



## Methodological Notes



# **Regional Observatory Functions**

## **A first Mediterranean analysis of education and training for employment**

**EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT (ETE)** IS AN EU FUNDED INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTED BY THE EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION (ETF). ITS OBJECTIVE IS TO SUPPORT THE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RELEVANT TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) POLICIES THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROMOTION OF EMPLOYMENT THROUGH A REGIONAL APPROACH.

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**Methodological Notes**  
**Regional Observatory Functions**  
**A first Mediterranean analysis of**  
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# INTRODUCTION

This methodological note presents the results of the work done in the framework of the MEDA Education and Training for Employment (MEDA-ETE) project to establish a Euromed observatory for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and the labour market. In this sense, it constitutes a common frame of reference needed by all the Euro-Mediterranean partners.

The note thus concludes the series of methodological notes issued by the project to meet the expectations of all the partners, as expressed by the foreign ministers at their meeting in Valencia in 2002 and confirmed by the representatives of the partner countries in the preparatory phase of the project. These representatives particularly stressed the need for tools to clarify the decision-making process concerning TVET systems and the labour market at the national and regional levels.

The Euro-Mediterranean observatory function is based on the assumption that the regional level can only be relevant if there is a similar arrangement at the national level, and that the interaction between the two levels is as much bottom-up (definition of thematic priorities and standardisation of data collection tools) as top-down (processing and dissemination of information and assistance with decision making). The approach taken therefore comprises three complementary strands.

- At the regional level, there will be a database covering all the indicators identified by the Euro-Mediterranean partners and reflecting the major trends at that level.
- Each country will have a national network, and some (Egypt, Jordan and Syria) will have a training and employment observatory supplying national data, supporting analysis and providing the information needed for decision making at the national level.
- The preparation of methodological notes and reports and the activities undertaken by the network (workshops, study visits, training sessions, etc.) will enable the various parties to combine their regional and international expertise and conduct joint analyses of training and employment. They will also act as a focal point for the results of the analyses carried out.

The series of methodological notes<sup>1</sup> produced within the MEDA-ETE project has therefore enabled us to develop a conceptual and operational framework for the establishment of an observatory function and the development of indicators covering the education and employment systems. From the outset, the emphasis has been on the need for broad consultation among Euro-Mediterranean experts and specialists on accessible and coordinated indicators capable of clarifying the choices to be made in terms of education and employment policies. The national representatives chose the

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1 The series has covered the following topics: (i) Guidelines for developing indicators on technical and vocational education and training; (ii) Indicators for the governance of vocational training systems; (iii) Analysis of data supplied by the countries; and (iv) Euromed observatory function – objectives, results, instruments and evolutions.

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following topics: access and equity; investment in education and training; and involvement of social partners in the governance of education and training systems.

Based on these selected topics, a range of indicators has been identified and developed. A standardised data collection tool has been created and made available to the partner countries. In parallel, a considerable effort to identify the education and training programmes in place helped in understanding the education and training systems and the specific features of each of the partner countries.

These resources enabled us to obtain a harmonised set of data across the different countries of the region. The information gathered formed an essential input to the analysis set out in this methodological note. This note shows that the tools for data collection and processing in the different countries are far from perfect. Issues of methodology, the availability of data, the quality of the information, institutional trends, and sometimes limited capacities for analysis, are all factors demonstrating that this remains a complex area and that the ambitious aim of obtaining comparative indicators for the ten countries is a long-term exercise.

It is important to note that the analyses carried out in this methodological note are based on data supplied in 2008 and no doubt reflect problems encountered in the second round of data collection. The situation has changed somewhat since then, and we now have a much richer database of information both by country and at the overall regional level.

This note puts forward a ‘map’ of available and harmonised data, and shows especially the limitations and weaknesses of the current arrangements at the national level and their impact at the regional level. This is worth fleshing out by way of a debate, with the partners, on the current situation in the different countries and at the regional level in general, looking at a number of questions. How can we promote decision making based on the topics reviewed and take account of their relevance to developments in the education systems and the labour market? How can we advance the arrangement established under the MEDA-ETE project regarding (or taking account of) the policy directions set by the European Union for the Mediterranean, particularly at the employment and labour ministerial conference held in Marrakech in November 2008?

On the one hand, this development could help to position the Euromed observatory within a more precise political context in terms of the objectives set by the declaration by Euromed ministers of employment and labour, while also bringing together the two fields of national and regional analysis. This perspective will then bring some consistency to the work being done by the observatory and provide points for consideration at each level of decision making.

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In Europe, the development of the observatory function assumes a reference point as an instrument for improving the efficiency of education systems. As we progress in the knowledge-based society, awareness of the importance of possessing effective information mechanisms to support decision making also increases. Nowadays, the observatory function constitutes an advanced function which is necessary for a systemic concept of education and employment.

## 1.1 The observatory function concept

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The incorporation of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership into the new European Neighbourhood Policy has increased the scope for action and created new objectives and new instruments for action by way of action plans and new financial instruments. The Barcelona Summit in 2005 drew up a five-year work programme intended to promote closer regional cooperation; action plans signed to date include proposals to support reform in the Mediterranean countries, particularly those relating to training and employment systems.

More recently, following the establishment of the new political framework for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership – the Union for the Mediterranean – decision makers have reaffirmed the value of human capital. Indeed, the Joint Declaration from the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, which met on 13 July 2008, emphasised the importance of vocational training in the region in these terms: ‘Particular attention should be paid to enhancing quality and to ensuring the relevance of vocational training to labour market needs.’ The first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour, held in Marrakech on 9 and 10 November 2008, is also completely in keeping with the discussions held at the Paris Summit, with the final declaration highlighting ‘the urgency of challenges relating to employment, investment in human capital, and decent work for all in the region’. The heads of state committed themselves to a framework for action which would contribute to developing a genuine social dimension within the Euro-Mediterranean agenda. They highlighted the need for a better match between current and future labour market needs and the development of the necessary skills – mainly through enhanced education and vocational training along with reforms at the national and regional levels concerning the framework of qualifications and competencies – and drew attention to the benefits of cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean context.

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For the countries and territories in the Mediterranean<sup>2</sup> region, education and employment systems are among the major issues in closer Mediterranean cooperation. The need to integrate their economies to a greater extent into the world economy requires a fundamental refocusing of the economies in the area, which involves making them more competitive by means of human resources with greater capacity for innovation, competitiveness and entrepreneurial spirit. However, despite the growth in employment in most of these countries in the last few decades, this impetus is insufficient both quantitatively and qualitatively to meet the increased demand for employment among young people. This is due to demographic tensions and the major investment in education of the past decades, and goes some way to explaining why levels of unemployment, under-employment and even emigration are still higher than desirable.

In this context, education systems face a big dilemma. On the one hand, they must contribute to the training of large contingents of young people and prepare them for work, thereby improving the skills of the human resources needed for the current economic reforms aimed at internationalising the economies. At the same time, countries must retrain their adult workforce so that their skills are adapted to new production requirements. On the other hand, however, they are faced by a lower level of job creation than initially expected, particularly in sectors which should be making use of the skills of the new professionals required by the production system.

This imbalance between the differing educational and economic cycles creates great tension for the education systems, requiring difficult decisions to be made; the risks can be avoided if considerable efficiency and transparency are shown in management. In this context, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of education and employment systems is becoming a major priority, which assumes a fundamental contribution to the objectives agreed at the time of the Barcelona Process.

The existing cooperation relating to the observatory function for the education and employment systems in the region must be viewed in this context. The new requirements have also led to new ideas about observatories. Between the initial observatories of the 1960s and more recent observatories, there have been many developments in the search for more useful information for decision making.

European experience helps to classify three generations in the evolution of the observatory function<sup>3</sup>: informal, institutional and networked. The latest generation of observatories expands the observatory concept by interpreting it as a function of a system rather than a simple producer of information.

In the context of education and employment, observatory function now means a network for producing and distributing information that is relevant for decision making by the main parties involved in the education and employment system, with the intention of creating a structured and forward-looking awareness of education and employment systems and of developments in that system, thereby establishing a basis for decision

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2 In the context of this publication, the term 'Mediterranean' refers to the ten Mediterranean Partners – Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey – that are part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

3 Homs, O., European Training Foundation, 'Structures and mechanisms for information and needs forecast on training, qualification and employment (The Observatory function)', ETF, Turin, 2001 (unpublished).

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making in cooperation between the parties involved. The main characteristics or key concepts behind this new observatory function concept are as follows.

- *Networks of parties.* It is an essential condition for all the parties, suppliers and users of the information to be involved. Organised in a two-way network for the circulation of information, they gather and offer the information that is available.
- *Institutionalisation.* The legitimacy and the common recognition of the quality and relevance of the information supplied to the network constitute key elements for incorporating information in decision making. The institutional formalisation of the way in which the observatory function is organised supplies the necessary legitimacy and creates formal channels for the distribution of information that guarantees reliability over time. The forms of institutionalisation vary greatly according to circumstances. In some cases, they are public or private bodies regulated by law and in which social partners participate; in others, they are consortia combining various public or private bodies; in others again, they are networks that coordinate various bodies or even associations. The form varies depending on the political body or individual who takes the initiative, the institutional and legal tradition of the country and the location of the observatory.
- *Integration of the education–employment relationship.* Although most European countries originally created observatories which separated employment and education, experts now recognise that this was a mistake which must be corrected. Nowadays, education is seen as being intrinsically integrated as one of the constituent elements of the employment market and, also, subject to the requirements of continuing education throughout people's lifetimes.
- *Permanence and continuity.* The observatory function acquires its full meaning if it maintains continuity and permanence over time and is capable of anticipating changes and tracking developments in education and employment systems.
- *Priority focus for the needs of decision making.* The new observatories created in recent years have the same direct focus, which is to provide information that is useful for decision making by the parties involved in a given topic. They thus go beyond self-centred and academic ideas about the production of information for themselves.
- *Transparency of information.* The network concept, focused on decision making, requires guarantees as to the transparency of information at all levels – from the gathering of data until the final distribution of the various products produced. Without this transparency, legitimacy and trust in the network will soon disappear.
- *Precision and rigour in information processing.* Through experience gathered in the processing of information, increasingly rigorous and precise processing becomes possible, based on developed capacities and the professionalism of the technicians involved in the process.
- *Analysis and reflection on the basis of information.* Assisting the network in the analysis and interpretation of the information produced is becoming an increasingly important priority. A good example of this is the Portuguese Employment and Vocational Training Observatory, which gives a special place to discussions between all its participants on the interpretation of data, given direct observation of the main problems that have appeared in the diagnoses performed.

Many observatories have been established in Europe in recent years, taking the perspective of the design of the third generation of observatories and also a more conventional point of view. Their main features are as follows:

- subject specialisation (observatories of the third sector, of change or innovation, etc.);

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- various levels (European, national, regional, local, sector observatories, etc.);
- the use of web and Internet technologies to distribute activities and products;
- a more practical focus, to facilitate decision making;
- a participative and multi-institutional structure involving a whole range of public and private institutions;
- the incorporation of think-tank activities that have launched initiatives to run the network by partners involved in the subject being tackled.

Observatories have to some extent become a work methodology aimed at creating knowledge centres for the knowledge-based society.

