

WOMEN AND WORK IN TUNISIA

TOURISM AND ICT SECTORS: A CASE STUDY

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TOURISM AND ICT SECTORS: A CASE STUDY

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November, 2010

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PREFACE

This report has been produced within the framework of the Women and Work project of the European Training Foundation (ETF), a European Union (EU) agency that provides guidance and assistance to partner countries to help them to develop their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems within the context of the EU's external relations policy. The main aim of the project is to contribute to promoting gender equality strategies in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia in the areas of education, training and employment.

The project was divided into three phases: (i) stocktaking and data research activities in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia; the setting up of a consultative group in each of the three countries with design of methodology and selection of priority sectors (2008); (ii) field research based on surveys of companies and creation of discussion groups formed by young women from the three countries (2009); and (iii) production of country-specific reports (such as this report) and an analytical report designed to present a summarised version of the findings of the study (2010).

A local consultancy and engineering firm, COMETE Engineering, was commissioned to conduct the field survey in Tunisia. The provisional report produced by COMETE Engineering was reviewed and completed by a team of experts from the ETF (Milena Corradini, Debora Gatelli, Outi Kärkkäinen, Agnieszka Majcher-Teleon and Elena Carrero Pérez).

The ETF team would like to thank the Tunisian Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment and all the members of the national consultative group members who actively participated in the discussions and deliberations relevant to the issue at hand and contributed to the production of the report. Special thanks are also due to the team at COMETE Engineering (Nabila Baati, Moez El Elj, Souad Triki and Lofti Bennour), who showed genuine commitment throughout the project and consistently produced quality results.

Outi Kärkkäinen
ETF Project Team Leader

SUMMARY AND KEY MESSAGES

Considerable progress has been made in women's education and training in Tunisia in the past 50 years. Today, young women have a better education level than their mothers and women in the younger generations are better educated than men. Equal opportunities legislation has gradually been introduced and improved to provide a legal framework to safeguard against all types of discrimination in education and employment. Nevertheless, according to the National Statistics Institute (INS), just 25.4% of working-age women, compared to 69.6% of working-age men, are employed in the formal sector (INS, 2009).

Improvements in levels of education and training generally lead to improved rates of participation in the workforce. Despite the advances that have been made in female educational attainments around the world, however, women are still under-represented in the labour market with respect to their education level. This has negative effects on women's status, on their economic and social integration and on the fight against poverty. The returns to investment in education and training are limited by the shortage of skilled workers participating in the economy. Studies have shown a positive correlation between the rate of female participation in the workforce and economic growth.

One possible explanation for women's inability to access or participate in the labour market is that they have perhaps received irrelevant or low-quality education and training. This raises the question of whether education and training provide young women, as they do young men, with the qualifications they need in order to join the workforce. What do employers say about this? And what do the young women say? Are there other more important aspects that should be taken into consideration? These are the questions that form the basis of the European Training Foundation's (ETF) Women and Work project in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. The current report presents the findings of the study conducted in Tunisia. The overall project specifically aims to increase knowledge and interest in women's employment opportunities in the three countries and to analyse how women might benefit from improved job opportunities. Its main aim, however, is to contribute to the promotion of gender equality strategies in the areas of education, training and employment.

Because the public sector is shrinking in the countries analysed, it was decided to focus exclusively on the private sector. The tourism and the information and communication technology (ICT) sector were chosen because of their potential to contribute to economic growth, job creation and development and because they are economic development priorities for the Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. To analyse job demand, we interviewed employers in the two sectors about aspects relating to recruitment needs, preferences and obstacles in the area of women's employment. To analyse the supply side of the market, we evaluated obstacles and opportunities reported by young women who participated in discussion groups formed by students from vocational training centres and universities and graduates working or looking for work in the two sectors. The project targeted women aged between 15 and 29 because it is generally women in this age bracket (graduates and those looking for their first job) who have the greatest difficulty finding work. Small, family-run businesses were excluded as they were considered less likely to have human resources and recruitment policies in place, and also because they generally have less potential for job creation.

Employment opportunities for women in the hotel and ICT sectors

The hotel and ICT sectors are two of the most dynamic sectors in Tunisia. According to the National Office of the Tunisian Tourism (ONTT, 2008), 11.5% of the country's workers are employed in the tourism sector, which, in turn, has a knock-on effect on other sectors such as air transport, crafts, trade and building and public works. While the ICT sector is a less important source of jobs, it is expected to grow at an annual rate of 17%, and in 2008 it accounted for 10% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

Tunisia has invested in tourism as it is aware that it provides a means of fighting against unemployment. Nevertheless, Tunisian women have not succeeded in gaining access to the hotel industry on an equal footing to men. Indeed, according to the survey, women represent only 22.5% of the total of employees in the sector, less than the female labour force activity rate at the national level (25.6%). In the ICT sector, in contrast, based on the results of our survey, women account for 41% of the workforce, which is well above the national average. This share, however, falls to 35% if we exclude call centres¹.

¹ According to a recent study by the Ministry of Communication Technologies (2008), the estimated rate of female employment in ICT companies is just 27%. The difference between this rate and the rate detected by our survey could be explained by the fact that we excluded ICT companies with fewer than 15 employees (mostly small companies run by men) from the survey. It could thus be concluded that there are even fewer job prospects for women in small ICT companies.

The ICT sector has a greater job creation potential than the hotel sector and it also seems to be less affected by the crisis. Indeed, among the hotels surveyed whose staff numbers had changed in the 12 months prior to the survey, the overall result in employment was a reduction of 1.4%. This contrasts with the situation in the ICT sector, where jobs had grown by 13% with respect to the previous year. Only a third of the hotels surveyed planned to step up investments and create new jobs in the coming year compared to two thirds of the companies in the ICT sector. Furthermore, the rate of job creation in the 12 months following the survey was estimated at 3% for the hotel sector and 6.8% for the ICT sector.

Based on the results of the survey, the ICT sector would appear to offer women greater employment opportunities than the hotel sector. Proportionally, more women are employed in the former than in the latter. According to the data collected, the jobs created in the ICT sector in the 12 months prior to the survey went to a marginally higher proportion of women than men (54% vs 46%) while those created in the hotel sector went mostly to men (73% vs 27%). Nonetheless, it should be noted that over half of the jobs created in the ICT sector were in call centres and were assigned to a greater proportion of women than men (64% vs 36%). Employment opportunities for women, thus, are not equally distributed among the different subsectors of the ICT industry, where there is a tendency towards greater horizontal segregation and gender stereotyping.

