



European Union

Skills in the Tourism sector in Jordan: Overview of the challenges and needs after COVID-19

Report from the national webinar, 15 June 2020

COVID-19 has spread to almost every country in the world, with few exceptions affecting mostly the countries with vulnerable economic system. Jordan, like many other countries in the world, is facing significant socio-economic challenges: (i) a high unemployment rate, particularly among youth, (ii) economies do not create enough jobs to meet the needs of the labour market, leading young people to a disengagement and a sense of frustration and (iii) the impact of COVID-19 crisis. The youth unemployment rate in Jordan for the year of 2018 stands at a staggering 37.2%, which is noted to be one of the highest figures in the past 30 years and among the highest globally (The World Bank, 2019). This is even higher amongst vulnerable groups such as women, where despite having a slightly higher ratio of educated females to males in Jordan, the female labour force participation rate is at only 14% (ILO, 2017b). According to the World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Gender Gap Index, Jordan has one of the lowest employment rates for women worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2018), suggesting that those females face more obstacles when attempting to enter the workforce than their male counterparts (YEM).

Although the government is facing a lot of challenges yet it is clear that at this moment, health care and Education seems to be at the forefront of government importance.

Henceforth the need to start planning an adequate response to the challenges this pandemic generates.

Ms. Marina Patrier, Head of Education - UNESCO Amman Office officiated the webinar by underlining UNESCO's support role when it comes to youth employment through high quality TVET and skills development programmes within different frameworks in Jordan, (1) First, to support national strategies such as the Jordan Human Resource Development Strategy (2016-2025) and the National Employment Strategy (2011-2020); (2) Second, to promote policy dialogue and capacity development in line with the UNESCO TVET Strategy (2016-2021), focusing on TVET transformation to foster youth employment, entrepreneurship and improved skills anticipation; (3) third, to support the Education 2030 Framework for Action and implementation of SDGs 4 and 8 in Jordan. She then continued by introducing YEM project, (Youth employment in the Mediterranean), the 36-month regional project funded by the European Union and implemented by UNESCO over the period of 2018-2020, with an overall objective to support national authorities, together with the private sector, the TVET providers and the youth organisations in the South Mediterranean region, in understanding and anticipating labour market changes with a view to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of relevant TVET policies, strategies and programmes, aimed at increasing youth employment and entrepreneurship. The project targets eight beneficiary countries in the South Mediterranean region, including Jordan.

Employment and employability, especially among youth, is a common priority for the YEM countries, at the same time technological change, globalisation and demographic changes are impacting labour markets, education and training systems. There is a broad consensus on the importance of anticipating labour market skills needs through the application of different complementary quantitative and qualitative methods.

Seeing that there is a need to strengthen national dialogue on future skills needs through identification of employment growth drivers and building of related scenarios on employment demand and based on YEM different previous activities and policy dialogue initiated with concerned TVET policymakers in Jordan, the tourism sector has been selected to be highlighted in terms of skills needed for its various jobs as the tourism sector has been the worst affected of all major economic sectors by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Ms. Marina Patrier confirmed that during this webinar all participants would have the opportunity to hear different voices in the tourism sector in Jordan, notably through the specific lens of COVID-19, its challenges, its impact on education, on the sector, youth employment, but also to discuss the opportunities emerging from this crisis.

Participants at the webinar represented the public sector (the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Vocational Training Corporation, National Center for Human Resources Development, (NCHRD), TVET Skills Development Commission), the private sector (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Tourism Sector Skills Council, Chamber of Industry and Commerce) Youth NGOs and Youth representatives, as well as Local and international NGOs.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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Currently, the COVID-19 has laid its weight on different countries, and there is no doubts that the situation after the pandemic will not be the same as before. Hence the need to start planning an adequate response to the challenges this pandemic generates. Under the UNESCO YEM project, UNESCO Amman Office has the pleasure to invite you to participate to the "National Webinar on Skills in the Tourism Sector in Jordan", which will take place on **Monday 15th of June 2020 from 2:00 PM to 3:45 PM**.