### **1.2 Initiatives in the Mediterranean region**

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This is the context in which the European Training Foundation (ETF), which has acquired considerable experience in creating observatories for education and employment in the EU candidate countries, encourages the development of the observatory function in the Mediterranean region with a focus on education and employment systems.

This line of work led to the MEDA-ETE programme financed by the EU and implemented by the ETF. The project aims to provide technical support for Mediterranean partners in designing and implementing policies in respect of technical and vocational education and training which contribute to promoting employment as part of a regional approach. A specific support programme for the Euromed Observatory Function is provided under subcomponent 2.1 of the Euromed TVET Network for Employment.

The network is already fully operational, with regular meetings and activities bringing together the representatives of ten countries and territories in the area: Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. This programme is a real step forward as it gives a new regional perspective to national actions supporting the observatory function. In fact, this perspective strengthens national actions by raising an interest in the standardisation and international comparison of information and products developed at the national level; it also offers a very useful comparative viewpoint for the location and interpretation of national data. These two programmes – support for the observatory function at the national level and the MEDA-ETE network – constitute two pillars of a single strategy, consisting of developing the capacity for thought on the basis of systematic information on employment and education systems in the region.

In the same context, also worth mentioning is an initiative by Eurostat (the statistical office of the European Union), financed by the EU with the aim of strengthening statistical systems, producing better-quality statistics and improving the visibility of statistical activities and products in the Mediterranean countries through the MEDSTAT II programme (2006-08). This programme, in which nine countries in the area are involved, takes place in various domains, including the production of social statistics (MED-SOC). Its objectives are to assist the Mediterranean countries in improving their long-term capacity to produce and distribute up-to-date, reliable and relevant statistical data in accordance with international and European standards, and to do so within the specified deadlines. The intervention areas are: vocational education and training, employment and salaries, working conditions and poverty.

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The ETF and MEDA-EETD programmes, like those of Eurostat, complement each other to a high degree and offer an appropriate institutional framework for the development of the observatory function in the region.

In addition to and in collaboration with the ETF programmes, mention can also be made of the projects promoted by the EU in a number of countries, which are intended to support reforms in the education and employment market systems. These include programmes to create and support observatories focused on education and employment and initiatives by the cooperation agencies of other European countries (France and Germany) and Canada and by international institutions like the World Bank and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The efforts converging on the area by various routes, as a whole, mean that, in future years, strong development can be expected in the observatory function in the countries and territories of the region, with an impact directed at improving the operation of the education and employment market systems.

### 1.3 The MEDA-EETD observatory function network

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The greatest value of this network relates to two characteristics.

- *Cooperation between three types of national institutions*, namely, those responsible for employment (in general employment ministries), for education and vocational training and for national statistics agencies. In reality, the project has attempted to create a (regional) network of (national) networks.
- *Regional cooperation between the ten countries and territories*, in an area with a great variety of situations and problems, is a challenge of the greatest importance. The exchange of experience, the benefits of joint work and the richness of the shared thoughts provide a perspective which may be highly beneficial for other regions in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

In the first two years in which the observatory has been in operation, the network has created a consensus focused on a list of indicators, defined jointly and classified into four major dimensions: context, investment, access and equity and social partner participation. The original 27 indicators were subsequently reduced to 22, with an extra point added concerning the involvement of social partners in relation to anticipating skill needs. For each dimension, indicators have been defined and implemented, with due account taken of international reference criteria (Eurostat in particular) so as to guarantee international comparability.

Focusing the work of the network on the production of joint indicators has made it possible to detect and deal with the problems that generally arise in such an exercise; it has also helped strengthen and consolidate the impetus of the work of the network. The work of the network has revealed a number of elements which provide food for thought in various areas.

#### ***Formalisation of the institutionalisation of the network at the national level***

The countries which have made most progress in this direction are those with the most positive results for their observatory function. However, this process involves many difficulties, as it implies including the problem in the political and institutional agenda of each country. It is clear that the progress achieved in Jordan is directly due to the political

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decision to develop a national statistics plan for education and employment, which constituted the ideal context for the implementation of the observatory function. Other countries are working in this direction; where the network is more informal, however, the urgency of everyday management causes delays and blockages and slows progress, and this may jeopardise the consolidation of the work carried out. However, the institutionalisation of the network at the national level should be regarded as a process which has to adapt to the different situation in each country, rather than to a single standard model. Nevertheless, experience shows the positive contribution of a formal institutionalisation directed at achieving the desired objectives.

### ***Unifying education and employment priorities***

Apart from the difficulties of relationships between institutions, priorities, approaches and working methodologies as seen from the employment and education perspectives are different and require considerable joint efforts in order to arrive at unified priorities. For this reason it is necessary, in the initial phases, to make the requirements of both parties compatible, to add priorities together instead of integrating them and to seek to satisfy requests from both areas. The design or reformulation of basic instruments for obtaining and classifying information (enquiries, systems for classifying occupations or economic activities, the production of lists of training courses available, etc.) could be one element in which common ground for cooperation could be shared.

### ***The complexity of incorporating new instruments to produce information***

One of the findings from the work of the network has been gaps in the information from which many indicators considered essential for decision making could be constructed. The reason is usually that, to date, information systems have been much more centred on purely statistical production than on decision making. In many cases, this makes it necessary to reformulate some instruments for producing information (including new questions in questionnaires, rewriting classification programmes and information-processing programmes, etc.) which assumes decisions of a political or budgetary nature and the existence of sufficient resources; this is not always easy and takes time, to say the least. In fact, establishing the observatory function requires sufficient human and budgetary resources in order for the objectives to be attained.

### ***Cultural change as regards the production, use and distribution of information***

Probably the most important task to be addressed in the work of the network and, in fact, the basis for success is proving the benefits of a different point of view regarding information systems, with systems being understood to mean mechanisms necessary for good public administration. This assumes rigour, transparency and participation by the parties involved as an indispensable condition for the achievement of sufficient legitimacy and recognition, without which information cannot contribute to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the education and employment systems.

### ***Technical difficulties with obtaining data and data appropriateness in a context of informal economies***

The work of the network has highlighted the importance of informality in the economic organisation of the countries and territories in the region and its consequences

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in regard to obtaining the necessary information, not to mention the relevance of some information in those contexts, for example as regards the concept and interpretation of indicators based on activity, employment and unemployment rates. This problem will have to be dealt with specifically in the future work of the network.

### ***Technical difficulties as regards the comparability of data at the regional level***

In order to attain the objective of producing comparable data on a regional basis, further steps must be taken and advances made even if gradually. In any event, it will be necessary to follow a top-down approach, so as to start by understanding the meaning of the national data and then progress towards a consistent or comparable formulation of regional indicators. The data obtained to date constitute the starting point from which progress can be made towards more ambitious objectives.

We already have the first three collections of national data for the 22 indicators which have produced a consensus and an attempt at a comparative analysis of the data. The analysis in Chapter 2 is based on the second collection of data. The data in the third collection will be assessed in the validation phase, taking place as this methodological note is being written.

Moreover, as stated above, the promotion and support of the establishment of the observatory function in the Mediterranean region goes beyond the MEDA-ETE programme and involves intervention in a number of countries and in specific actions and projects. This means that, although the MEDA-ETE programme operates at the regional level, other interventions also exist which support the development of the observatory function at the national level. These two approaches are complementary and support one another. It also implies that it will be difficult to make progress at the regional level unless one relies on the national observatory capacities that are developed and strong. However, the regional dimension also enriches the national observatory function by giving it a comparative perspective which helps to locate and interpret national data.

In six countries of the region (Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Algeria and the Occupied Palestinian Territory), actions have been carried out to support the observatory function. In addition to the national initiatives supported by the ETF, other activities exist which can be included in a viewpoint on the development of the observatory function in the context of education and employment in other countries such as Turkey, Tunisia and Israel.

An overall view of the situation of the countries in the area enables one to say that, in almost all of them, current activities exist which are aimed at improving the capacity to produce relevant information about employment and vocational education and training; moreover, in many countries, progress is apparent as regards the establishment of cooperation networks between producers and users of information involved in the improvement processes.

If a certain course is established for each phase in the establishment and implementation of the observatory function in a given country, three non-mutually exclusive phases can be identified.

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- An initial establishment phase refers to creating the network in cooperation with the main partners and defining a work plan. Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Morocco and, informally, Israel and Turkey are in this phase.
- A second phase relates to starting up processes to prepare products and construct instruments to improve the quality of existing information. Jordan, Morocco and Turkey have also reached this stage.
- A third phase is where countries have succeeded in formalising and institutionalising a mechanism to coordinate the observatory function, by means of budgetary and legislative instruments, human resources and techniques, sufficient to consolidate the implementation of the observatory function in the country. Jordan has made most progress along this path.

Finally, one could imagine a fourth phase in which the consolidation of the observatory function would be focused on distribution and on the impact of decision making on observatory activities. This phase could be the objective for the future for countries which have already made progress during previous years.

As we can see, one of the first conclusions is that the observatory function in the Mediterranean area is currently halfway through a first phase, characterised by the establishment of national networks by the main parties involved. Activities are in progress to produce essentially basic information, but they nonetheless represent important training in terms of improving processes and the work of cooperation between institutions.

The institutionalisation of the networks generated in Jordan to update the internationally comparable classification instruments, the sector-based products set up in Morocco and the degree of complementarity and integration of the reform processes established in Algeria and Turkey are all examples of good practice which serve as references and experiences to be drawn on, spread and exchanged in the countries of the region.

A second conclusion emerges, concerning the variety of models and situations found in the process of constructing and developing the observatory function in the region. For example, within a general schema and assuming a consensus as to the nature of the observatory function, we see different ways of operating, different rhythms and different trends. Each country needs to decide for itself the most appropriate way to establish the observatory function according to its own national context.

### **1.4 Future scenarios for changes to the observatory function**

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A general analysis of the current results of the activities carried out to support the establishment of the observatory function at the national and regional levels indicates that the joint and global approach of the two processes should be reinforced.

On the basis of the results of the first phase – in which the observatory function has been started at national level – it appears that these results should be made to converge so that they can be integrated better into the regional network set up in MEDA-ETE. In fact, the regional network should be made up of representatives of the existing national networks and of those in the process of being established. The convergence of these two

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processes would strengthen the results of each and facilitate their future durability. To be added to this process convergence are the direct initiatives of the various projects which the EU is developing on the same topics and in the same countries.