Horizontal segregation, however, seems to be more widespread in the hotel industry, with a gendered division of labour evident within the different hotel departments. Over 70% of the women employed in this sector work in the housekeeping department, where they account for 56% of all staff. Over 93% of the jobs in the food and beverage department (restaurants, kitchens, and bars) are held by men. The corresponding figures for the maintenance and finance/accounting departments are 99.6% and 81%, respectively. In the ICT sector, women are relatively well represented in all departments, although they have a slightly greater presence in departments such as sales and marketing, administrative support, and finance and accounting.

Vertical segregation, in contrast, appears to be more pronounced in the ICT sector. While women are concentrated in skilled jobs, just 3% are in senior management positions (contrasting with 7% of men). The corresponding percentages for women and men in middle-management positions are 30% and 38%, respectively. In the hotel industry, there are marginally more men than women in executive and senior management positions and higher numbers of women in unskilled jobs. The differences at other levels are minimal.

While there are employment opportunities for women in both the hotel and ICT sectors, the chances of finding a job in the ICT sector are only slightly higher than those of finding a job in general, and they are even worse in the hotel sector. Furthermore, companies tend to recruit women for female-gendered jobs, which are often inferior to those held by men. Considering that young women in Tunisia today are highly educated, this tendency cannot be explained by differences in competences between women and men.

The impact of education and training

On analysing job distribution by education level in the companies surveyed, it was estimated that 11% of those employed in the hotel industry have higher education, which is lower than the average proportion of employees with higher education in Tunisia (14.2%). On comparing the situation by gender, a marginally higher proportion of men than women (11.5% vs 9.9%) had higher education. The corresponding percentages for those with vocational training were 47.1% for men and 38.3% for women. Over half (53.6%) of the women employed in the hotel industry have at most secondary education; the corresponding figure for men is 41.4%. Considering the education level of young women in Tunisia, it can be concluded that the hotel industry employs women with lower-than-average education. This is not the case in the ICT sector, where a majority of those employed have higher education. Indeed, 59% of all higher education graduates are women. Of all the women employed in the ICT sector, 75.6% have higher education; the corresponding figure for men is 72.6%.

Young women account for only a very small proportion (approximately 20%) of all the students in Tunisia's public hotel training schools, which prepare most of the future employees for this sector. Yet if one considers that 54% of all the women working in the hotels surveyed had secondary, primary or even less education, it is evident that a large proportion of the women graduating from the hotel training schools are not working in the hotel industry (either because they cannot find a job in the sector or because they have opted out of the labour market). Women would also appear to be under-represented in the ICT sector (where they hold 41% of all jobs) if we consider that 46% of ICT university students are female. If we also consider that women, even those with better qualifications than men, are under-represented at the different job levels within this sector – 76% of executive/senior management positions, 65% of middle management positions, and 62% of professional positions are occupied by men – and that, regardless of their education level, they outnumber men in skilled or low-skilled jobs, mostly in call centres, it would appear that neither education nor training have an evident impact on women's participation in the ICT or indeed the hotel sector.

That said, in Tunisia, there is a positive correlation between education (at all levels) and participation in the labour market for both sexes, but particularly for women. In 2007, for example, just 16% of the female workforce was uneducated while 56% had higher education. The corresponding figures for men were 70% and 74%, respectively (INS, 2008).

Education, thus, has an impact though contrasted one on female employment. The benefits appear to be greater in the ICT sector than in the hotel sector, which attracts fewer women and also women (and men) with lower qualifications. Considering that the rate of female employment is highest among women with university qualifications, it is logical that the ICT sector employs more women than the hotel sector as many of the competences required are acquired through third-level education. That said, considering that many women in this sector hold jobs for which they are overqualified, one might wonder if education has a positive impact on the rate of participation of women in the labour market in general or rather if education increases their chances of finding a job because of the skills and qualifications they have acquired. In other words, does education make women more active in the labour market or does specific education increase their employability? Most of the young women working in call centres believed that their qualifications had helped them to find a job but felt that there was no association between what they had learned and the job they were doing. Furthermore, they felt undervalued because of the monotony of their work. While unemployment rates increase with education level for both sexes reflecting the labour market tensions, nonetheless, more women are unemployed than men, regardless of education level.

In conclusion, education has a greater impact on women's participation in the workforce than on men's. Despite this, women have greater difficulty accessing the labour market and when they do succeed, their qualifications are less highly regarded by employers. Indeed, women are often given inferior jobs, even though they have a higher education level than their male counterparts. Considering that young women in Tunisia today are well educated and based on the information provided by the companies surveyed, it would appear that the lower rate of women's participation in the hotel and ICT sectors in Tunisia and their under-representation in managerial positions cannot be explained by their lack of preparation compared to men. The explanation would appear to lie in the existence of a certain degree of discrimination against women, not only in the ICT and hotel sectors, but also in the labour market in general.

Obstacles to women's employment

The relatively low proportion of women workers in the hotel industry may seem puzzling given that hotel work is particularly attractive to young women, as was confirmed during the group discussion sessions. Nonetheless, there are several sociocultural factors, particularly related to the prevailing mentality in Tunisian society, which can explain this apparent contradiction. Firstly, women are deterred by the negative image associated with working women in Tunisian society. The image is particularly negative in the hotel industry, where there is a clear preference for hiring men for the majority of jobs. Most of the vacancies and training opportunities for women in this sector are in the housekeeping department. The strong association between women and housekeeping work explains women's reticence to work in the sector and also their low numbers in other departments.

They do not apply for jobs in departments that require them to work nights due to transport difficulties. They also avoid jobs in which there is a risk of sexual harassment from male colleagues (e.g., jobs in kitchens or bars). Despite its potential as a service sector employer, thus, the hotel industry still offers few career opportunities for women and employs low-skilled women for few years. Because of the negative image associated with women in the hotel industry, women often leave their jobs when they get married and as a result, hotels do not consider it worthwhile investing more than is necessary in on-the-job training. Nevertheless, the young female graduates we interviewed from hotel training schools reported that they were extremely interested in working in this sector and also expressed their frustration with not being able to find a suitable job.

Women with higher education are strongly attracted to the ICT sector. As an explanation for the poor participation of women with third-level ICT qualifications in the ICT sector and the persistence of vertical segregation, the companies interviewed mentioned that women's lack of mobility poses a barrier to their recruitment and promotion within the company and also to their access to positions of responsibility. Some companies mentioned that women actually avoided such positions because of their double workload (at work and at home) and the lack of support systems to help with childcare and household chores. The employers also stated that women became less productive and thus more costly when they had to look after young children and particularly during the maternity period. This does not explain, however, why women's work is more highly regarded in the call centre sector.