Experts from the tourism sector and from the education field of will address the challenges that the sector is facing such as the value chain, employment and skills needs. They will highlight previous and future initiatives to reinforce the tourism sector in Jordan, and a youth representative will provide their perspective.

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Programme specialist
UNESCO - Beirut

Ms. Ansam Ousama Malkawi
Minister's Advisor
Director of Institutional Development
and PMO at the Ministry of Tourism
and Antiquities (MOTA)

Mr. Sameh Zawati
An administrative Employee
in the Ministry of Education (MOE)
Vocational Education Department,
Hotel and Tourism Education Department

Patrick Darq
Senior Skills and Employability
Specialist for the Regional Office
for Arab States, and the Country
Coordinator for Jordan
at the International Labour
Organisation (ILO)

Elana Janini
General Manager
of the Jordan Restaurant
Association

Suzanne Griogollet
Head of Project Development
at Luminus School for Hospitality
& Tourism at Luminus Technical
University College

Chazi Al-Awadi
Voice of Youth
Graduate of the UNESCO-
Korean funded project
"Provision of TVET for
Syrian Refugees and
Jordanian Youth"

The Microsoft Teams chatroom will also provide opportunity to ask questions. You can also submit a question to our panelists in advance by emailing them to: psobhie@unesco.org or o.gheime@unesco.org

Skills in the Tourism Sector in Jordan

Overview of the challenges and needs after COVID -19

National Webinar
Monday 15th of June 2020
from 2:00 PM to 3:45 PM

1 The YEM Project (Youth Employment in the Mediterranean) is a 36-month regional project funded by the European Union and implemented by UNESCO over the period of 2018-2020, the overall objective is to support national authorities, the private sector, TVET providers and Youth organisations in the South Mediterranean region, in understanding and anticipating labour market changes with a view to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of relevant TVET policies, strategies and programmes, aimed at increasing youth employment and entrepreneurship.

YEM knowledge platform link: <https://unesco.unesco.org/yem/>

The overall objectives of the webinar:

- 1. Analysing the tourism sector with its qualification needs and emphasizing the important role of work-based-learning (WBL), digital and entrepreneurial skills**
- 2. Highlighting previous measures and discussing future plans with stakeholders taking post- COVID-19 situation into account**
- 3. Understanding the perspective of the young people concerned**

More than 25 people took part in the webinar all convinced that this sector has the ability to create many potential job opportunities under different fields and specializations.

Mr. Salim Shehadeh, Programme Specialist at UNESCO Beirut Office, started the webinar by briefing about the current situation, the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector and on youth employability in a short-medium and long-term perspective. He highlighted that the world will face a lot of challenges regarding job opportunities after COVID-19. Then Mr. Salim briefed the audience about the YEM project's objectives and outcomes, with the focus on improving youth skills so young people can compete for better employment opportunities. He emphasized that the tourism sector is a very important sector in Jordan , knowing that it creates many direct and indirect job opportunities so there is a great need to look in depth into the skills needs and the labor market demands, in order to create a skilled and competent labor force.

Ms. Ansam Malkawi, Minister's Advisor, Director of Institutional Development and PMO at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA), confirmed that COVID-19 had a severe impact on the Jordanian tourism sector, in particular due to tough and prolonged lockdown measures imposed by the Government. Ms. Ansam emphasized the importance of the sector for the national economy, especially pointing out its 13% of GDP and having in mind that the recovery would be a long process. She stated that countries need to determine the parameters and entry protocol based on risks associated with each of the origin countries, and highlighted that the economic support to the tourism and travel sector is essential to protect the industry and retain the expertise.

Knowing that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has always been considered the main pillar in providing the labour market with skilled workers, in different sectors and particularly in the tourism sector, and that TVET and skills development programmes are well-placed to play a major role during and post COVID-19 pandemic, **Mr. Sameh Zawati**, Administrative Employee at the Ministry of Education (MoE) Vocational Education Department/ Hotel and Tourism Education Unit presented the challenges and aspirations of the hotel and tourism sector. He said that this this sector has a clear social impact and on individuals, and that it forms the decisive means of developing their capabilities, mastery of work, and granting employment opportunities, helps to increase capita income and the employment rate.