In this light, some short-term recommendations can be made, as follows:

- *To consolidate the progress* (or the steps forward) already achieved in each country, while taking care to allow better expression of the interests and needs in terms of developing the observatory function in the countries of the region to ensure that the national players become more closely involved. The main parties from each country should, depending on their needs and priorities, be the first beneficiaries of the observatory function. The necessary institutionalisation of the observatory function should therefore be designed as a process that takes different forms in each country; furthermore, progress should be more important than the final form. In the most advanced countries (Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Egypt), every effort should be made to support the continuity of the existing networks and to consolidate their legitimacy with appropriate institutional forms. The formal recognition of the observatory function and its integration into national strategies for the improvement of information systems should constitute one of the priority short-term objects.
- *To promote the generation of information products and analyses* by establishing networks of the parties involved (even partial networks) and providing practical orientation on decision making, thereby meeting the needs of the parties involved in each country, even if there is, at present, no more than a global vision of the education and employment systems. This will certainly lead, in a pedagogical way, to an awareness of the concept of the observatory function. It should not be forgotten that we are still at the phase in which the benefit of this approach has to be demonstrated.
- *To encourage the exchange of experience and cooperation between countries in the region* by organising methodological and thematic workshops on the most interesting experiences in the region, so as to provide a prospect of cooperation between similar parties represented by the members of the regional network. This is where the translation, publication and distribution of the existing national products may be very useful (with the work done by Jordan and Morocco constituting a possible starting point).
- *To improve the institutional capacity of existing networks and institutions* which, with the resources of outside experts, have shown their present utility and may be assumed as an important aid in the future. Examples to be applied are specialised workshops at the national level or with the participation of a number of countries, training courses, study visits, exchanges between the centres of different countries in the region and partnerships with European centres and institutions to generate certain information products. The creation of a master's or high-level annual Euro-Mediterranean training course for technicians from the information-producing bodies could also be considered.
- *To progress towards a more integrated concept of education and employment* by improving the basic information-gathering instruments and regional and international comparability. Assuming the previous steps have been consolidated, this would be a leap forward. As a result of accumulated experience and a better knowledge of the obstacles to this progress, a consensus should be reached on specific proposals from each country; furthermore, commitments with the authorities of those countries should be renewed in order to make progress in this

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respect. Convincing support to facilitate performance will certainly have to be offered. For example, the promotion of regional studies on topics which have been unanimously decided (the informal sector, priority sectors, youth, female employment, etc.) could stimulate progress towards a more integrated vision of education and employment.

These proposals for the short term are based on three conditions: (i) better coordination in the area between all European initiatives with similar objectives of reinforcing information-producing capacities and integrating them into decision making regarding education and employment; (ii) greater involvement by the governments of the countries in establishing plans to improve their information and decision-making systems; and (iii) (required by both of the previous requirements) the provision of greater incentives in order to achieve these objectives.

In order for these three conditions to be readily created, the following initiatives should be implemented: coordination between the various sponsors (particularly the European players) involved in promoting and establishing the observatory function; and the production of a work plan decided by a process of consensus with each country and containing clear priorities and precise timetables so as to progress with the development of the observatory function for education and employment systems. These work plans may give rise to action protocols agreed by each party. The activities planned at the regional level should be incorporated in these protocols. The European part should involve sufficient institutional, financial, technical and training support to ensure compliance with the objectives established in the protocols signed for each country through the corresponding co-financing arrangements.

Although these steps are the most urgent in the short term, the scenario towards which these efforts are supposed to be directed should be clarified in the medium term. The medium-term scenarios may be constructed from the following five topics or dimensions.

- *Quality.* This dimension refers to the quality, reliability and rigour of information on education and employment systems. Giving priority to this topic would mean concentrating all efforts on improving the quality of the information systems of each country by means of support with technical and training resources.
- *Integration.* This topic emphasises the progressive widening of the framework of the existing observatory devices in order to make progress towards an integrated vision of the problems of education and employment. For this phase, the first step should consist of covering the entire education sector, not merely what is covered by a single ministry but also what is covered by other bodies, whether public or private, and not only initial education but also continuing education.
- *Participation.* This topic aims to promote the concept of a network between all the partners involved in the education and employment systems, going beyond the concept of observatories as isolated bodies. The creation of coordination mechanisms and joint work programmes may be one of the first encouraging steps.
- *Incorporation of decision making.* This topic requires working to incorporate analyses of the information produced as a basis for decision making. This also assumes that activities to accompany the main parties involved in their decision making must be developed.

## 1. TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OBSERVATORIES FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

- *Regional aspect.* This dimension refers to the change from a national to a regional point of view to facilitate comparison and provide mutual reinforcement, and so contemplate a shared commitment to improving increasingly developed education and employment systems.

These five topics cover the entire range of elements which must be borne in mind when designing a medium-term strategy for the development of the observatory function. They represent the different options to be evaluated but also beg some questions. Is it possible to make progress on all topics at the same time? Could the tackling of all the topics at the same time hinder the development of the observatory function? Is it possible to go further on one topic without compromising the possibilities of making progress on the others? Current experience shows that, in some countries, it has been very positive to progress on all topics at the same time. However, other countries have seen how overall progress slowed down when trying to move forward on all topics, although partial improvements would undoubtedly have been possible. The strategies to be followed should therefore be evaluated on a case-by-case and country-by-country basis.

Must priority be given to the strategy focused on quality and the production of useful information and products? Or should preference instead be given to the process and the overall design so as to generate a dynamic which has greater impact on education and employment systems, in accordance with the line taken by the MEDA-ETE project? Both strategies are valid, but they would both undoubtedly be strengthened if there was a balance between them. This means that priority should be given to the development of specific products at the national and regional levels, provided, of course, that it is aimed at the new concept of the observatory function without necessarily making one subordinate to the other.

To what extent can the development of the regional level have a positive influence on the motivation for change at the national level? European experience shows that the pressures exerted at the European level have led to improvement processes at the national level. Would it therefore be appropriate to accelerate the programme at the regional level in order to risk greater involvement at the national level? And if so, to what extent? Would it, for example, be possible to envisage one or more regionally homogenous regional modules of the main instruments for gathering information, such as, for example, the household survey? Or should the creation of a stable regional unit shared by a number of countries and aimed at producing and analysing information on education and employment systems in the region be envisaged?

Whatever the case, it seems necessary to strengthen the involvement of representatives from each country in the MEDA-ETE network so as to make the benefit of their participation in the network sufficiently tangible for them to become the main defenders of the programme and its objectives. In order to do this, it would be beneficial to make progress in the short term by means of activities with a clear professional benefit for most of the participants in the network, such as, for example, study visits, high-level topic seminars, a course given in collaboration with a European university on the technical, statistical or analytical aspects of the education and employment systems, exchanges of technicians with European research centres, Eurostat or the ETF, and publications of interesting texts.

All of this assumes the consolidation of the MEDA-ETE space as a preferred area of cooperation between the countries and territories of the region and also the creation of

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understanding leading to greater trust between the institutions and the parties involved on both sides of the Mediterranean in what is one of the most beneficial frameworks for relations between the two parties. Success would help to prepare the ground for long-term consolidation of the observatory function in the region. This could lead to the institutionalisation of a network of cooperation among the countries in the region, aimed at developing mutual knowledge of education and employment systems at the regional level and also geared towards supporting the observatory functions in each country. Apart from the official institutions in each country, other players could also be included in this network, such as universities, social partners and the bodies involved in the production of information and, above all, representatives of the education and employment systems in each country.

## 2. TEN COUNTRIES, ONE REGION

Comparisons between countries are receiving more and more prominence in debates about education. Taking greater account of the reality and diversity of different countries, understanding progress and its limitations in different countries and assessing and comparing countries with each other is crucial for the Mediterranean region. TVET has a key role to play in providing people with the essential qualifications and skills needed for the development of individual countries and the region itself. Debates on TVET should be based, in the first instance, on objective data accepted by all. Comparative analysis will then help to facilitate discussion on aspects for consideration in relation to young people, the employment of women, differences between countries and so on. In this way, we will be able to better comprehend and take a more in-depth approach to the real problems that arise in each country.

The MEDA-ETE project initiated by the ETF had a dual objective: to analyse TVET in the ten countries and territories of the Mediterranean region based on summary indicators, and to enhance knowledge of the relationship between education and employment in each country and at the regional level. This chapter presents the findings of this initiative obtained over several years, focusing on the comparative analyses carried out by partners in the project and based on statistical data supplied by institutions and observatories in the ten countries and territories concerned.

Various facets of the Mediterranean region form the heart of this chapter. With a view to drawing up roadmaps for subsequent action, the comparative analysis underlines the principal regional trends, highlights specific national aspects and looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the region and individual countries. Striking changes in the level of education and in the working population in the region in the last few years (trends due to persist for some years to come) have provoked tensions in the labour market based around dual employment, with large disparities between the top and bottom layers and between generations. Unemployment is increasingly affecting young people. Sluggish economic growth and the regular annual influx of a large number of young people into the labour market both help to explain these difficulties. Unlike anywhere else in the world, the young people of this region are both its strength and its weakness.

In order to draw this regional comparison, however, we first have to understand the situation in each of the countries that make up the Mediterranean region. Hence, an analysis by country was conducted, discussed and amended with the national experts at a seminar held in November 2008. The analysis of Jordan is appended to this methodological note by way of illustration. A study of the economic and educational context in Jordan reveals interesting features of investment in education and training, access and equity in TVET, the involvement of social partners and the ability to anticipate training needs. The analysis of the labour market highlights segmentation by sex and by educational qualifications. Jordan is also characterised by the lowest employment rates for both women and men among the ten countries.

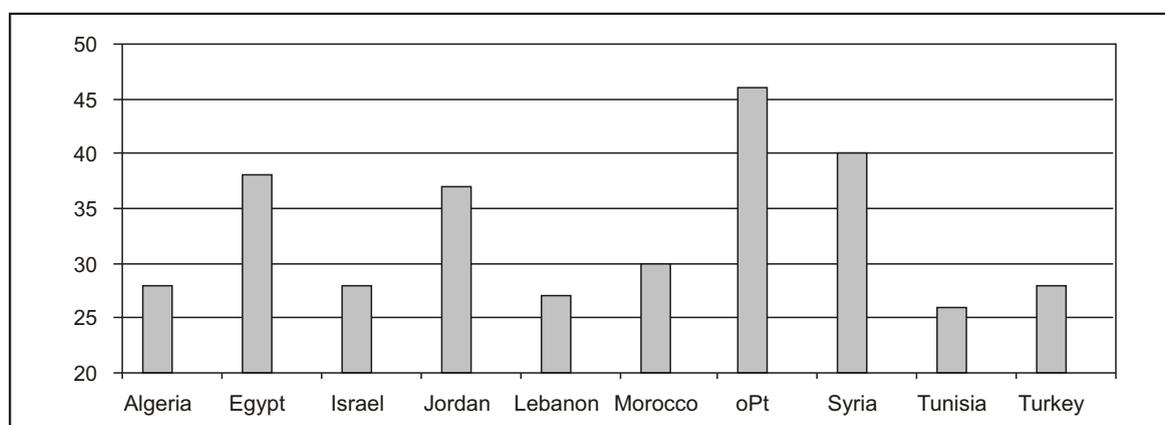
### ***The Mediterranean region, a region of multiple realities***

The Mediterranean region is marked by the youthfulness of its population and can expect to see large numbers coming into the labour market and some of the highest rates of growth in the working population anywhere in the world. In the situation of uncertainty and conflict that exists in some states, education remains a priority, with these countries spending an average of 5% of GDP in this area. Two other regional characteristics are the high risk of unemployment among young people and the low rates of activity and employment among the female population. Despite the acquisition of training and degree-level qualifications by women, there still exists markedly traditional sex-based representation in most professions. However, some countries do offer women greater opportunities. Finally, there are many similarities and convergences, as well as educational and economic aspects that are specific to each state.

## **2.1 From the inspiration of youth...**

The first peculiarity of the region is that almost one person in three in the ten countries and territories is under 15 years of age. In fact, they represent 26% of the population in Tunisia and almost 50% in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The region thus splits into two main groups, with Morocco representing an average of about 30%. The first group (Algeria, Israel, Lebanon, Tunisia and Turkey) has less than 30% of young people aged under 15, while the second group (Egypt, Jordan and Syria) has proportions close to 40%.