Discriminatory employment practices still exist at the recruitment stage, with almost 60% of hotels specifying the gender of the person they are looking to recruit, even though this is illegal. The corresponding percentage in ICT companies is 40%. Young women looking for work often use employment agencies or advertisements in the press. In their opinion, information about vacancies is not always available to interested parties but rather limited to a small circle. Indeed, most of the companies interviewed (84% of hotels and almost 58% of ICT companies) said that they relied on personal contacts to recruit new employees. The young women interviewed would prefer more transparent recruitment procedures, or even competitive recruitment examinations.

The main determinants of women's participation in the hotel and ICT sectors are largely identical to those that affect recruitment in general. Nonetheless, there are some differences such as availability to work nights, marital status, and having young children. Hotels appear to have adapted to the difficulties that women have in terms of working nights and consider it normal to allow them to go home at a reasonable time. It seems that both hotels and ICT companies prefer to recruit single women rather than married women as they have fewer time constraints. They consider that married women have more family obligations and thus cause more organisational problems. Job loss is most common in married women, particularly when they have young children, due to absenteeism. This demonstrates just how difficult it is for married women to balance family and work.

Transport and accommodation problems also contribute to the difficulties that women (particularly those living in rural environments) face in the labour market. An additional problem is the concentration of tourism activities in certain parts of the country. Tunisia's tourism industry is concentrated in the centre-east of the country, along the south-east coast and in the region of Nabeul/Hammamet. The ICT industry, in contrast, is mainly located in the urban centre of the District of Tunis.

The employers interviewed also mentioned several positive aspects associated with the work performed by women, in particular, their patience, the positive impact they have on the company's image, their client relationship skills, and their willingness to accept lower pay than men.

Recommendations

Tunisia is a model for other countries in the region in terms of the progress it has made in the education and training of women of all ages. The state has invested heavily in improving the educational attainments of both men and women and has made considerable progress in this area (see enrolment rates for girls at primary and secondary schools and the number of women in higher education, where they now outnumber men). It is now necessary to ensure the returns to this investment by aiding women to find work and contributing to the development of an increasingly egalitarian society. This might require specific actions aimed at promoting vocational training for women in several areas, improving the image of working women in society and encouraging the private sector to hire more women.

A society that is more respectful of both sexes is only possible if the different players involved are committed to working in a climate of cooperation and coordination. If they are to be effective, specific actions in the hotel and ICT sectors will require constant commitment from key players such as government, professionals, educational and training establishments and civil society. These players need to develop prospects for the future, pressurise companies, participate in the design of national programmes and rally public opinion at all levels of society regarding the role of the private sector in the promotion of gender equality.

General recommendations

1. Improve compliance with general labour laws and legal provisions relating to maternity protection and career plans for married women and mothers; ensure compliance with legislation prohibiting job advertisements excluding women in employment agencies and companies.
2. Organise awareness campaigns in favour of gender equality and against sexual harassment in the workplace.
3. Mainstream gender analysis across all sectors and design and implement systems to collect and process gender-disaggregated statistics.
4. Protect against gender discrimination to satisfy the employment demands of both young men and women.
5. Organise open days in education and training centres in collaboration with professional organisations to evaluate the competences of young graduates; increase awareness of employers' needs and the 'products' offered by education and training centres, and provide better guidance to students regarding choice of study.

Recommendations for the hotel industry

Education and training

1. In order to reduce dropout rates and increase returns to investment in the education and training of women and men, implement a two-week induction and career guidance week targeting young women in all hotel training centres and institutes to increase awareness of training prospects from the moment they become part of the vocational training system.
2. Increase the focus on practical skills in higher education tourism courses to align training with the realities of the sector; increase post-baccalaureate qualifications (BTS) in tourism.
3. Encourage the recruitment of women (with the establishment of minimum quotas) to participate in work-based training programmes in hotels to provide them with experience in the sector, facilitate their subsequent access and provide them with the opportunity to try jobs traditionally reserved for men; promote the benefits of working in the food and beverage department.

Employment

4. Promote a positive image of women in the hotel industry in society and strengthen initiatives by sector representatives in this area.
5. Improve working hours to facilitate the balance between work and family life and ensure that mothers remain in their jobs.
6. Organise collective transport for workers by types of jobs/working times and create residences for women and men who have no means of getting home or who live far from their place of work.
7. Introduce tax breaks and other incentives to encourage hotels in the private sector to hire more women.

Recommendations for the ICT sector

Education and training

1. Develop campaigns to encourage female secondary school graduates to study ICT and inform them about the sector.
2. Establish close cooperative ties between teaching and training institutions in the different fields of ICT and the profession to ensure gender equality within the context of a joint training-employment strategy.
3. Develop profession-specific training modules to strengthen project management skills among young women with ICT qualifications.
4. Promote work-based training programmes, particularly targeting women and jobs traditionally reserved for men.
5. Encourage companies to take on female students in work placement programmes (with the establishment of minimum quotas) and help young women to participate in these programmes (vocational training centres and institutions, professional organisations).

Employment

6. Inform young women about the different employment support policies that exist, particularly in the ICT sector; this information could be made available through leaflets or other means and given to young women by employment agencies, etc.
7. Design campaigns to attract women to higher positions within the company (in particular technical and decision-making positions).
8. Develop services with medium and high added value such as hotlines (advice and engineering) (skills levels 2 and 3) to take advantage of available skills and develop new skills (management, engineering, health) and thus prevent the accumulation of young women with higher education in low-level positions in call centres.
9. Promote entrepreneurship with a view to fostering telework and create company support programmes and expertise partnerships to help female entrepreneurs, particularly in rural Tunisia where there are few opportunities to work in ICT companies.
10. Guarantee a minimum quota of administrative and middle and senior management positions to be occupied by women (positive discrimination).
11. Introduce objective recruitment criteria in employment agencies (e.g., criteria based on competences, length of time unemployed, etc.).
12. Improve working hours in ICT companies (particularly in call centres) to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family for both men and women.
13. Improve society's image of women working in call centres.
14. Introduce tax breaks and other incentives to encourage ICT companies in the private sector to hire women.

Recommendations for donors

International donors are also responsible for promoting gender equality in their actions. With respect to the role of the EU or other donors in Tunisia, the following recommendations are made.

1. Include gender mainstreaming in employment projects or sectoral approaches with a particular emphasis on active employment measures.
2. Mainstream gender analysis across all sectors and help to implement a system for collecting and processing gender-disaggregated data.
3. Implement employment programmes targeting sectors in which women are under-represented (specific actions).
4. Promote social partnership in all programmes to facilitate the transition from education and training to work.
5. Include specific indicators in all programmes to measure progress made in gender equality.

I. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1. THE WOMEN AND WORK PROJECT

1.1 RATIONALE

Despite the advances that have been made in female education around the world, women are still under-represented in the labour market compared to men. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the participation rates for women and men in the global labour market in 2007 were 53% and 78%, respectively.

The participation of women in a country's economic activities has beneficial microeconomic and macroeconomic effects. Studies have shown a positive correlation between the level of participation of women in the workforce and economic growth. Microeconomic benefits include improved status for women and improved family well-being.

To be recruited, however, women must first have the skills demanded by the labour market. In general, by increasing educational and training attainment levels, one increases the rate of participation in the labour market. Furthermore, the higher a person's level of education, the higher their potential income. A low participation of women in the labour market is thus synonymous with decreased returns to investment in education and training and an underutilisation of the productive capacity of women. Equally important, it also poses an obstacle to the economic and social empowerment of women, weakens the fight against poverty and highlights the limited freedom that women have to exercise their capacities.

There has been a significant progress in women's and men's education in the southern and eastern Mediterranean region over the last decades. However, women activity rates remain among the lowest in the world. Furthermore, unemployment among young women (and men) is a recurrent problem and it particularly affects women in their transition from school to work. In this situation, many young women feel discouraged and opt out of the workforce.

One possible explanation for women's inability to access or participate in the labour market is that they have perhaps received irrelevant or low-quality education and training. This raises the question of whether education and training provide young women, as they do young men, with the qualifications they need in order to join the workforce. What do employers say about this? And what do the young women say? Are there other more important aspects that should be taken into consideration? These are the questions that form the basis of the ETF Women and Work project in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia where the estimated rates of female participation in the workforce are 24%, 16% and 26%, respectively (ILO, 2009).

Because the public sector is shrinking in the countries analysed, the study focuses exclusively on the private sector. The tourism and ICT sectors were chosen because of their potential to contribute to economic growth, job creation and development and because they are among the economic development priorities of Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. The two sectors are also quite different in terms of the qualifications that are demanded and as such might generate interesting conclusions about different types and levels of education and training.

The study will first attempt to provide answers to the following questions:

- What potential do the tourism and ICT sectors have to create jobs for women?
- Is the lower participation of women in these sectors a problem of job supply or job demand?
- What impact does education have on the employment of women in these sectors? To what extent can one improve the returns to education and the value of women's qualifications in the labour market?
- Why do women trained to work in these sectors not participate in the labour market? Are labour market constraints gender-neutral? Are there considerable differences between urban and rural environments?
- How can women's employment be increased in the ICT and hotel sectors in particular and in the private sector in general? Are there specific opportunities to seize to reduce the gaps between the proportion of men and women in employment?

The study will also attempt to draw lessons for governments and other stakeholders in these sectors and beyond in answer to the following questions:

- What could be done to support gender equality in the area of employment either through gender mainstreaming or interventions specifically targeting women?
- How could donors, in particular the European Union (EU), support these initiatives?

1.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Women and Work project is part of the ETF's innovation and learning projects. Its overall objective is to contribute to the promotion of gender equality policies in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia in the areas of education, training and employment.

More specifically, the project aims to increase knowledge and interest in women's employment opportunities in the three countries and also to analyse how women might benefit from improved job opportunities. An additional aim is to further strengthen the ETF's expertise by expanding on its knowledge and experience and thus improving its capacity to respond to the needs of the European Commission² and provide strategic advice to the ETF's partner countries³. The involvement of the different stakeholders in the process and the international dissemination of the study findings will also encourage the social partners of the three countries and hotel and ICT employers in particular to adopt an active role in promoting gender equality. Donors working in the target countries will also benefit from the research and be better positioned to promote gender equality and fight against poverty and exclusion.

This report describes the findings for Tunisia. It was prepared by the ETF and the Tunisia-based consultancy firm COMETE Engineering. It is based on an analysis of the literature and available documentation, on field work undertaken by COMETE Engineering and on observations and conclusions expressed by the stakeholders involved in the process.

1.3 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project was launched in 2008 with stocktaking missions in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. The ETF met with relevant national stakeholders and donors. The European Commission and the Italian Cooperation, co-funder of the project⁴, were consulted about the choice of countries. Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia are priority countries for both the European Commission and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The field research consisted of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of female workforce supply and demand. On the demand side, the focus was on studying the preferences, requirements and barriers to female recruitment by means of a survey of employers in the two focus sectors. On the supply side, the study looked at the obstacles and opportunities for female labour market insertion in the tourism and ICT sectors by means of focus group discussions with young women. Given that the problem is often related to the transition from school to work and the first entry into the labour market, the project's target group is young women aged between 15 and 29.

A national consultative group was established in each country, including representatives from the government, the EU Delegation and the social partners, in particular professional federations, to ensure local participation and ownership of the project. The groups met three times during project implementation. Representatives of Italian Cooperation and the European Commission participated in these meetings too. Other donors in the three countries were informed about the project in order to ensure coherence and synergy among the international donor community.

A study visit to the EU for 24 participants from Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia was also organised as an opportunity for members of the consultative groups to familiarise themselves with initiatives promoting women's employment in the Piedmont region, to share knowledge and experience in enhancing women's employment in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and the EU, and to discuss and come up with suggestions and recommendations to be incorporated in the country reports.

A synthesis regional report with policy recommendations was drafted and published in the second half of 2010.

² The ETF provides support to the European Commission at different stages of project cycles, particularly in the areas of project identification and design, strategic advice and the monitoring of content and reforms in the area of education, training and employment within the framework of the EU's external policies.

³ These are Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1224/1999), Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territory, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

⁴ The ETF has maintained ongoing relationships with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and particularly with its Office for Development Aid for many years. The funds used to cofinance this project were obtained from the Italian Trust Fund. One of the main priorities of the Italian Cooperation project is to help countries to strengthen their institutions in the areas of good governance, human rights and democratic participation in economic development without socioeconomic or gender discrimination. Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia are priority countries within this project.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 APPROACH

Gender determines access to material resources such as land, credit, training and immaterial resources such as power. This has diverse implications for aspects of daily life such as the distribution of household chores and other domestic and family responsibilities, education level, access to employment, and job promotion. Gender is closely linked to all aspects of the economic, social, daily and private life of individuals as well as to all aspects of society, which ultimately assigns everybody, men and women alike, specific roles.

This study investigates women's opportunities in education, training and employment from a gender perspective. Access to employment is not considered to be an end in itself but rather a means to acquire economic independence, enhance the well-being of families, fight against poverty and contribute to economic growth.