He elaborated on the importance of the contribution of the hotel and tourism education to the economic and social development programmes, which are helping to reduce unemployment and creating job opportunities. The tourism sector is facing a lot of challenges such as a negative social perception, lack of financial resources, poor infrastructure for tourism training institutions. All obstacles to increasing the number of students, for the maintenance and rehabilitation of infrastructure workshops as well as the upgrading workshop facilities and essential teacher training, which should be

in line with the needs of the labour market. At the end, Mr. Sameh concluded the priorities and aspirations of the tourism sector:

- Supporting Hotel & Tourism stream by providing skilled graduates who are able to meet the needs of the labour market.
- Adopting necessary strategies and policies and to develop vocational education and training at the MoE in particular Hotel & Tourism stream and increasing the financial resources to support tourism stream.
- Enhancing the negative perception on TVET in general and in particular tourism stream through developing and implementing awareness raising campaigns.
- Supporting partnership projects between the private and public sectors through the development of necessary legislation.
- Activating the Ministry's Vocational Guidance Strategy by developing action plans in line with the national vocational guidance strategy plans.
- Establishing an electronic platform for vocational education to provide interactive e-learning courses.
- Introducing a comprehensive quality control system in hotel & tourism school.

Mr. Patrick Daru the Senior Skills and Employability Specialist for the Regional Office of the Arab States, and Country Coordinator for Jordan at the International Labour Organization (ILO), presented a global overview of the tourism sector and the impact of COVID -19 and stated that based on ILO's recent research 330 million jobs (10% of the total jobs of 2019) were created directly and indirectly by the tourism sector. A great share of MSME's, around 30%, are small enterprises and a informal employment specially for youth, female and migrant people.

COVID- 19 has a huge impact on the tourism sector and he explained further that the sector faced 40 to 70% of contraction. MSME's are even more affected because of less assets, less savings and less access to finances. He added that there is an indirect impact on civil aviation (10 million jobs are on hold) and handicrafts, agriculture and food and beverage provision. The crisis also worsened the basis of decent work, which included long hours and lack of payment for extended working hours.

Mr. Daru demonstrated the measures that were taken in a few countries, such as Portugal, Barbados, Singapore and Chile, who had conducted training and capacity building for tourism workers during the lockdown through free or subsidized online courses. Other examples were the reduction of income tax by Malaysia, the companies allowance to offer rescheduling vouchers in France and Rwanda, the wage protection of the unemployed, self-employed or part seasonal workers in Portugal, Jamaica, Italy, the Bahamas , Chile Peru and Korea, as well as the Singapore state support in cleaning and disinfection.

At the end Mr. Daru imagined that the domestic tourism will likely restart first after the crisis, and that there will be a huge need to support enterprises and workers to rebuild the sector, and that a great importance should be given to OSH (occupational safety and health) when things will gradually start getting back to normal.

Ms. Eliana Janini, General Manager at the Jordan Restaurant Association provided an overview of the resilience of the tourism and hospitality sector in Jordan and the impact of COVID-19 survey results. The survey was conducted in April 2020 by the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Skills Council in Jordan, which

is at the forefront of supporting the tourism sector responding to the crisis. 341 responses from employers were collected across the tourism and hospitality industry. The survey revealed that:

- 44 % of employers expect to lose talents and skills due to the increasing layoffs and financial burdens of small enterprises.
- Many businesses are not prepared for the pandemic and related restrictions, therefore organisational communication has been impaired:
 - 53% do not have a contingency plan,
 - only 29% are able to work remotely and,
 - 46% cannot even take part in virtual meetings.
- Great levels of uncertainty on how the crisis will impact learning & development activity.
- Resilience skills will be most needed (awareness of changing customer requirements and behaviour).
- Digitalisation and the ability to use appropriate equipment, identifying the needs for domestic tourism, and identifying complex problems are also important skills for the sector in the future.
- Respondents highlighted the need for sector specific guidance on social distancing and legal requirements upon re-opening.