**Figure 1: Population aged under 15 (in %)**



Source: MEDA-ETE; see database for more details ([www.meda-ete.net](http://www.meda-ete.net))

The number of children per woman in the region in 2006 ranged from 1.9 in Lebanon and Tunisia to 3.6 in Syria, with women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory having most children (4.6). These figures have fallen greatly since 1980, underlining a period of demographic transition in these states. Moreover, this change has been accompanied by population flows into already over-populated urban areas. Thus, poverty remains a reality for many inhabitants of the region, particularly in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Gross domestic product per capita is relatively low compared to Europe, with the exception of Israel which is well ahead of Turkey and Lebanon. Education remains a

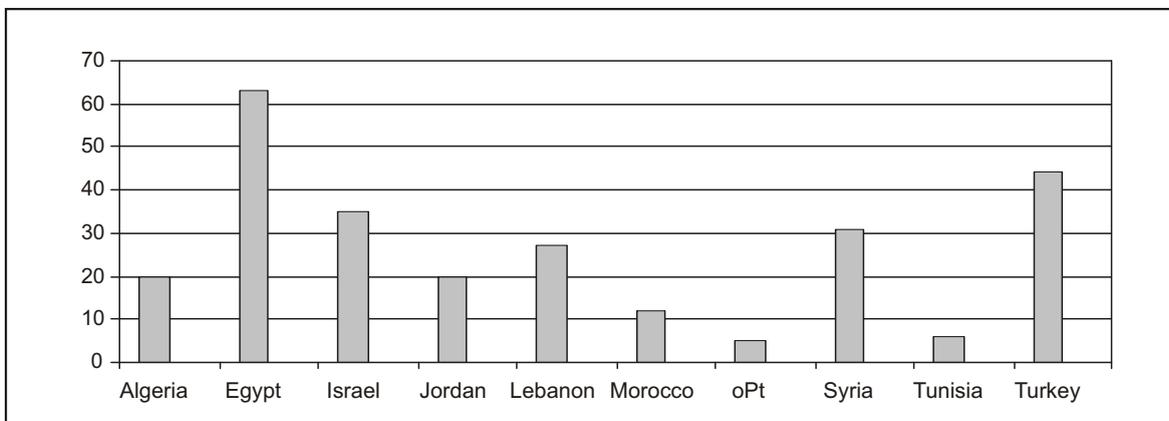
priority issue, with the countries devoting anything from 4% (Jordan and Syria) to 7% (Israel and Tunisia) of their GDP to this item.

## 2.2 ... to the specificities of vocational education and training

The question of the position of vocational education and training is a pressing one in a context of economic and technological globalisation. By virtue of developing and constantly improving their education systems, these countries have significantly reduced illiteracy and truancy, and sometimes the differences in schooling between boys and girls. The indicator for access to education (primary and secondary levels) shows that Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia have performed particularly well compared to Morocco, with the other countries falling somewhere in the middle. All the countries have instituted compulsory basic schooling for nine or ten years, with the exception of Lebanon. In Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon, the number of women in higher education far exceeds the number of men. Mediterranean countries and territories are faced with specific challenges: Egypt and Morocco, with universal primary schooling and a reduced gap between the sexes at every level of education, have to tackle a relatively low level of illiteracy; Algeria and Syria have high dropout rates, particularly from secondary school; while Morocco, Turkey and the Occupied Palestinian Territory see many children leaving school early.

TVET is generally open to young people who have successfully completed compulsory schooling. These pupils are aged 15 or 16, depending on the type of education. Lebanon is an exception, with people entering vocational streams from the age of 12. Although the rate of participation in TVET in secondary schools (ISCED 3) averaged 30% in 2004, more than 60% of pupils take vocational courses in Egypt, 44% in Turkey, and almost 20% in Algeria and Jordan, against less than 7% in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Tunisia. The lack of prestige enjoyed by the vocational sector is not peculiar to the Mediterranean region. Many young people participate against their will because of poor exam results, and once they enter vocational and technical streams, very few have the opportunity to continue their studies in higher education.

**Figure 2: Participation in secondary-level TVET (in %)**



Source: MEDA-E TE; see database for more details ([www.meda-ete.net](http://www.meda-ete.net))

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TVET has experienced a sustained rise in numbers of pupils and students in many countries, including Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Turkey, while recording a striking drop in Israel and Jordan. The proportion of women in these segments ranges from 22% to 46% of the workforce, depending on the country and industry. In Algeria, Turkey and possibly also Morocco and Tunisia, apprenticeship schemes constitute a major part of the education system. Conversely, vocational training and apprenticeships are a relatively small component of education in Lebanon, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Most TVET programmes seem to be aimed at traditional handicraft professions and at manual work. However, some exceptions are emerging: Egypt offers training in business and commerce, Syria in telecommunications and nursing, and Algeria in the services and office sectors. While tourism is a strategic and dynamic sector for all the countries in the region, young women do not often figure in this area of training.

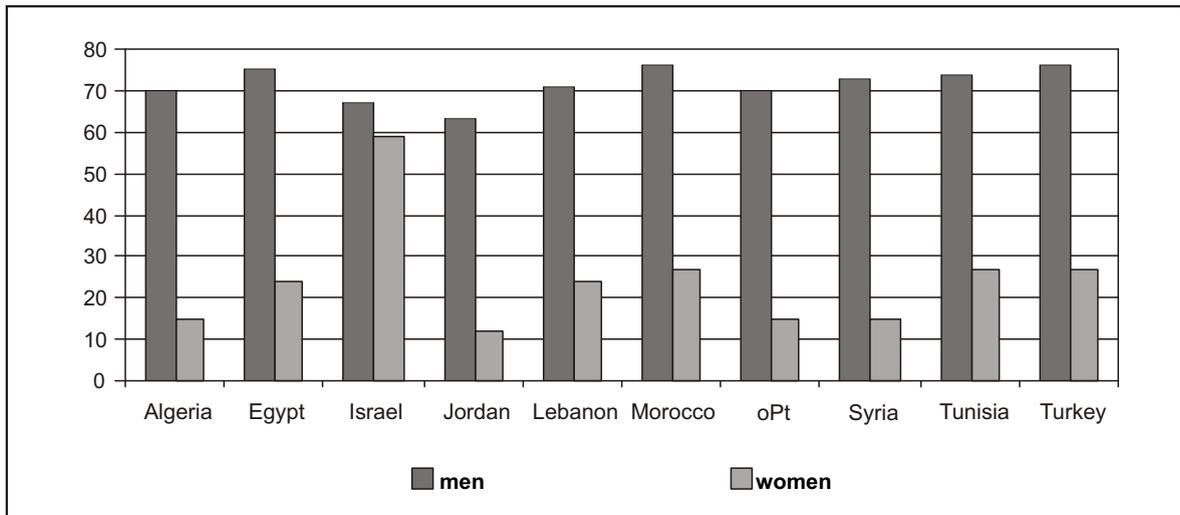
Another peculiarity of the region is that the state plays a central role in the governance and management of the TVET system. Centralisation, the multitude of ministries involved (at least 15 in Syria and more than 20 in Egypt) and fragmentation of institutions characterise vocational training. Only Lebanon stands out, with more students enrolled in private than in public higher education institutions. In general, a lack of coordination between the ministries involved in TVET and the low level of participation by social partners and other key players combine to reduce the effectiveness of government policies. The various ministries draw up their own individual programmes, their own statistics, their own management systems and their own ways of monitoring those receiving the training.

Nevertheless, there are some cooperative structures in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, which assign a role (often too modest) to employers' and employees' representatives, allowing them to express their opinions on the education system or to assist in managing it (cf. the Mubarak-Kohl initiative in Egypt). In Jordan, the Chambers of Industry and Commerce are represented on various bodies. In Morocco, a sector-based approach based on an analysis of skills is under way to identify the needs of the professional world. Employers in Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia and Turkey have helped to update certain professional qualifications for apprenticeships. Only Tunisia has embarked on a real process of decentralisation, however, granting greater autonomy to educational establishments (boards of management are chaired by professionals) and reforming programmes using a skill-based approach and involving representatives from the world of industry.

### **2.3 Progress and obstacles to the employment of women**

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Another peculiarity of the region is the still limited participation of women in the economy, despite a slow increase in all these countries. Only 23% of women are in employment, against 70% of men. Israel stands out, with a rate of female employment close to the European average (59%), while Jordan is conspicuous for having just one woman in ten in employment. However, this slow movement of women into the labour market comes at a price: unemployment, under-employment, concentration in a small number of professions and areas of activity and limited access to high-level jobs. Although women have better academic results, they do less well in the regional labour market; some countries, nonetheless, do offer women greater opportunities.

**Figure 3: Employment rates for women and men (in %)**

Source: MEDA-ETE; see database for more details ([www.meda-ete.net](http://www.meda-ete.net))

In Lebanon, for example, in line with the other countries in the region, the activity rates in 2007 were very different for women (24%) and men (71%). However, the women in employment are much better qualified academically than the men: half of them have a degree, whereas a third of men have only primary schooling. Almost 27% of women occupy high-level executive or intellectual positions, particularly in education, against 21% of men. Men are more widely represented in various professions, a third of them as craftsmen or skilled workers.

The difference in education between girls and boys takes them into different professional domains. In Jordan, for example, 48% of women are in professional positions against 17% of men and a quarter of the women are in associate professions (nurses, assistants and technicians) against 9% of men; 33% of men are skilled workers or employees in commerce and car repairs, and a third are in unskilled jobs.

The active population in Israel is highly qualified, with 45% having attended higher education. Over 50% of women have this level of qualification, far outstripping men (39%). However, only 15% of women work in professional roles (as engineers, executives, teachers, etc.), against 14% of men.

The regional average activity rate of almost 50% masks differences between countries, ranging from 38% in Jordan to 63% in Israel. These differences reflect disparities in cultural and social profiles and, above all, a chasm between men (from 63% in Jordan to over 75% in Egypt, Morocco and Turkey) and women (from 12% in Jordan to 59% in Israel). This segmentation is reflected in employment rates, which affect almost 60% of men (from 53% in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to 71% in Egypt) and just 21% of women (from 9% in Jordan to 53% in Israel). As a result of social mores and traditional customs that allow more or less room for women in the labour market, four countries stand out with female employment rates below 13%, namely, Algeria, Jordan, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Syria. It is important to note that activity and employment rates among women rise with increasing levels of education, with major differences according to the level of academic qualification. Hence, graduate recruitment

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figures are much higher than those for people with school-leaving certificates. Among men, the gap can be seen mainly between secondary and primary school leavers.

Another finding is that the sectoral breakdown of the workforce has evolved in the same way in almost all the states over the last few decades. Commerce and services have grown while agriculture and construction, and also the public sector, have contracted. Two groups of countries stand out, however: in Morocco and Turkey, followed by Egypt, agriculture still occupies a very important position, whereas services predominate in Lebanon, Jordan and Israel. Outside these three countries, agriculture takes up almost 20% of the workforce in the region, rising to 45% in Morocco. Industry and construction occupy more or less the same position as they do in the EU. Services are of less importance than in Europe, accounting for less than 50% of the workforce in most countries, apart from Lebanon and Israel (almost 70%). In most of the region, with the exception of Lebanon, the public sector predominates and remains the main employer. It continues to be an attractive source of employment in terms of working conditions, salaries and pensions, and receives an ever increasing number of applications, particularly from young women with secondary and tertiary qualifications.