The country-specific studies and analyses were designed not only to generate knowledge but also to provide the basis for actions aimed at transforming given social situations. Consequently, the aim was to implicate relevant stakeholders in the process, including local authorities, trainers, and in particular, employers from the two sectors analysed with the implicit aim of involving them directly in the promotion of gender equality and formulation of policy recommendations.

The research is based on three components – a review of the literature (see references), and quantitative and qualitative analyses of female labour demand and supply:

- on the demand side, a quantitative survey in tourism (hotel) and ICT companies to assess female labour demand and employer expectations;
- on the supply side, a qualitative survey with focus groups formed by different categories of young women in order to assess and understand the labour supply situation in the two sectors.

2.2 LABOUR DEMAND: SURVEY OF EMPLOYERS

The surveys were conducted using a questionnaire⁵ designed by the ETF, reviewed by COMETE Engineering and the Tunisian consultative group and validated before the interviews were held. These took place at the respondents' place of work. All the participants had been previously sent an introductory letter describing the study and its purpose. Only companies with more than 25 employees were included as it was considered that these would be more likely to have human resources and recruitment policies in place as well as a greater potential to create jobs. Prior to the survey, the local service provider undertook a mapping exercise of the two sectors and pre-tested the questionnaire as a pilot.

2.2.1 The hotel industry

The subsectors of the tourism sector in Tunisia are restaurants, travel agencies, and hotels. It was decided to focus on the hotel industry because restaurants offer little potential as they are very much still dominated by men (there are very few waitresses because the work implies contact with clients, etc.) and travel agencies are small or very small. The hotel industry is an important subsector that encompasses different types of jobs. It is a dynamic sector with growth potential that is present in different parts of the country and is also relevant in terms of different training options.

The companies targeted for the survey were hotels with at least two stars and several resorts and apartment hotels. According to the ONTT database (ONTT, 2008), one-star hotels have an average of seven employees and they make a small contribution to total employment (0.6%). These hotels were thus excluded from the survey as we were looking to interview establishments with more than 25 employees.

There are 834 hotels in Tunisia. Based on this information, a sample size of 300 was calculated. The precision rate⁶ for the survey was almost 4%; 287 hotels (34% of total) were interviewed, which corresponds to a response rate of 96%. Given the target enterprises were to have 25 or more employees, the total number of candidate establishments was 602. This means that the 287 hotels that responded to the survey represented 48% of the target population. The regional distribution of the hotels interviewed was generally representative of the number and category of hotels chosen and the level of employment. The exception was the region of Nabeul/Hammamet, which was under-represented due to contact difficulties.

TABLE 2.1 DISTRIBUTION OF HOTELS BY REGION

	ONTT database (%)	Sample (%)
District of Tunis	12.7	15.0
North and north-west	7.0	5.9
Nabeul/Hammamet	24.0	17.8
Centre and centre-east	29.7	32.8
South-east coast	19.6	23.3
South (excluding coast)	7.0	5.2
Total	100.0	100.0

Source, ONTT, 2008

2.2.2 ICT sector

The ICT sector can be defined in many ways, with definitions often varying according to the needs of users. Accordingly, there is a growing tendency to refer to the sector as the information industry rather than to break it down into its traditional subsectors. For the present study, we included all sectors working with digital technology, with the exception of the audiovisual sector. The sectors analysed are listed below:

- telecommunications services and equipment;
- Internet access services;
- computer hardware;
- installation and management of telecommunications and computer networks;
- software and information technology (IT) services;
- digital content (website agencies, e-learning, etc.);
- ICT-based services (data conversion, call centres).

Given the different definitions of the sector and the limitations of the sampling method, the survey was not designed to cover the entire sector. The nomenclature employed was taken from the ICT yearbook published by Symboles Média (Symboles Média, 2008). It covers all aspects of ICT professionals and includes 16 main categories, namely: (i) systems and networks; (ii) call centres and voice response systems; (iii) IT management; (iv) knowledge engineering; (v) telecommunications; (vi) technical IT; (vii) industrial IT; (viii) online added-value services; (ix) ICT consultancy; (x) IT services; (xi) IT builders; (xii) IT distributors; (xiii) website development; (xiv) interactive marketing-communication; (xv) ICT training; and (xvi) multimedia content. Each category is further divided into subcategories describing the areas in which the companies operate. This facilitated the task of situating the companies in their relevant fields and identifying their areas of specialisation.

⁶ This is the confidence interval for the results obtained with a sample population compared to the results that would have been obtained if the entire population had been surveyed. The sample size was calculated using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{4 * p(1 - p) * N}{L^2 * (N - 1) + 4 * p(1 - p)}$$

p: estimated proportion
N: sample size (543 + 66 = 609)
L: margin of error ($p \pm L\%$)

A database of public and private companies operating in the ICT sector in Tunisia was compiled from the following sources of information:

- the ICT yearbook (Symboles Média, 2008);
- a list of IT services companies provided by one of the ICT firms contacted;
- a list of contacts in companies operating in the ICT sector;
- the Tunisian Yellow Pages;
- the Internet (in particular the website of the Tunisian ICT Federation).

On the basis of the data compiled, it was seen that there were almost 600 ICT companies in Tunisia. As many of the companies were small, the threshold had to be reduced to 15 employees. Of the companies with known staff numbers (mentioned in the ICT yearbook or during telephone contact), only 25% (n=150) had 15 or more employees. The companies were contacted over a period of five months to arrange interviews. Interviews were secured with 95 companies (16% of all the companies in the database and 63% of those with more than 15 employees), which is the equivalent of a response rate of 63%. Most of the companies were located in Tunis.

TABLE 2.2 DISTRIBUTION OF ICT COMPANIES BY REGION

	Number of staff	%
District of Tunis	76	80.0
Centre-east	16	16.8
South	3	3.2
Total	95	100.0

Source: Data compiled by COMETE Engineering, 2009

It was decided not to classify the companies by subsector as several operate in a range of fields. This information was obtained during the interview by asking what the company's main and secondary activities were.

2.3 LABOUR SUPPLY: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

To add a qualitative dimension to the study, discussion groups were created with young women representative of the target population. The participants were aged between 15 and 29 and were (i) students, (ii) graduates in employment and (iii) graduates looking for work. The discussions were based on a structured interview designed by the ETF, reviewed by the working team and the consultative group, and previously validated.

