy, promotion of lifelong learning opportunities and enhancing the quality and relevance of TVET provision.

Given the similarity of challenges, there is an added value in the exchange of experiences between countries in the region to support national reform processes. Given the progress of reforming TVET systems varies from country to country, an approach is also required to meet the specific needs of each beneficiary country, in offering twinning opportunities across the region. It is on these premises that this new regional initiative "**Supporting Youth Employment in the Mediterranean**" (YEM) is proposed for European Union funding.

At the policy level, the proposal is aligned with the **new UNESCO Strategy for TVET (2016-2021)**⁸, which prioritizes inclusive policy dialogue and reinforcement of stakeholders' capacities to promote TVET transformations that foster youth employment and entrepreneurship.

Employment and employability, with a focus on youth, is also one of the joint priorities for cooperation in the **new European Neighbourhood policy**. The joint communication on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy states that the EU can help **improve the employability of the local workforce, and help to focus efforts on the development of skills and competences and creation of opportunities particularly for young women and men**. At the policy level, close coordination with EU Delegations in beneficiary countries as well as with ETF will be required, as the areas of work covered are at the core of ETF's mandate. Particular attention must be given to the Torino Process reviews, and with Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in the context of the last UfM Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour, (Sept. 2016), UfM Roadmap for Action⁹ and related ongoing projects in the region, such as Med4Jobs¹⁰, 'Youth Match' project (implemented by GIZ).

At the operational level, the proposal builds on the EU-funded, UNESCO-led Networks of Mediterranean Youth's (NET-MED Youth) project and ETF-led GEMM project achievements. In particular, the project will build on the skills anticipation methodologies being implemented, as well as reinforce partnerships and capacities developed at the institutional level within targeted national technical partners¹¹. Furthermore, YEM will be implemented in close articulation with existing EU-funded bilateral programmes in the region¹² and UNESCO's office-led projects such as Finland-funded skills development project for Syrian Refugees and Lebanese youth.

In addition, as gender disparities remain especially high in the Arab States and in a view to move forward towards the Sustainable Development Goal 4, in particular targets 4.3 and 4.5¹³, the YEM project will be

⁸<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002438/243804e.pdf>

⁹ <http://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/UfM-Roadmap-23-JAN-2017.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://ufmsecretariat.org/mediterranean-initiative-for-jobs-med4jobs/>

¹¹Through NET-MED Youth project, targeted national technical partners have included the Tunisian National Observatory for Employment and Qualifications (ONEQ) under the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, the Moroccan High-Commissary for Planning (HCP), the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIIC), the Palestinian Economic Research Institute (MAS), the Israeli Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Trade and Labor, the Algerian Ministry of Finance (MDF), the Lebanese National Employment Office (NEO).

¹² This includes any on-going actions supporting TVET systems to match labour market needs, including PAJE and AFEQ programmes in Algeria, E4C, etc.

¹³ Target 4.3: by 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university. Target 4.5: by 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations.

designed in alignment with both the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019 and the UNESCO Gender Equality Action Plan 2014-2021 (GEAP II)¹⁴.

For all countries, the main focus of YEM is understanding how to effectively collect and use information on skills needs, turning them into relevant policy actions and programmes and establishing appropriate governance arrangements, to ensure good coordination across the key stakeholders in this region.

There is a strong interest expressed among countries in the Neighbourhood South to collect, process and disseminate appropriate information on future skills needs in order to better plan employment, education and training policies and avoid skills mismatch in the labour market. Labour markets are by no means static and face structural and conjunctural changes linked to technology, climate change and labour force migration. Countries face significant challenges in ensuring that their education and training system can adequately provide the right mix of skills and that learners own the appropriate tools and capacities to undertake this iterative assessment. However, skills forecasting, using quantitative projections, remains one tool within the broader landscape of skills needs identification methods, which successfully combines various techniques that can be implemented according to the level considered (individual/enterprise; regions/sectors; national/macroeconomic) and within the time horizon foreseen (short; mid; long-term).

In addition, the process encompassing discussion and use of the results and dissemination among an inclusive range of key stakeholders for policy-making, advocacy and information purposes requires a structured and sustainable institutional framework. Taking into consideration the country-specific situations and needs, YEM will include clustering of countries during the project's inception phase, based on achievements of the NET-MED Youth project and considering GEMM's 'lessons learned'¹⁵.

