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مركز التكامل المتوسطي



Youth and Employability in MENA

Better Skills, More Jobs

الشباب والتوظيف
في منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا
مهارات أفضل، وظائف أكثر

Cairo, 9-10 July 2017

Marriott Hotel, 16 Saray El Gezira Street, Zamalek

PRELIMINARY VERSION AS OF 26/06/2017

الشباب والتوظيف في منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا مهارات أفضل، وظائف أكثر

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In the Mediterranean region there are about 140 million young (aged 15-29) women and men. That is almost 20 percent of the population. They account for a large reservoir of untapped human resources, with the world's highest unemployment rate among youth and the lowest participation of females in the labour force¹ (25 percent in the Southern Mediterranean – the lowest in the world). The high number of young people neither in employment, education, or training (NEET) illustrates the lack of opportunities and contributes to increase youth's absence of a vision on its own future. Work in the private sector has been underdeveloped, whilst civil service – where positions are highly sought after because they provide access to status and stability – has been more attractive. Moreover, the current organisation of the production system between the Northern and Southern Mediterranean restricts the Southern economies to the low value-added end as well as short-term subcontracting arrangements, thus preventing reduction of the abnormally high levels of unemployment of skilled workers which fuels expatriation².

Therefore, fostering job creation and employability is necessary to achieve youth inclusion in the Mediterranean.

A solid investment climate and a dynamic private sector are prerequisites for a vibrant economy that would reduce the current pressure on the State to guarantee employment through unsustainable civil service expansion. In order to be competitive and allow to exit a rentier model, jobs in the private sector should bring competitive salaries and social security. Labour market regulations that favour the hiring of youth and efficient social insurance systems are thus key elements for growth and welfare.

Moreover, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region countries need to gradually move to knowledge-based economies, as knowledge is recognised as a key driver for productivity and economic growth. Young people entering the labour market need to acquire the range of skills that is required by the labour market and continuously adapt these skills. Despite the success of the MENA countries in ensuring access to education and infrastructures, curricula and learning methods do not impart sufficient skills that match labour market needs, which constitute necessary conditions for inclusion, self-fulfilment and social mobility. A new vision of education is critical for the MENA region – one that promotes critical thinking, creativity and innovation that would allow the region to achieve inclusive growth, stability, and global competitiveness.

This two-day conference aims to leverage existing research and analytical tools/frameworks to identify the main binding constraints afflicting youth employment in the MENA region, and explore the role of business climate, labour and education policies in mitigating those challenges. The conference will bridge theory with practical applications by focusing on international good practices related to the design and implementation features of policies that can help youth connect to jobs, start a new business, or manage periods of inactivity or unemployment.

Promoting job creation for youth requires the involvement of a myriad of government and non-government actors across different sectors. As such, the conference will target both policy makers and technical experts from different MENA governments and agencies, international organisations, private sector and civil society. The conference will be interactive and will encourage active participation and discussion among participants. It is expected that the conference will lead to the identification of concrete policy and operational recommendations to tackle some of the region's most pressing job challenges for youth.

¹ 'Jobs for Shared Prosperity: Time for Action in the Middle East and North Africa', World Bank, 2013.

² 'Economic Transitions in the Mediterranean' policy paper, CMI, 2015.



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Sunday, 9 July 2017

09:00 Opening speeches

Sahar Nasr, Minister of Investment and International Cooperation
Asad Alam, Country Director for Egypt, The World Bank

09:30 Session 1: Institutional Panel Discussion

Sahar Nasr, Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, Arab Republic of Egypt
Ali Ghezawi, Minister of Labour, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Imed Hammami, Minister of Employment and Vocational Training, Tunisian Republic

Moderator: Mourad Ezzine, Manager, Center for Mediterranean Integration

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 Session 2: What Does It Take to Create Jobs for Youth?

A prerequisite for job creation is the creation of a policy environment that is conducive to growth. This session will provide its participants an overview of the fundamentals that are needed for job creation, and which include macroeconomic stability, an enabling business environment, and the rule of law.