The discussion groups were formed as follows:

Women studying at vocational training centres or university

- Group 1: Women studying ICT or tourism at university (mixed group) – District of Tunis
- Group 2: Women receiving vocational training in ICT or tourism (mixed group) – District of Tunis

Working women

- Group 3: Women employed in the ICT sector – District of Tunis
- Group 4: Women permanently employed in the tourism sector – Sousse
- Group 5: Women with seasonal jobs in the tourism sector⁷ – Hammamet

Unemployed women

- Group 6: Women looking for work in the ICT or tourism sectors (mixed group) – North-west Tunisia (Tabarka)
- Group 7: Women looking for work in the ICT or tourism sectors (mixed group) – Southern Tunisia (Sfax)
- Group 8: Women looking for work in the ICT or tourism sectors (mixed group) – District of Tunis.

⁷ It was originally intended to include women from the ICT sector in this group but as seasonal work mainly affects tourism, we decided to focus on seasonal workers in the tourist industry.

A ninth group was created to include young women who were not active in the labour market by choice. However, because we found it very difficult to find educated women under 30 years in this situation, the group had to be eliminated.

The interviews lasted half a day each and were conducted in a relaxed, informal environment. An environment of trust was established quickly, allowing the participants to express their opinions freely and openly. The main problem with the discussion groups was the low rate of participation, which was surprising given the fact that those invited to participate were contacted on repeated occasions and that ample information had been provided about the legitimacy and purpose of the study and the importance of participating⁸.

2.4 PARTICIPATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

To ensure the involvement of relevant stakeholders from the three countries, a consultative group was created to monitor the implementation of the projects in each country. The Tunisian consultative group consisted of trainers, social partners, representatives of relevant economic sectors, leading institutional beneficiaries, the EU delegation, and the Italian Cooperation group. The Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment adopted the role of project leader and presided over the meetings held by this group.

The role of the Tunisian consultative group was to inform the companies and discussion groups about the survey methods, to discuss and validate the results of the research performed by COMETE Engineering and the ETF, to draw up priority recommendations based on these results and to present the conclusions of the project to potentially interested institutions. The group met twice in 2009 and once in 2010.

In January 2010, the members of the consultative groups from each of the three countries were invited to participate in a study visit to Turin, Italy. The aim of the visit was to:

- familiarise members of the groups initiatives for enhancing women's employment in the Italian region of Piedmont;
- foster the sharing of similar experiences in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and the EU;
- provide a platform for the discussion of preliminary reports and recommendations.

2.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

It is not easy to define the limits of an economic sector and in this case in particular, of the ICT sector. It is to be recognised that the results for this sector are biased by the high number of call centres included in the sample.

The results of the discussion groups should also be interpreted with caution. They provide an insight into the employment problems faced by women beyond official figures and statistics, but they are not meant to be representative. Furthermore, it was impossible to create a discussion group of young women who were not active in the labour market by choice. This could be interpreted as a result in itself. In other words, it would appear that young Tunisian women aged between 15 and 29 do not voluntarily choose not to work.

The local consultancy firm, COMETE Engineering, faced numerous obstacles during the field research stage of the project. For example, appointments were not always kept, respondents often did not have the information required and interviewers had to return a second time because the group discussion participants were not always available. The ETF recognises the efforts made by COMETE Engineering and its commitment to conducting the field research in a professional manner.

Despite certain limitations, the study provides very useful information and findings about the employment situation of women in Tunisia's hotel and ICT sectors. Furthermore, it provides insights into female employment and employability in the private sector as a whole.

⁸ The profiles of the women that participated in the discussion groups are available upon request.

3. GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

3.1 GENDER EQUALITY IN EU'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS POLICY

In 2007, the EU reaffirmed that equality between men and women was a common objective and a common value of the entire union (European Commission, 2007). With the aim of improving gender equality in the EU, the majority of EU member states together with the European Commission adopted a double strategy: to mainstream gender equality throughout all policies, strategies and actions and to finance measures that directly promote the empowerment of women. Considerable progress has been made but there is still much to be done. The average employment rate for women in the EU is 64%, contrasting with 78% for men (Eurostat, 2008).

The promotion and protection of women's rights is an important element of the EU's external policy. It is considered that equality between men and women is not only a necessary condition but also a fundamental right, a matter of social justice and one of the keys to the reduction of poverty (European Commission, 2007). The European Consensus on Development⁹ of 2005 identified gender equality as one of the five basic principles of its development policy:

'The gender aspect must be addressed in close conjunction with poverty reduction, social and political development and economic growth, and mainstreamed in all aspects of development cooperation.' (Council of the European Union, 2006)

More recently, on the occasion of International Women's Day 2010 and in commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration, the European Commission reaffirmed its commitment to defending equality between women and men in its relations with third countries:

'Our ambition is not limited to the borders of the Union. Gender equality must be fully incorporated into our external policies too so as to foster the social and economic independence and advancement of women and men throughout the world. The EU is committed to promoting gender equality in all contexts, including conflict and post-conflict countries. Reducing gender inequalities, tackling gender-based violence, and promoting women's rights are essential for developing sustainable and democratic societies.' (European Commission, 2010)

For the period 2007 to 2013, EU external cooperation in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment is financed through geographical instruments (the European Development Fund, the Development Cooperation Instrument and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) at the national and regional levels and by thematic instruments (Human and Social Development and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights), with a focus on: improving literacy among adult women and addressing inequalities in countries where women's lives are shaped by customary laws; empowerment of women in conflict situations; and greater coordination between donors and national governments to support progress towards gender equality.

3.2 PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

The relations between the EU and Mediterranean countries were initially regulated by the Barcelona Declaration on the Euro-Mediterranean partnership¹⁰, also known as the Barcelona Process, launched in 1995. The five-year working programme established at the Euro-Mediterranean Summit in November 2005 included gender equality among its priorities. The working programme remained effective when the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was relaunched in 2008 as the Union for the Mediterranean during the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean.

⁹ Joint declaration by the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the member states meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on the development policy of the European Union entitled 'the European consensus'.

¹⁰ The Euro-Mediterranean partnership (the Barcelona Process), launched in 1995, establishes a vast framework for political, economic and social relations between EU member states and partner countries in the Southern Mediterranean. It consists of 35 members: 25 EU member states and 10 Mediterranean partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey). Libya was granted observer status in 1999. The three main objectives of the partnership are: (i) the establishment of a common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of political dialogue and security (political and security aspect); (ii) the creation of an area of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the progressive establishment of a free trade area (economic and financial aspect); and (iii) the establishment of closer links between people through a social, cultural and human partnership designed to promote understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies (social, cultural and human aspect).

In November 2006, during the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, the Euro-Mediterranean ministers approved the Istanbul Framework of Action¹¹ to promote women's rights and equality in civil, political, civil, social, economic and cultural spheres. They agreed to undertake measures in the areas of the economy, employment, education and training. The most relevant actions with relation to our study are described below.