On the other hand, there is a more or less accentuated imbalance in the distribution of economic activity by sex in the countries, reflecting very different national characteristics. Overall, men are to be found in all sectors, taking up the bulk of jobs in industry, while women predominate in service jobs. Women have little training in industrial trades, whereas many of the service professions are well suited to their traditional activities (childcare, housework, etc.).

By way of example, two sectors predominate in the Egyptian economy: agriculture and services. Women are split between the agricultural sector (46% of female employment), where they outnumber men, and services (47% of female employment against 46% of male employment). Almost 21% of employed women are in professional positions compared to 11% of men and 46% of women are farm workers compared to 27% of men.

In Tunisia, the sectoral breakdown of employment exhibits some peculiarities. The proportion of women in industry is 42%, with women under 25 years of age outnumbering men. On the other hand, the percentage of women in service jobs is only 25%. The levels of education show great differences between the sectors; two thirds of illiterate people are employed in agriculture and construction, whereas 83% of the workforce in service jobs have tertiary qualifications. Three quarters of the people employed in agriculture, and almost 90% of the women, are illiterate or have received only primary education.

In Syria, the female population is concentrated in agriculture (one third) and services (one third), in contrast to the representation of men in all sectors. Half of all girls aged under 25 are in agriculture. Almost 40% of women compared to 10% of men in employment work as professionals and technicians; a third work in agriculture (against 17% of men), whereas 44% of men are employed in skilled jobs in industry.

Education has a significant effect on prospects of high-level employment, particularly for the female population. Their position in the labour market is largely determined by the segregation that exists in all the countries of the Mediterranean region and Europe. The jobs occupied by women are much less equally distributed across the

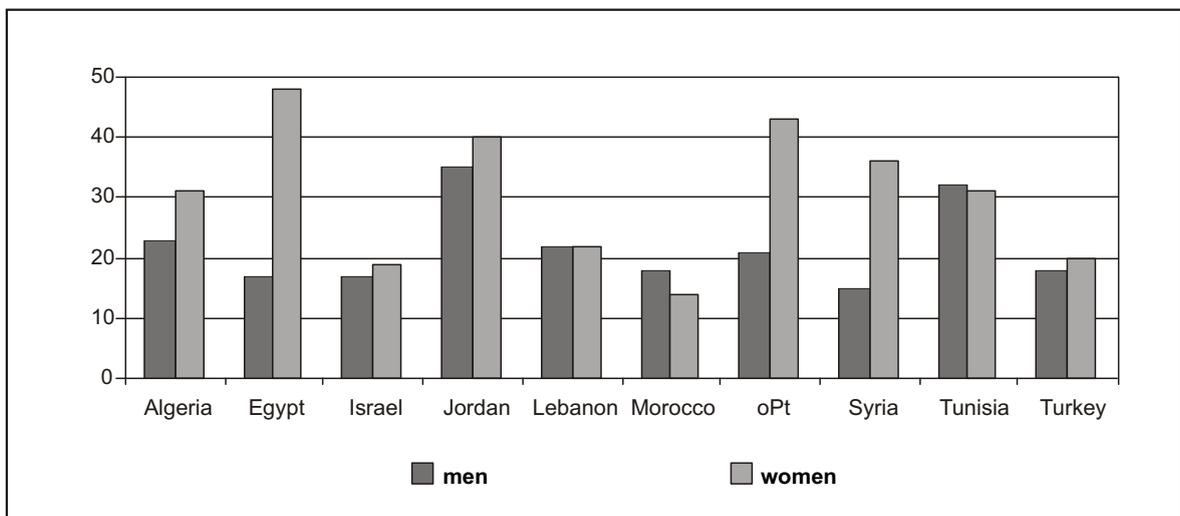
sectors, and in fact the domains in which women work are distinct from those in which men are concentrated.

## 2.4 Differential risks of unemployment

Sluggish economic growth and the regular influx of large numbers of young people into the labour market every year help to explain the high rate of unemployment among young people in the Mediterranean region and also points to a lack of stable jobs. There is also a significant informal sector in all these countries. Indeed, informal work occupies a substantial part of the population, estimated at 40% to 60% of non-agricultural jobs, depending on the territory. The demand for labour is generally insufficient because of weak economic growth, the importance of the public sector as an employer (30% to 60% of jobs) and the preponderance of informal micro-companies and small and medium-sized enterprises. While education does have a significant impact on employment prospects, being young and being female still represents a dual source of difficulties in the regional labour market.

Unemployment running at 12% in the region is a real problem faced by many countries, affecting better educated people to a disproportionate extent in some countries. Women with degrees, in particular, experience high unemployment: one third of them in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and almost 27% in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, against 6% in Israel and just 2% in Morocco. All these countries have higher unemployment rates than Europe, ranging from around 9% in five countries (Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey) to 14% in Jordan and Tunisia, and reaching as high as 24% in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This variability in unemployment rates has its origins in economic and cultural differences, especially in the variability in rates among women (from 9% in Israel to 25% in Jordan), with women more exposed to unemployment than men. However, four countries – Israel, Lebanon, Morocco and Turkey – are marked by relatively low unemployment and generally small differences between the sexes whatever the age of the population. On this count, Morocco stands out with a risk of unemployment among young women significantly lower than that for young men (14% against 18%).

**Figure 4: Unemployment rates among young people (in %)**



Source: MEDA-E TE; see database for more details ([www.meda-ete.net](http://www.meda-ete.net))

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Unemployment hits young people particularly hard. With a regional average of 25%, the rates range from 17% in Morocco to 36% in Jordan and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The difference is more accentuated among young women (ranging from 14% in Morocco to 48% in Egypt) than young men (ranging from 17% in Egypt and Israel to 35% in Jordan). Jordan and the Occupied Palestinian Territory are marked by labour market obstacles to the employment of young people and women. Egypt displays the widest gap in unemployment between the sexes, particularly for young people (31 points).

### **Activity, employment and unemployment rates in Mediterranean countries (%)**

Country (year)	Activity			Employment			Unemployment		
	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F
Algeria (2007)	44	72	15	38	63	12	14	13	18
Egypt (2007)	50	75	24	46	71	20	9	6	19
Israel (2006)	63	67	59	58	62	53	9	8	9
Jordan (2006)	38	63	12	32	56	9	14	12	25
Lebanon (2007)	47	71	24	36	56	16	9	9	10
Morocco (2007)	54	81	29	49	73	26	10	10	10
Occupied Palestinian Territory (2006)	43	70	15	33	53	12	24	24	21
Syria (2005)	46	76	15	43	71	12	8	6	20
Tunisia (2007)	50	74	27	43	64	23	14	13	18
Turkey (2006)	51	76	27	46	68	24	10	10	11

Sources: MEDA-E TE and Eurostat

All in all, the striking improvement in the level of education of the working population in the Mediterranean region in the last few years (which is expected to continue) has provoked tensions in the labour market based around a dual employment market, with large disparities between the top and bottom layers and between the generations. Young people are more prone to unemployment and under-employment than adults and are also much more involved in the informal sector. Given the difficulties encountered by young people in these labour markets, only a set of policies and programmes drawn up within a national strategy covering supply and demand can provide them with jobs. It does not help that the existence and importance of the informal economy in these countries mask structural weaknesses – not to mention the fact that niche markets may exist that might be worth developing. Although informal jobs may seem attractive in the short term – bringing flexibility to the market and greater responsiveness to demand – they are likely to be costly in the long term. Moreover, in countries where social, cultural and religious factors are still more or less present, certain types of inequality between women and men demand new policies and initiatives from politicians, public authorities and local employers. Although there is evidence of improvements for women in the region, progress is not equal in all countries. Disparities remain a matter of concern if the full potential of the region is to be realised.

## 3. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Before making any attempt at a comparison, the first essential step is to define and collect comparable data and indicators. This chapter underlines the complexity of the experience gained in the MEDA-ETE project and its achievements and limitations, which is a real challenge. In fact, TVET is marked by differing forms, timescales and means of access, reflecting the specific features of each country, particularly in the case of apprenticeships; hence the difficulty of performing a comparative analysis. Nor do the countries always have the same definition or understanding, the same statistical coverage or the same calculation method for a given indicator. Moreover, there is a lack of data to capture the real facts of the region, such as urban versus rural unemployment, informal work and the rate of recruitment of those with vocational training. Before setting out the progress made by the project, this chapter will begin by addressing questions of methodology.

Statistics and indicators need to be an integral part of the education and employment system both at the regional and national levels. This MEDA-ETE project is a real challenge and part of a lengthy process. It is essential that a national project should be launched in each country to develop indicators covering the relationship between education and employment; this should be done with the support of national players and decision makers and potentially orchestrated by the employment and training observatory, if there is one, or by a networked working group led by the national statistics office and partners in the fields of education and employment with some support from the ETF. The second part of this chapter concerns the impact of observation on national policies and presents proposals and viewpoints aimed at improving or pursuing such a regional project.

### 3.1 Methodological issues

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The technical guidelines defining each of the chosen indicators and the method of calculation have been explained to all the countries. In reality, very few countries in the region have been able to provide all the 22 indicators used and in the format explicitly requested. The ETF team tasked with the analysis has therefore been faced with problems of comparability for some figures.

#### ***Qualities and choice of indicators***

The characteristics of a good indicator can be defined as follows<sup>4</sup>.

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4 See Sauvageot, C., European Training Foundation, *Methodological Notes – Euromed Observatory Function: Guidelines for developing indicators on technical and vocational education and training*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 2007.

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- It must be relevant.
- It must be able to summarise information without distorting it.
- It must be coordinated and structured, allowing it to be used in conjunction with other indicators to provide an overall analysis of the system.
- It must be accurate and comparable.
- It must be reliable.

As mentioned in the introduction, the indicators used within the project have been defined in close consultation with the partner countries. The members of the network have agreed on the definition of three domains of information: access and equity, investment in education, and involvement of social partners in driving and managing the TVET systems (taking account of training needs). A further group of contextual indicators has also been considered, although the priority of the network has been the analysis of the three domains under review.

### ***Absent or inadequate data***

The problems of comparison between certain figures remain.

- The dates of the data range from 2005 (Syria) to 2007, depending on the country.
- The indicators are not all complete. For example, the employment and unemployment rates among young people in Jordan and Syria are calculated across two age bands, not for the 15-24 year old range.
- Some indicators are calculated by the countries using their own national classifications. For example, for male and female professions or for the sectors in which companies operate.
- The same applies to total spending on education, which countries often quote in their national currency.
- There is no doubt that GDP figures need to be calculated by MEDSTAT, because the countries have problems to draw them up in euros at current rates. This GDP indicator is a good example of the difficulties encountered with all the data to be collected within the MEDA-ETE project.

Further indicators should be included after discussion and validation in each country:

- an indicator of long-term unemployment (to help define the difficulties);
- an indicator of urban/rural unemployment (some countries in the region calculate this);
- figures for the public sector that is so significant in this region (and perhaps for applicants/jobs in the public sector, as in Jordan and Syria);
- figures for the informal sector which is very much present (and which need to be verified);
- indicators on labour market entry and monitoring of young people in receipt of training.