Ms. Janini highlighted that the survey recommends that the resilience of the hospitality and tourism industry in the aftermath of COVID-19 is key to recovery of this important economic sector. There are several short- medium-term recommendations that are emerging as critical factors to consider as employers plan to re-emerge and reopen their doors:

- ▶ Follow the government guidance for safe operating practice and ensure that staff is trained in social distancing measures, new workplace standards, infection prevention and hygiene control.
- ▶ Use the new Professional Standards for Service Operators to make sure that the training meets the industry-recognised standard.
- ▶ The free-to-use guidance acts as a checklist and clearly outlines the skills, knowledge and behaviours required.
- ▶ Consider alternative shift patterns. Rotating Team A and Team B or more teams in order to able to isolate employees who only work together on shifts if new cases arise means businesses can continue to keep operating.
- ▶ Invest more in technology and innovation.
- ▶ Work closely with industry associations.
- ▶ Raise consumer confidence, ensure to customers that front facing teams are equipped to keep them safe will be critical beyond COVID-19.
- ▶ Empower managers.
- ▶ Value the greatest asset: regardless of business size, people are the greatest asset. Those who have chosen to work in hospitality and tourism at every level are the key to the economic recovery of this sector.

Ms. Susanne Griogoleit, Head of Project Development at Luminus School for Hospitality & Tourism presented Luminus Technical University College's (LTUC) response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The College offers high quality vocational training, diplomas and bachelor degree programmes, soft skills and technical education to individuals, corporations, donors and Governments through accredited programmes. To mitigate the pandemic risks, more than 300 teachers were equipped with laptops, routers and essential equipment and 547 programmes were accessible to students on the learning management system (LMS). She explained that in order to plan youth employment for the post COVID-19 era, the Luminus Employment Hub reached out to new and emerging industries and discussed with them the required competencies and skills.

She showed briefly the facilities of the Hospitality & Tourism School that is extended over 3 floors and designed to replicate actual working environments within the hospitality & tourism industry. Currently, LTUC is adopting blended learning modalities, which includes self-paced e-learning, media, activities, events, online learning and face-to-face trainings.

Ms. Chaza Al-Awadi represented the voice of youth, a graduate of the UNESCO-Korean funded Project "Provision of TVET for Syrian Refugees and Jordanian Youth". She praised the opportunity saying that she joined the training programme "Tourism and Hotel Management" at LTUC, with hopes for a better future amid the hard situation that all youth is currently facing. Her dream was to be financially independent. She underlined the importance of the training programme by confirming that by being upskilled she is ready to take the road towards success. The programme offered her the most needed skills and competences needed for the job market which boosted her innovation skills, and she described herself as prepared to conquer the world of work.

Overall, this webinar offered an important platform for gathering the thoughts of experts coming from different sectors, presenting different community demands and highlighting the need to have a clear overview of skills anticipation in the tourism sector, since it has the potential to offer a lot of direct and indirect job opportunities in the nearest future in Jordan. More reflections on especially the future of the tourism sector post COVID-19 touched upon what would be the role of each shareholder and organization to support the sector in regaining its strength. To know what would be the required skills in the future, a more in depth study was suggested to be carried out. This webinar constituted the first step towards a more detailed study and research of the tourism sector, market needs, gaps as well as required skills.

YEM builds on the achievements of the EU-funded NET-MED Youth project's Employment Component. It has helped build skills anticipation models and mobilized key national stakeholders, including national institutions, youth and private sector representatives, to understand and employ the results from this exercise in service of policymaking for technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

The YEM project is funded by the European Union and implemented over a three-year period (2018-2020). Its aim is to support youth employment and entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean region by improving skills anticipation and TVET systems.

- [YEM project website](#)
- [YEM Knowledge Platform](#)
- [What UNESCO does in the field of Skills for Work and Life](#)