Economy and employment

- Create equal opportunities and remove obstacles for women to work or to be recruited/employed or to stay employed.
- Promote family-friendly policies, aiming at reconciliation between professional and family life, in particular affordable care services for children, elderly and other dependents and ensure a professional environment that is suited to women in terms of transport and safety and non-discrimination at the workplace.
- Promote and strengthen national capacities to regularly collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data, including data on the informal sector and the impact of macroeconomic reforms on women and men.
- Strengthen knowledge of the impact of macroeconomic policies on women's and men's employment and develop research focused on gender to enable the elaboration of efficient strategies aiming at strengthening the role of women in the economy.
- Promote women's representation and participation in economic decision-making positions, in particular in employers' association, workers' unions and other socioeconomic structures.

Education and training

Ensure the empowerment of women by providing greater access to education at all levels and to vocational and technical training. In this regard:

- Launch literacy campaigns (with the objective of halving female illiteracy) particularly targeting rural and poor women and provide more incentives to encourage women to demand literacy.
- Put in place incentives for families, especially in rural and poor areas, for sending girls to school.
- Promote specific vocational and technical training courses for women in diversified job sectors.
- Increase the number of women trainers (including at decision-making levels) and take into account the full enjoyment of all human rights by women in the training of trainers.
- Promote post-training support through appropriate linkages between relevant partners such as training institutions and governmental employment agencies.
- Ensure greater access to lifelong learning to provide women with skills responsive to the rapidly changing labour market.
- Provide guiding programmes to help women return to the labour market after an absence or to direct them to new sectors.

In this regard, the conclusions of the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour, held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 9 and 10 November 2008, and the framework of actions on employment, employability and decent work established the objective of promoting equal opportunities for men and women, improving the employment rate of women, and particularly, promoting access for women to decent jobs in accordance with the Istanbul Framework of Action.

The second Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, which was held in Marrakech on 11 and 12 November 2009, was an extension of the Istanbul process. In their conclusions, the participants confirmed the commitment of their countries in three areas: civil and political rights, cultural and social rights and economic rights. These domains include gender equality in employment (equal pay and access to decent work), social protection and the fight against poverty, equal access to employment and the promotion of women's entrepreneurship. The ministers also included gender equality as a priority for the Union for the Mediterranean. Meetings between experts will serve as a monitoring instrument and lead to a final document reviewing advances made in preparation for the next ministerial meeting, to be held in 2012.

The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (cooperation instrument for the region) identifies gender equality as a common value of the EU and Mediterranean countries and as a potential area for subregional cooperation. Country-specific action plans within the European Neighbourhood Policy for the region include promoting the participation of women in economic, political and social life.

In this context and in accordance with the EU's strategic guidelines for the promotion of gender equality, the ETF has included equality between men and women in its activities related to education, training and employment. As indicated in its mid-term objectives for 2007 to 2010, gender balance in education and employment will continue to be a priority for the ETF within its Women and Work project.

11 For more information, visit www.euromedgenderequality.org/image.php?id=393

4. COUNTRY PROFILE

Tunisia gives high priority to the training and education of young people and allocates a sizeable part of its resources (a quarter of the state's budget and approximately 7% of its GDP) to this area. The amount of public resources allocated to education by the Tunisian government is among the highest recorded for middle-income countries. The result has been a considerable improvement in enrolment rates at all levels of the education system. Today, over one in four Tunisians attends school (ETF, 2010).

The country has an active population of 3.67 million (data for 2008). The overall rate of activity is 46.8% (3.08 million employed people); the corresponding percentages for men and women are 68.8% and 25.3%, respectively (INS, 2009). Job demand trends have changed considerably in recent years, with the integration of women and higher education graduates into the labour market. There is also, however, strong pressure from workers without a high education level.

Tunisia has undergone profound changes since it gained independence in 1956. It has shifted from a primarily agricultural and mining economy to a more modern, diversified economy, dominated by manufacturing and trade. Agriculture is no longer the predominant industry. Following considerable growth during the 1970s, investment in manufacturing levelled off and started to decrease in the mid 1980s, giving way to investment in the service sector.

This context justifies the decision to analyse the situation of young women in the hotel and ICT sectors for the current study. The public sector is shrinking and the textile and clothing sectors, which were the traditional source of employment for women in Tunisia, are both in crisis. In contrast, considerable investment continues to be made in the service sector, which makes a substantial contribution to GDP (an estimated 50% in 2008). The largest proportion of the active population (64.9%) is between 15 and 59 years old and according to estimates of the INS, this figure is expected to reach 69% by 2014. The economy will thus need to be able to absorb an increase in job seekers between now and 2014 (Euromed, 2006a). In Tunisia and other countries in the region, young people are affected most by unemployment, which creates an additional problem in terms of labour market integration.

4.1 LEGISLATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Tunisia's constitutional and legislative framework expressly asserts the principle of equality between men and women, both in terms of citizenship and before the law. This principle of equality is confirmed in the constitution, which states that all citizens have the same rights and the same obligations, that they are equal before the law, and that women have the right to vote and hold office.

The Code of Personal Status, promulgated on 13 August 1956 by President Habib Bourguiba, abolished polygamy, created a judicial procedure for divorce, set the minimum age for marriage at 17 for girls, subject to the girl's consent, and granted women the right to guardianship of their children if their husband died. It was the first time that a Muslim state had intervened in areas that were previously governed by religion (CREDIF, 2005).

The Code of Personal Status has been reformed on several occasions. The last amendment set 18 years as the minimum age at which either sex can marry. One of the most significant amendments to the code was undoubtedly the replacement in 1993 of the provision requiring women to obey their husbands with the obligation on the two spouses to treat each other with kindness and to help one another in running the home and caring for their children. The obligation of mutual respect thus replaced the obligation to obey (Triki et al., 2006).

Tunisia asserted the superiority of international treaties of which it was a signatory in 1959 with the promulgation of the constitution. Once ratified, international conventions become an integral part of Tunisian law. In the event that Tunisian law is at odds with these conventions or does not mention an aspect that is covered by the conventions, the conventions apply. Tunisia has joined international conventions sanctioning the equality, security, freedom and dignity of all human beings, thereby affirming its commitment to gender equality. In 1980, the government signed the United Nations convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, in 1985, when adopting the Copenhagen Convention, it reiterated certain reservations¹² that it had already expressed (Euromed, 2006b).