It is interesting to evaluate vocational qualifications by studying the labour market entry of young people with these qualifications emerging from the education system. Tracer studies could be conducted a few months after people leave the education system, and one or more years after the end of their initial vocational training. In order to make comparisons, these studies must be carried out from the outset using the same

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

methodology and the same indicators (employment and unemployment rates, etc.) as a route for the ETF to take in the future).

It is clear that the aim of obtaining a comparative framework for the region is a far from easy task, particularly given its pioneering character in a region in which definitions, tools and data collection mechanisms are not clear. By way of example, the concepts of TVET and of apprenticeship are not uniform at the regional level and, to some extent, at the national level either. One significant finding is the difficulty of gaining a real understanding of TVET in each of the countries. For this reason, considerable effort has gone into clarifying the concepts and definitions, and all the members of the network agree that these definitions are far from settled.

In this regard, the third set of data collected shows some improvements in comparability. Despite these advances, however, the figures for spending on TVET are always ill-defined and work is still required at the national level if we are to gain a coherent overall view of this expenditure, although international and especially regional comparisons are often useful in this area. Finally, details of the involvement of social partners remain limited. There is, however, plenty of qualitative, and sometimes quantitative information on the role played by social partners and, particularly, on their involvement in the process of defining the need for skills and in observing the changes in professions and qualifications in the different countries.

For all the indicators, each country has submitted its data with different presentation criteria and, as often as not, the countries have not followed the proposed guidelines. This situation does not facilitate understanding the data. We must insist on the importance of using the guidelines put forward in order to facilitate consistent presentation of the information. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the work done in preparing this report was based on the results of the second round of data collection. The third set of data collected at the end of 2008/beginning of 2009 is much more complete, both in terms of coverage of indicators by country and in terms of the quality of the available data.

With regard to the contextual indicators indicated above, we can quickly arrive at indicators of GDP and employment and unemployment rates after checking the correct use of the definitions. For the time being, for the other contextual indicators, we need to define more precisely what is expected and to revisit them with the countries. Once again, coordination with the MEDSTAT project is essential.

When it comes to the indicators of investment and access and equity, we have sufficient details for four or five countries to draw up an initial analysis of the data. For the remaining countries, we need to check the availability of the data once more. In some cases, we must assume that it is just a question of having a little more time to produce these indicators.

For most of the countries for which we have figures, we need to verify locally the concepts and calculation formulae used, to enable a correct analysis of the indicators. This will allow us to obtain an initial result of great value to each of these countries and for the region as a whole, because they can be used as a reference.

For the indicators of equity and investment, it will be necessary to tighten up the definitions and the calculation rules, especially for the financial indicators and the indicators bearing on the different TVET levels and programmes.

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On these topics, before we try to initiate a regional comparison, we need to go further at the country level to verify the correct production of each indicator.

For the other indicators, one way forward might be to give priority to a limited number of indicators that are easier to calculate, and to leave the remaining indicators for more in-depth work in a second phase – but not before verifying the existence or feasibility of the tools needed to obtain the missing information. For this small number of indicators, we need to work especially on defining the scope of TVET in each case, and on the ISCED criteria for the different programmes. Resolving these two difficulties would have a major impact on an initial set of TVET information of great interest across the region.

### **3.2 Progress due to the indicators component of the MEDA-ETE project**

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It is important to set out the positive points and the progress made thanks to the indicators component of the MEDA-ETE project.

In parallel, a considerable effort to identify the education and training programmes in place helped to understand the education and training systems and the specific features of each of the partner countries. These ‘maps’, shared and validated by the members of the network, are now accessible on the MEDA-ETE project website and will be distributed beyond the restricted circle of members of the MEDA-ETE networks.

Despite the difficulties encountered, the countries have made great efforts to collect the information requested, and we need to encourage them to continue with this exercise. All in all, and although the results are still far from satisfactory, this is the first time we have had such a substantial quantity of figures and indicators available at the regional level. Most international statistical yearbooks gather information on TVET containing a very restricted number of indicators, and even with this small number, the boxes are often empty. In the present project, the substantial number of indicators that we aim to obtain justifies a lengthy process of working and learning together which needs to be seen in a medium-term perspective so that we can develop and accumulate experience and expertise.

As pointed out on several occasions, international experience shows that the development of comparative indicators is a lengthy process, and in the MEDA-ETE project, we are right at the start of this process. To take one example, this phase took several years for the OECD’s Indicators of Education Systems (INES). It involved very many experts and several case studies, and it is fair to say that, even though it started in 1990, work in some areas is still not complete.

Moreover, in the field of TVET, international comparative indicators are not always of the best quality. Significant efforts have been made by Eurostat with the assistance of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), but there is still a long way to go in this area, as shown by the discussions held in the workshop on what indicators to use for vocational education and training at the Paris conference on international comparative indicators (13-14 November 2008).

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The issue of the data available for calculating the indicators was raised at the very start of the project. This availability remains one of the major problems for the coming years and for future projects.

However, we need to bear in mind that something which is difficult for the countries of the EU and the OECD will clearly be at least as hard for the countries and territories of the Mediterranean region. It is therefore very important to stress several very positive points that have come out of the indicators component of the MEDA-ETE project.

An initial success was the creation of a network enabling coordination of the work in the different countries. For an issue as complex as TVET, this requires the active involvement of several bodies: national statistics offices, the ministries responsible for national education, ministries of employment and ministries of state secretariats for vocational training. The institutions responsible for TVET have been identified, along with the sources of data that they can provide.

The first visible product of this network was the production of an initial list of indicators chosen by all of the countries to reflect developments in vocational education and training in all the countries and territories of the Mediterranean region. Apart from the agreement of all the countries to a common list of indicators, this implicitly indicated (not a given) that the countries were willing to be compared on the basis of their indicators.

The implementation of this list of indicators necessitated significant capacity building in the different countries to enable them to calculate comparable indicators. This was supported by many seminars and visits from ETF experts.

The expert visits and the discussions in the various seminars raised awareness among the different players of the need to work with other national institutions to gain a full overview of the activities of any given country. Indeed, to gain this overview, it is necessary to consolidate information from different institutions which have not necessarily been accustomed to working together. It is true that some of the institutions were producing partial reports on the part of TVET for which they were responsible, but no overall picture was being produced.

Another major contribution was the provision to MEDSTAT of a list of indicators concerning TVET. In fact, within the MEDSTAT project, TVET seemed to be a very complex area and difficult to define. Thanks to the work of the MEDA-ETE project, MEDSTAT has been able to take advantage of the discussions on the indicators needed to monitor TVET and include them in its project.

Drawing up comparative international indicators entails developing a real culture of international comparison. MEDA-ETE has helped to raise awareness and develop skills in international comparison processes. This has been reflected in a better understanding of international classifications, essential to be able to make comparisons. It also turned out to be necessary to harmonise the concepts used in TVET (apprenticeship, for example) and the survey procedures used in workforce surveys. There is still much to do to make the application of international standards to national conditions and realities entirely satisfactory, but the MEDA-ETE project has given an essential impetus to this initiative.

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The initial results, particularly those on the contextual indicators, have demonstrated the usefulness of making comparisons and exchanging points of view on these topics. It is important to stress that this is a first in this area and we should welcome it as such: the first time such a large and coherent set of indicators and data on TVET in the Mediterranean region has been drawn together. Moreover, the discussions provoked by the presentation of the results at the Paris seminar on 3-5 November 2008 were very interesting and fruitful for all the participants. This presentation benefited greatly from the wide experience of international experts both in content and in making these comparisons real. All this was really very positive.

The methodological and conceptual difficulties that emerged enabled us to make the need for standardised data collection mechanisms very clear. The link with MEDSTAT is vital to this. However, it will be necessary to back this up with much more expertise. We should stress that some countries have decided to help each other and to give each other the benefit of their own expertise.

Finally, the work done has once again demonstrated the importance of developing a national project to support an international comparison project. The observatory function must exist in every country for the overall view of TVET to be complete, for the data to be reliable and for the system to last.

### **3.3 Observatory function impact on national policies**

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Observation means, above all, noting and explaining, on the basis of statistical data and indicators, socioeconomic and/or institutional phenomena and mechanisms. Observation is necessary but not sufficient. It serves as the basis for analysis; to deconstruct what appears to be in order to structure what actually is. We need to understand before we act.

The analyses of TVET in the ten countries and territories of the Mediterranean – Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Turkey – have followed the path from deconstruction to restructuring, based on a descriptive method.

The data, information and indicators produced are helpful for understanding and describing the TVET environment. These elements are grouped by topic to help make sense of them, to use them to improve the system as defined and to draw up operating rules. The statistical evidence is supplemented with logical reasoning. It is then possible, based on observation (in this case demographic pressure) to recommend and put forward a series of actions to improve social policies (here, training and employment policies) and tools enabling us to manage and evaluate the execution of these policies.

For each country, an identically structured file has been defined (see the example for Jordan in annex): a summary, the context, investment, access and equity, the involvement of the social partners and the anticipated training needs. Each part is addressed with the aid of indicators provided by the national authorities based on a framework defined jointly by the experts from ETF and the officials of the services concerned.

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

The method adopted and adapted, despite some inadequacies in the statistical data, allows us to analyse the area of TVET in three dimensions: (i) socioeconomic indicators that help to understand the environment and the management of TVET; (ii) the role of the state; and (iii) the appeal of training and employment.

#### ***Environment and management of TVET***

The demographic changes (proportions of young people aged under 15 and under 30 and fertility rates) and changes in economic growth (share of GDP assigned to education and GDP per capita) prompt us to look at the characteristics of the groups benefiting from economic growth in terms of rates of employment and activity and also of the groups – young people and women – most prone to unemployment.

The continuing urbanisation of populations and the degree of poverty are directly linked to these changes. Access to training and employment is subject to discrimination by age and sex. The observations made prompt us to wonder about the impact of tertiary qualifications on access to employment and on reducing poverty. Indicators of performance – literacy, access to education and training and dropout rates at each level – can be compared with employment and activity rates by age and sex.

Comparing these indicators allows us to describe the TVET environment and management and prompt us to look at the relationships between TVET and socioeconomic activities. The breakdown into five sectors – commerce/services, construction, agriculture, public administration and industry – can be compared with employment status (employed or unemployed) and the type of activity (formal or informal). TVET itself is studied according to whether it is part of the public sector – in the sense of a public service – or the private sector – as a product of the market.

The observatory function derives from these approaches – from an information system which translates the observation of an activity with a diagnostic function into a system to aid decision making, thereby combining the functions of evaluation and forecasting that are needed to anticipate training needs.

TVET arrangements, based on a skill-based or sectoral approach or sometimes both, will gradually incorporate the territorial approach, aligning supply and demand and studying the phenomena of personal and economic mobility. The observatory function is then expected to develop from a static approach of observing stocks into a dynamic approach of observing flows.

Social and economic policy measures can then be decided upon, particularly measures to promote diversity and equality of employment. This idea leads us on to two aspects: the role of the state and the appeal of training and employment.

#### ***The role of the state***

The role of the state is characterised by its degree of centralisation or decentralisation. This raises questions of the type of administrative organisation. Hierarchical structures predominate in public administration, where officials provide a public service; they are less prominent in private administration, where the idea of results drives activities.