Moderator: Egypt's Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation

Keynote speaker: Ibrahim Elbadawi, Managing Director of the Economic Research Forum, President and Coordinator of FEMISE*

Christophe Lucet, Head of Regional Office for the Near East, European Investment Bank

Heba Handoussa, Founder of Egypt Network for Integrated Development (ENID)

Ruba Jaradat, Regional Director for the Arab States, International Labour Organization*

Nour Shammout, Policy Manager, J-PAL

Youth success story: ★

Nour El Wassimy, youth representative, winner of the World Bank's Youth Essay Competition in Egypt

12:30 Lunch break



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13:30 Session 3: Private Sector and Entrepreneurship for Job Creation

This session will provide its participants an overview of the programmes and policies that can promote the development of the private sector and encourage entrepreneurship, especially among youth. In MENA, most micro and small enterprises are just forms of survivorship, with limited chances to grow. Moreover, many large enterprises are born large, often the result of government support or privileged access to finance and information. Breaking privilege is one more reason why the success of micro and small enterprises is so important. On the other hand, self-employed workers account for a significant share of employment. Even if only a fraction of them succeeded in building a viable business, the aggregate impact on living standards and productivity would be substantial.

Moderator: **Mohamed El-Shiaty**, Sr. Private Sector Specialist, The World Bank
Keynote speaker: **Noomane Fehri**, Founder & CEO of B@Labs incubation platform, Former Minister of Digital Economy, Tunisia
Egypt's Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation Representative
Eman Omran, SME Program Team Leader, Global Affairs Canada, Egypt
Nicholas Skibiak, Deputy Regional Program Director in Middle East, Mercy Corps
Gustavo Demarco, Program Leader, Social Protection and Labour, The World Bank

Youth success story: ★
Muhammad Nagi, Managing Director & Cofounder, AlMaqarr

15:00 Session 4: Education and Skills: What Really Works

The education model established in the 20th century is no longer applicable in the 21st. What is required instead is a comprehensive, holistic approach to education that focuses on the skills development of the person and is inclusive to all citizens. These skills have to be connected to the labour market needs and close cooperation among students' families, teachers, and the private sector is necessary to prepare youth to enter the labour market. Tertiary education, alongside with vocational training and life-long learning should provide up-to-date technical competencies and soft skills required by local and national companies.

Moderator and keynote speaker: **Mourad Ezzine**, Manager, CMI
Silvia Marchionne, Project Manager of RESUME "RESeaU Méditerranéen pour l'Employabilité", CBHE project under Erasmus+, UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union
Antonio Crupi, Ph. D. Candidate in Economics, Statistics and Management, University of Messina – RESUME Partner, Italy
Dina Craissati, Regional Education Adviser, UNICEF
Abdulrahman Y. Al-Mua'alemi, Project Coordinator, Youth Employability Improvement Program, GIZ, Yemen

Youth success stories: ★
Imane Helmy, youth representative, 1st winner of the World Bank's Youth Essay Competition in Egypt

16:30 End of day



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Monday, 10 July 2017

9:30 Day introduction

10:00 Youth Panel: 'Young Mediterranean Voices' debating on Youth Employment

11:00 Session 5: **Connecting Youth to Jobs: Active Labour Market Programmes**

Active labour market policies are critical to facilitate mobility of job seekers and promote their economic inclusion. In this session, international experts will present existing evidence on youth employment programmes, as well as ongoing efforts (i.e. improved targeting through the development of profiling systems, working with the private sector, etc.) to improve their efficiency/effectiveness.

Moderator and Keynote speaker: **Gustavo Demarco**, Program Leader, Social Protection and Labour, The World Bank

Peter van Rooij, Egypt Country Director, International Labour Organization

Ali Chelbi, International Consultant

Omar Hamdy, Microsoft Egypt - Ta3mal programme

Egypt's **Ministry of Manpower** Representative*

12:30 Lunch break

13:30 Session 6: **How can mobility and international cooperation enhance innovation and promote entrepreneurship?**

High quality mobility pursues educational, cultural and behavioural goals, such as enhancing the competences, knowledge and skills of those involved, as well as learning about new cultures, traditions and regulations and exchanging experiences and ideas. Mobility contributes to expanding and improving the flow of ideas, experiences, innovations and knowledge to further internationalise higher education organisations and institutions, to promote the employability and personal development of the mobility participants and to strengthen the cultural identity of the Mediterranean region. All these factors contribute to foster employability and stimulate entrepreneurship through soft and behavioural skills enhancement.

Moderator: **Silvia Marchionne**, Project Manager of RESUME "RESeaU Méditerranéen pour l'Employabilité", CBHE project under Erasmus+, UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union

Keynote speaker: **Ragui Assaad**, Professor, University of Minnesota, USA

Hatem Atallah, Executive Director, Anna Lindh Foundation

Yasser El Shayeb, National Erasmus+ Coordinator, Egypt

Iwona Ganko, Labour Market Specialist, European Training Foundation

Youth success story: ★

Safi Sabuni, President, Erasmus Student Network

15:00 End of conference

* Speaker to be confirmed



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