YEM will link skills assessment and anticipation exercises to specific policy challenges, including building effective learning pathways, enhancing work-based learning and entrepreneurship, and making TVET pathways more attractive. It will facilitate the understanding and use of information by curricula design actors and TVET institutions leaders. Sectoral or local focus will be also considered.

3. Modalities of regional cooperation and synergies

The project will set-up a Regional and sub-regional Platforms to facilitate cooperation and a community of practice (in particular through the UNESCO-UNEVOC Network), in the field of TVET and employment across the region (including the national and local authorities in charge of TVET); entrepreneurship and employment (such as Ministries of Labour and Employment (MoL), Public Employment Services (PES) and TVET providers). Employers' federations, trade unions and civil society will be involved in the Platform.

The project will develop new methodological guidelines, a body of knowledge, as well as intelligence and analysis of TVET and labour market developments and make them available for regional and national stakeholders.

¹⁴<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002272/227222e.pdf>

4. Logic of intervention

OVERALL OBJECTIVE:

The overall objective of the project is to support national authorities together with the private sector, the TVET providers and the youth organizations, in the Neighbourhood South in the design, implementation and evaluation of relevant technical and vocational education and training policies, strategies and programmes, which will contribute to increasing youth employment and entrepreneurship in the region. The project will achieve this through a consolidated regional and sub-regional approaches.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

The specific project objectives are as follows:

1. To reinforce capacities of countries in the Neighbourhood South in assessing and anticipating the labour market demands and in sharing and using the results to make informed TVET policy and programme decisions;
2. To use the results of skills assessment and forecasting to promote quality TVET pathways through work-based learning and entrepreneurship, digital skills and enhance gender equality.
3. To reinforce regional cooperation in the field of TVET with particular focus on skills assessment and anticipation issues.

➤ Result 1 – National systems for skills needs assessment and anticipation strengthened

Building upon the achievements made through NET-MED Youth project and taking into account the uneven situations and progress achieved according to national contexts, YEM's Expected Result 1 will aim at strengthening and developing further national systems for skills needs assessment and anticipation. This result will be achieved by developing and applying appropriate tools and building related capacities to enable them to undertake skills projections and discussing the results and inform policy-making (including forecasting, foresight, enterprise surveys and digitized tools, etc.). In addition, the articulation of Result 1's activities with Result 3's will aim at developing an improved regional and national dialogue on future skills needs using National Stakeholders Platforms and peer-learning/networking activities through the Regional Platform. For the purpose of taking into consideration progress achieved and fostering regional peer-learning and knowledge-sharing, countries will be clustered in 2 groups.

➤ **Result 2 –TVET promoted as a quality and attractive pathway, especially for young women**

Drawing on the outcomes of the assessment and anticipation of skills needs, this result seeks to facilitate effective dissemination and use of findings in several TVET areas with particular focus on training programmes, training providers and career guidance and counselling. It will support countries in ensuring a virtuous feedback loop between labour market and education and training actors. The planned activities aim at developing an appropriate approach for feedback loop with a view to increase the responsiveness of training systems to changing skill needs and to address skill shortages and tackle identified skill mismatches, through entrepreneurship and work-based learning, reinforcing the role for employers in training provision. A sectoral focus will be adopted based on the findings of Result 1.

➤ **Result 3 -Regional platform for cooperation on assessing and anticipating changing skills needs established**

In addition to national activities, regional and sub-regional networking, peer-learning and knowledge-sharing activities will be implemented to consolidate progress achieved at the national level in order to actively disseminate good practices. A Regional Platform, including through web-based and virtual meetings, will host these activities and will include the National Expert Team members (established through NET-MED Youth) and key relevant members of GEMM's National Committees on TVET governance.

The main objective of this Regional and sub-regional platforms will be to facilitate cooperation and knowledge exchange between key regional actors involved in the field of skills intelligence and anticipation. The platform will focus on the adoption of a regional perspective on applied and emerging methodologies of skills anticipation, the use of results for decision making and on the effective governance of skills anticipation systems.

The focus of the platform will be also on monitoring the existing state of play in skill needs anticipation exercises taking place in different countries as well as keeping track of ongoing developments at international level. The platform, through peer learning, will seek to deepen understanding of the different policy drivers and levers in setting up skills anticipation initiatives and how they are affected by country- or region-specific policy priorities and socioeconomic context. Finally, the platform will also explore the changing landscape in terms of anticipating emerging trends in skills and skill needs in specific sectors across countries with particular focus on green and digital economies.