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This observation leads us to the forms of management of TVET. The fact that there is little or no coordination between the institutions managing the schemes, little or no consultation between the various players and little or no cooperation, prompts us to study more closely the administrative workings and decision-making procedures.

The effectiveness and efficiency of public policies requires analytical tools that establish a dialogue with social partners without fear of judgment or personal criticism (or observation). The evaluation and forecasting functions of the observatories must serve to correct malfunctioning and improve the skills of the people involved in the schemes.

Some states have already started setting up employment and training observatories, observatory functions, cooperative structures and governing bodies to observe the relationship between training and employment. There are, however, two difficulties.

- *Recognition of and consistency with the approach taken by the other socioeconomic and institutional players.* The recurring question is how to make the system of vocational training sensitive to the needs of the labour market.
- *Financing the activities required to produce the strategic information,* particularly the analysis and communication functions. Here the recurring question is who benefits from the information, whether members of government, administrations, socioeconomic players or users of TVET.

The management of this information seems to be a major factor in involving social partners and anticipating training needs. It seems that we need to teach the players in the vocational training system to 'read' the information so as to enable dialogue and the implementation of both active policy measures to combat unemployment and poverty and policies designed to promote job creation.

### ***The appeal of training and employment***

The analyses show that the impact of training is not enough to curb unemployment, combat social discrimination and satisfy the demand from employers. Training is therefore necessary but not sufficient in all the countries.

It turns out that general education is more attractive than vocational and technical training. It is therefore recommended to study the relationship between training and recruitment, not just by measuring employment rates but also by describing working conditions, remuneration and benefits. This approach should not only apply to structured jobs but should also help turn informal jobs into formal ones. The appeal is not limited to social phenomena, but should include a study of sociological and economic phenomena. The attraction of cities for rural populations is essentially linked to the hope for a better life.

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## **3.4 Proposals and perspectives**

Statistics and indicators need to be an integral part of the education system and the labour market, both at the regional and national levels. The publication of a report or an analysis of indicators may be a good means for communication and evaluation. What is then needed is the political will and the resolve to make things happen, both at the

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country level and across the region. Without a doubt, this project has helped to stimulate debate and launch discussions on the analysis of training and employment indicators. In most of these countries, collecting and calculating the chosen indicators has been lengthy and laborious. In this regard, we applaud the remarkable efforts of the people and the various groups involved in this project, and we count on them to continue in the same vein. The point is not just to publish an initial regional study along with summaries for the ten countries and territories and then, after so much effort and investment, to rest on our laurels.

The MEDA-ETE project was a real challenge, but have we perhaps put the cart before the horse? Have we tried to draw up regional indicators before obtaining national indicators? Have we analysed each country involved in the project without real request, in an unsystematic way, without any real consultation and without proper methodological support?

It might have been wiser to work with the authorities in these countries and with existing training and employment observatories in order to start creating national indicators, then regional ones. This was the case in Jordan, the leader in this field, which chose some indicators in advance and produced reports on these indicators through a networked working group led by the National Centre for Human Resources Development (NCHRD) with the support of an official from the ETF.

We need, indeed, to think in terms of a lengthy process. However, the essential thing is that a national project should be launched in each country – so as to develop and analyse indicators covering the relationship between education and employment with the support of national players and decision makers – potentially orchestrated by the employment and training observatory (if there is one) or by a networked working group led by the national statistics office and partners in the fields of education and employment. It is also possible to embark on a regional analysis and comparison of a given sector (hotels/tourism, construction, etc.), which would allow the relationships between education and employment to be addressed with professionals in each country, to target the potential and the limitations of vocational training and to identify the expectations of companies – with national meetings and seminars and a regional seminar aimed at disseminating the findings and increasing visibility in the region.

In each country, we see a need to give genuine methodological support – extending from the definition of concepts, the choice of indicators and the quality of the data through to analysis and recommendations – while taking into account the use of international classifications. All the work done in the last few years – achievements and limitations, successes and failures – can and should serve as a basis for discussion in each country, with the support of the ETF. The objectives are as follows: (i) to develop analytical and diagnostic tools at country then regional level; (ii) to evaluate the available information spread across the various authorities; and (iii) to encourage country authorities to work together, with the ETF guiding the network of experts, that is, the observatories.

Finally, as proposals for the ETF, we need to continue to assess this list of indicators but with greater involvement from the experts in the countries (which indicators to keep, discard, modify, etc.) in order to identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It would also be interesting – with the technical and scientific resources and support of the ETF experts – to make suggestions, particularly on future prospects and the integration of young people into national labour markets. Indicators monitoring and

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forecasting relationships between education and employment – such as identifying the companies/sectors that take on young people coming out of the education system, women with degrees, etc. – could be important tools for fostering dialogue between the players in the education system and companies. This work should take in both the present situation and the future – and yet should also recognise the limitations of any forecasting exercise. Tracer studies of trained people are essential to any analysis of the relationship between education and employment, firstly, so as to be able to appreciate the extent of the match between graduates and trends in demand within the labour market and, secondly, to anticipate future needs and make the supply of vocational training more responsive. These two courses of action are all the more important in view of the fact that the economic context and demographic situation both suggest a very strong probability of tension associated with the arrival of large numbers of young people in the labour market in all the countries and territories of the Mediterranean region.

In the short to medium term, it is possible to lay down some recommendations:

- consolidating the progress made in defining indicators and analysing them at the national and regional levels, particularly in identifying a relationship between education and employment;
- developing this information to support decision making, responding to the needs and issues raised by the players and then publishing this in each territory;
- exchanging experience and collaborating at the regional level, with methodological workshops and dissemination of the work done in the pilot countries (website, seminars, etc.);
- developing institutional capabilities using the resources of external experts, partnerships, study visits and seminars.

In short, the MEDA-ETE project has helped to compare available data, create a network, coordinate work and mobilise institutions. The results obtained can be summarised as follows:

- identification of institutions,
- identification of data sources,
- production of lists of indicators of TVET development,
- capacity building,
- development of collaborative working,
- harmonisation of concepts.

These results should be supplemented with actions aimed at developing the skills of people involved in the following areas:

- normalisation of concepts,
- consistency of procedures for data collection and processing and information exchanges,
- transfer of definition and analysis methods,
- inclusion and integration of national projects in the Mediterranean project.

An analysis of the country files shows a weakness in the involvement of social partners and in the ability to anticipate training needs. This finding is directly attributable to the way the TVET environment is managed. Few countries have established operational frameworks for consultation and cooperation with social partners, and where

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

these exist, the frequency of the meetings indicates a difficulty in building a dialogue. Few countries are carrying out studies of potential skill needs in the labour market.

In the future, it is desirable that these operational frameworks should exist and that the studies be carried out, as these activities will provide the basis for policy decisions.

The change from a static observatory function to a dynamic forecasting function will facilitate the integration of young people into companies, promote equality of opportunity between men and women and drive the transition from informal work to the formal private sector.



## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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This methodological note presents a detailed overview of the results obtained and the challenges facing these countries. The note also highlights the strengths and limitations of the existing arrangements and proposes a scenario for enhancing the current approach.

The note emphasises that the Euromed observatory needs to serve a regional political objective and vision. We have mentioned that the Union for the Mediterranean process attaches great importance to human capital and to the links between education and employment. The future work of the observatory therefore needs to be part of this new political framework.

At the political level, this development could help position the Euromed observatory within a more precise political context, as expressed in the objectives set by the declaration by Euromed ministers of employment and labour, while also bringing together the two levels of national and regional analysis. This will bring some consistency to the work being done by the observatory and provide points for consideration at each level of decision making.

Within this political framework, developments at the political level need to move towards a consolidation of the work already done and the tools developed while identifying the programmes and initiatives needed for capacity building at the national level. These two aspects are developed in more detail in the following sections.

### 4.1 Points for consolidation

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The work done so far has enabled greater comparability between national statistics on education and training, particularly concerning the topics raised by the partner countries. This work has also promoted closer links between developments at the regional and national levels. Hence, the regional view has allowed us to relate regional trends to the development of education systems and labour markets at the national level.

Despite the great efforts made, we note that a large number of data items were entered directly by the experts into reports or publications in the countries. This means that data consolidation via the tool provided by the ETF did not work sufficiently well, particularly in the first two data collection cycles, as the institutions responsible for this consolidation did not provide all the available data. It is important not only that the countries should respond using a standard data collection tool, but also that they should look for all the available data, irrespective of the institution that produced it. It is worth remembering that the countries asked for a standard tool, but have only used it partially, making the work of the ETF and the experts very difficult and long drawn-out. It is clear

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that the observatory function has not worked properly in every country. Without an institution or a group to coordinate the different authorities, we cannot hope to obtain an exhaustive set of data based on the most recent figures.

There is a lot of progress still to be made, both in collecting data at the national level and in doing the work needed to make the data comparable. We still need to work in all the countries to make systematic use of international classifications and definitions: ISCED, ISCO, TVET, apprenticeship, activity, employment and unemployment in particular.

In terms of data collection, it is desirable that the countries develop their own information systems on TVET. This is not a situation unique to the Mediterranean region. EU countries also need to do this, although they are more advanced in some areas thanks to surveys of individuals (labour force surveys, for example, which some countries in the Mediterranean region conduct). In any event, we need to develop modules and tools specific to TVET. We also need to make progress on financial data.

### **4.2 Some ways forward**

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It is necessary to continue to support Mediterranean countries in producing all the indicators for several years to come, in terms of methodological help with concepts and definitions, the implementation of appropriate data collection tools and the use of international classifications.

In the present project, the results obtained in general, and more specifically, the substantial number of indicators that we aim to obtain, justify a lengthy process of working and learning together that needs to be seen in a medium-term perspective so we can develop and accumulate experience and expertise.

For the indicators other than those relating to context, one way forward might be to give priority to a restricted number of indicators that are easier to calculate, and to leave the remaining indicators for more in-depth work in a second phase, but not before verifying the existence or feasibility of the tools needed to obtain the missing information. The end of this initial phase of regional work is also a good time to revisit the list of indicators and consider whether there are other indicators that are now more relevant? The world and the economic environment have changed a lot in the last few years, and even more in the last few months, and it is desirable, and maybe even necessary, to discuss areas of common interest in the region.

If the option chosen is to restrict future work to a reduced number of indicators, we need to work especially on defining the scope of TVET in each case, and on the ISCED classification criteria for the different programmes. Resolving these two difficulties would have a major impact on an initial set of TVET information of great interest across the region.

We need to relaunch the observatory projects or similar schemes in all the countries. As has often been said, it will not be possible to complete an international comparison project if we do not have a national project based on the observatory function. This is as true of TVET as it is of every other area. It is essential that this observatory

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function should be developed and strengthened in the countries. It may take many different forms, but it must have clear legitimacy and the appropriate resources.

It is essential to support the countries in the analyses they will be carrying out on the indicators, highlighting the importance of data quality for policymakers and for regional and international comparison purposes.

It is interesting to stimulate aid and cooperation between countries. One country that is more advanced in a given domain can provide assistance to another. The reverse may happen in another domain. We can point to the very effective support provided by Jordan to the development of the observatory function in Syria.

At several points in this document, we have mentioned the very ambitious nature of this project and the great deal of time needed to complete it, in the light of projects of a similar nature affecting countries that are better equipped on average than those of the Mediterranean region. We should therefore think in terms of a long process demanding constant effort over a substantial period of time, both in the countries and in the institutions that support and assist them, but of great importance to the development of this region. But this is also a challenge that has to be met given the importance of TVET, and is well worth the effort.



In the past 30 years Jordan has made a considerable effort to develop its human resources, in a relatively stable setting compared to the economic and political turbulences elsewhere in the Mediterranean region. Lacking substantial natural resources, the country relies on its human capital and has made significant progress in reducing illiteracy and the school dropout rate by constantly improving its educational systems. However, the part of the population with less than secondary education is still close to two out of every three adults. In 2006, over 56,800 pupils and students, of whom half were girls, attended TVET. The unemployment rate, which remains stuck at around 14%, is a real problem for Jordan. Although education has a significant impact on job opportunities, being young and female nevertheless represents a dual difficulty in a labour market where the public sector predominates and the informal sector is present. Women are concentrated in a very small number of training courses and jobs that are largely female-dominated. There are three evident strategic priorities which require action: (i) to facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market; (ii) to promote equal opportunities for women and men; (iii) and to encourage the transition from informal work to the formal private sector, notably by developing diverse vocational courses suited to the needs of the local, national or even regional labour market.

### Context

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One-third of the population are schoolchildren or students. In 2007, Jordan had a population of almost 5.7 million, of whom 37% were under the age of 15. The number of children per woman (3.5) places this country at the forefront in the Mediterranean region, alongside Syria. In an essentially rural country, almost 82% of the population now lives in an urban environment. Although women make up 48% of the population, their employment rate has been no more than 12% for many years, although on average they hold more formal qualifications than men. In fact, Jordan is the country of the region with the lowest employment rates for both women and men (64%).

The analysis of Jordan's labour market reveals some interesting characteristics. Firstly, the low rate of economic activity (38%) is due to the population structure, with a large number of students and a low rate of female participation in the labour market (probably for social and cultural reasons). Activity and employment rates increase as the standard of education increases. Thus, in the case of men there is a large gap between those with pre-secondary level qualifications and those with higher qualifications (intermediate diploma, degree and above) with the employment rate rising from 55% to 86%. The gap is even more marked for women: while very few of them join the labour market with no qualifications (5%), two thirds of those with higher education diplomas want to work, while their employment rate is 45%. Jordan's labour market is clearly segmented according to sex and qualifications. Young people under the age of 25 have a low economic activity rate compared to other countries in the region.

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Secondly, there is a gender imbalance in the distribution of economic activities. In recent decades, trade and services have expanded while agriculture and construction have declined, along with the public sector. In 2007, only education could be considered to be a mixed sector with women representing 50% of employees, in contrast to the dominance of men in all the other sectors. Thirdly, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises predominate: thus, firms with fewer than five employees represent over 40% of private employment outside agriculture. Finally, as in other countries in the region, informal employment accounts for a substantial proportion of the labour force, estimated at between 200,000 and 650,000 persons<sup>5</sup>.

The public sector remains the biggest employer and still accounts for half of the women and one third of the men. Its attraction endures, with a continuing high number of applications, particularly from young women with higher education diplomas, in comparison with the number of jobs available. Two thirds of applications are from women, while equal numbers of men and women are employed (according to the Civil Service Bureau). Thus, in 2007 over 178,850 candidates applied for 11,200 jobs. The female population and their families seem to prefer these jobs, probably for their stability, security, working hours, employment conditions and retirement terms. Government spending, which has been declining over the years, is now in the region of 40% of GDP. In 2006, per capita GDP was estimated at nearly 1,873 euros (1,805 Jordan dinars).

By following different training courses, girls and boys are steered towards different occupations and areas of employment. Thus, in 2007 around 48% of women held professional jobs (teachers, managers, etc.) compared to 17% of men and one quarter were in intermediate occupations (as nurses, technical assistants, etc.) compared to 9% of men. Nearly 33% of men are skilled workers or employees in the repair and trade sector and one third holds jobs without qualifications. Education has a significant impact on high-grade job opportunities, particularly for the female population.

Above all, unemployment is high among young people. Jordan is in line with the other countries in the region. Sluggish economic growth and the steady inflow of large numbers of young people entering the labour market each year are among the reasons for these problems. In 2006, among those under 25, the unemployment rate was 36% whereas the average was 14%. Women are at a much greater risk of unemployment, with a jobless rate twice that for men: one in four active women is looking for a job. Unemployed women tend to have a higher standard of qualifications than men. Persons with no training or qualifications represent over half of the unemployed men. Moreover, there are fewer men among the long-term unemployed: 12% of men compared to 22% of women have been out of work for more than a year.

### **Investment in education and training**

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The analysis of the supply of vocational and technical training in Jordan highlights specific characteristics according to the type of education. The TVET system is divided into three sub-sets: (i) vocational secondary education organised by the ministry of education (24,850 students in 2006); (ii) alternance (work-based) training courses and apprenticeships run by the Vocational Training Corporation (6,280 young people) under

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5 Haan, H.C. and Mryyan, N., 'Skills acquisition for the informal micro-enterprise sector in Jordan', draft report, World Bank/ETF, 2003.

the aegis of the ministry of labour; and (iii) short higher technical education and training courses (two years) under the aegis of Al-Balqa Applied University (25,740 students).

The number of TVET teachers has risen in recent years to a total of almost 5,100 in 2006, a considerable proportion of them having less than five years' seniority (over 36%). With over 68% holding higher education diplomas (at least degree level), the ministry of education teachers are more highly qualified than the teachers at the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) centres, where staff, who teach both theory and practice, usually hold a vocational certificate (43%), although one-third of them have no more than a secondary school standard of education. In the Al-Balqa Applied University, the teaching staff are highly qualified; 70% of them hold at least a degree and 26% a doctorate. Women represent half of the teachers in vocational secondary education, 17% in the VTC centres (increasing), and a steady 24% in technical education.

## Access and equality in vocational and technical education

In Jordan, on completing compulsory schooling (ten years of education, or around the age of 16), almost 16% of pupils are enrolled in vocational education courses run by the ministry of education, and 6% take up alternance training courses at VTC centres. While young people at these centres do not pursue a course of study, over a quarter of graduates from the ministry of education schools continue their education, and some of them go to university. Less than half of pupils in the national vocational education courses pass the examination entitling them to attend higher education, and less than 4% obtain the *Tawjihi* entitling them to go to university. Pupils of the vocational training centres have a high completion rate in the region of 84%, due to low dropout and repetition rates. The dropout in apprenticeship was around 6% in 2006. Almost 60% of technical education students pass their final examination at the first attempt.

The number of pupils and students attending vocational training is declining, and is now around 56,870. The ministry of education, with some 231 schools, offers vocational secondary education nationwide for 24,850 young people. That represents nearly 44% of those enrolled for TVET. The 6,280 pupils attending training courses in the 47 VTC institutes represent 11% of the total number attending vocational training. Higher technical education, with 25,740 students, accounts for 45% of young people. Overall, there is a ratio of approximately 15 students per teacher in vocational education (18 students per teacher in general education) for ISCED level 3.

The proportion of young people in TVET was 14% in 2006 (compared to 21% in 2001). This decline is due partly to a shift away from commercial education programmes towards general secondary education (this concerns 5,000 pupils), but primarily to the fact that young people and their families prefer other general training courses which they consider more prestigious. Conversely, the numbers pursuing apprenticeships have been rising since 2003, owing to the expansion in apprenticeship centres and exemptions from course fees. However, there is a marked increase in the numbers attending paramedical and technological courses at Al-Balqa Applied University, information technology courses (with equal numbers of male and female students) and personal services apprenticeships. The gross percentage in TVET in relation to the young reference population has fallen in

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recent years: it is extremely low for apprenticeships (only 1%) compared to other forms of vocational education (8.5%) and even lower for girls.

There are wide variations in the rate of female participation according to the type of training. While over 60% of student technicians are women, they represent one third of the numbers in vocational secondary education. In the case of apprenticeships, their number rose to 28% of the total in 2006, as a result of the establishment of 12 centres around the country and a relatively diverse range of courses, such as information technology, personal services and secretarial skills. But all the courses are very much dominated by either women or men alone, very few are mixed. While tourism is beginning to become a strategic sector for Jordan, girls still do not enter studies or work in this sector.

Further supplementary training for persons between the ages of 18 and 36, designed as a support programme for the unemployed, is run by the Vocational Training Corporation. Since 2006, almost 6,600 people have already taken part in this programme, 2,200 have obtained a certificate and 1,400 have been taken on by their training enterprise.

### **Social partner involvement and anticipation of skill requirements**

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The role of the state is central in the governance and management of the TVET system. However, the Jordan Chambers of Industry and Commerce are represented in the Vocational Training Corporation, administered by a tripartite board of directors, chaired by the Minister of Labour and including representatives from the government, employers, unions and professional associations. Recent proposals aim to give social partners a greater role in decision making. A TVET Council was set up in 2001 (now the E-TVET Council) comprising government officials, employers and unions; it arranges coordination between the three main providers, the ministry of education, the Vocational Training Corporation and Al-Balqa Applied University, all of whom prepare their own programmes, statistics, monitoring surveys and management systems. In order to update the vocational education and training programmes, the ministry of education turned to committees comprising representatives of businesses and other experts. Similarly, the Vocational Training Corporation set up sectoral committees to modify the content of training courses in line with labour market requirements (750 modules were devised).

The ministry of education has conducted surveys and tracer studies to anticipate the skills required. In the Jordanian labour market, the Education Reform for Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) project (phases I and II) also aims to renew all vocational subjects, to increase industry involvement, and to upgrade vocational teachers skills. In addition the Al-Balqa Applied University also changed its programmes (reduced from 125 to 66) following discussions of advisory boards composed of two thirds of representatives of businesses. However, it has proved difficult to maintain the interest of the labour market sector in the design of the programmes and to involve small and medium-sized enterprises.

In Jordan an effort has been made to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the TVET agencies: the National Centre for Human Resources

Development has published a number of analyses on various aspects of TVET, Al-Balqa Applied University has adopted a set of key monitoring indicators, and numerous studies have been conducted to monitor various sectors and groups trained by the ministry of education and the Vocational Training Corporation, but with their own approaches and methodologies<sup>6</sup>.

This summary was produced by Christine Guégnard in November 2008 with the participation of Abeer El-Kiswani, Adel Abedalrahim and Ahmad Al-Henawi, on the basis of statistics collected by the ETF (MEDA-ETE) and Eurostat (MEDSTAT), and documents produced by the Jordan Observatory (Human Resources Information and Knowledge System), the National Centre for Human Resources Development (NCHRD, Al-Manar) and the ETF. In particular:

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6 The follow-up results on trainees indicate partial success, since over half of those obtaining a certificate remained jobless at the time of the surveys. In the case of craft training, the employment rate is better, at almost 62% (Vocational Training Corporation, 2003).



# ACRONYMS

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<b>ETE</b>	Education and Training for Employment
<b>ETF</b>	European Training Foundation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>INES</b>	Indicators of Education Systems
<b>ISCED</b>	International Standard Classification of Education
<b>ISCO</b>	International Standard Classification of Occupations
<b>NCHRD</b>	National Centre for Human Resources Development
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>oPt</b>	occupied Palestinian territory
<b>TVET</b>	technical and vocational education and training
<b>VTC</b>	Vocational Training Corporation



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