Article 34 of the Tunisian Constitution¹³ determines, inter alia, the basic principles of the right to work and social security for both men and women. Since 1992, when it was amended, the Labour Code asserts the principle of non-discrimination between men and women in all areas of work (access to employment, equal pay), both in the public

¹² Article 9(2) nationality of children; 15(4) free movement of people and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile; 16(1c) rights and responsibilities during and after marriage; 16(1d) guardianship of children; 16(1g) the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation; 16(1h) ownership rights for both spouses; 29(1) CEDAW dispute mechanism between states parties.

¹³ Amended by constitutional law 97-65 of 27 October 1997.

and private sector. Nevertheless, failure to observe this principle is only very lightly penalised. Discrimination regarding access to work no longer exists in the legislation, except that civil service regulations state that no distinction should be made between sexes in the application of the legislation except for certain jobs that may specifically require a man or woman (Triki et al., 2006).

In the public sector, labour law recognises particular rights for women, specifically the right to two months of maternity leave on full pay and, on request, a further four months leave on half-pay. In the private sector, however, only 30 days of paid maternity leave are granted. Two extensions may be granted to this period of leave, each lasting 15 days and subject to a medical certificate. Women also have the right to two years of unpaid leave to raise one or more children under six years of age or to look after sick or disabled children. They are also entitled to welfare cover if they are a salaried employee or the wife of a salaried employee. If a woman's husband dies, she has the right to receive 70% of his pension, and vice versa. Women are prohibited from working at night (exemptions may be granted for management positions, responsible technical positions or work in the social services). Nor are they allowed to perform arduous or dangerous work underground, in mines or in quarries or to perform certain types of agricultural work that pose particular risks (Triki et al., 2006). The Penal Code addresses sexual harassment but labour law does not deal.

The Euromed project Role of Women in Economic Life conducted an analysis of women-focused institutions. It found that the steadfast political will of the Tunisian State to promote equality and gender issues in education, vocational training and health policies has not always been accompanied by the necessary budgetary resources (Euromed, 2006b). The government began to establish institutional structures (listed below) to implement policies favouring women mainly in the 1990s.

1. The Ministry for Women, the Family, Childhood and the Elderly (MAFFEPA) was established in 1992. Its mission is to formulate government policy in relation to women and the family and to coordinate the actions of the various bodies dealing with women's and family affairs.
2. The National Council of Women and the Family (CNFF) was also set up in 1992. It performs a consultative role under the auspices of MAFFEPA and assists the ministry in implementing the main elements of ministerial policy.
3. The Centre for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women (Centre de recherches, d'études, de documentation et d'information sur la femme – CREDIF) was established in 1990. It is the scientific arm of MAFFEPA and its mission is to conduct studies and research on women, collect data relating to their social and economic situation, publish all the information that it collects and produce periodic reports on how the situation of women is developing.
4. The Commission for Women and Development was set up in 1991. It is charged with developing a strategy that integrates women into all development sectors, supported by representatives of the government and by institutions, and organisations and associations working in the area of development and women.

4.2 GIRLS AND WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Tunisian law 58-118 of 4 November 1958 guarantees the right to education for girls in order to 'allow children of both sexes, without distinction [...] to develop their personalities and their aptitudes'. With this, the Tunisian state guaranteed the right to education for all children of school age (six years old). In 1991 it became obligatory for all children aged between six and 16 to attend school for nine years.

The gender gap in education has been reduced and female students now outnumber male students in both secondary and higher education. Specifically, there are twice as many young women with higher education as there are young men. There are, however, also more illiterate young women than men, and generation gaps are more pronounced among women.

4.2.1 Basic education

Male-female differences in school enrolment rates have been eliminated in the first cycle of basic education. The net enrolment ratio for young girls aged six increased from 82.5% in the academic year 1981/82 to 99.2% in 2008/09.

TABLE 4.1 NET ENROLMENT RATIO FOR CHILDREN AGED SIX (%)

Academic year	Boys	Girls
1981/82	97.6	82.5
1988/89	98.3	91.5
1999/00	99.0	98.9
2000/01	98.8	99.1
2006/07	99.0	99.0
2007/08	99.1	99.1
2008/09	99.2	99.2

Source: Ministry of Education

Despite the unquestionable advances that have been made in school enrolment rates, almost a third of Tunisian women are still illiterate. The National Literacy Strategy introduced by the Tunisian government was replaced by the National Adult Education Programme in 2000. One of the aims of this programme is to reduce the gap in illiteracy rates not only between men and women but also between urban and rural inhabitants (Ministry of Education, 2010).

4.2.2 Secondary education

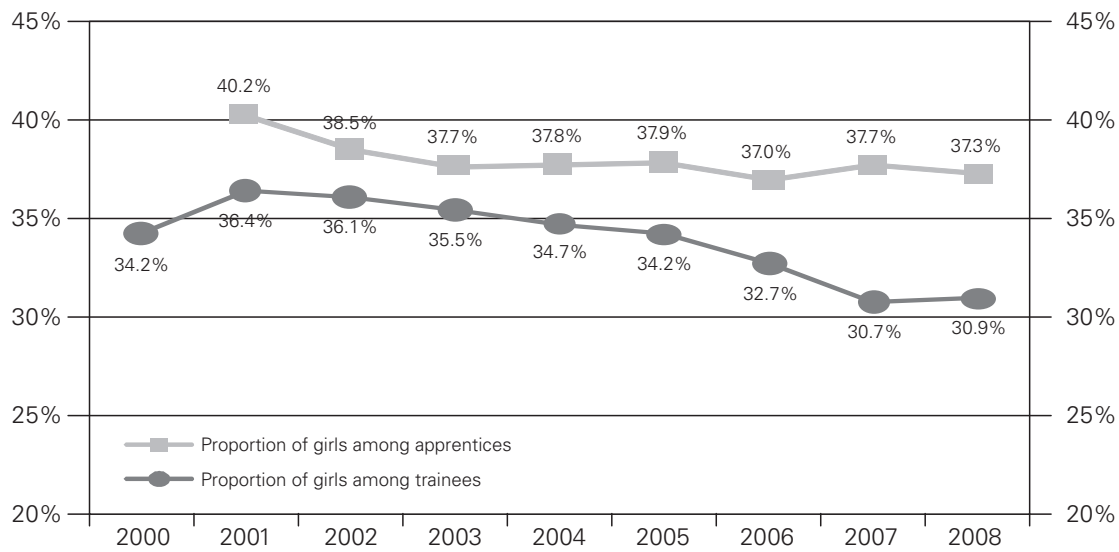
Female access to secondary education has also improved substantially, with the proportion of girls in secondary schools increasing from 25.6% in 1965-1966 to 58% in 2008-2009 (Ministry of Education, 2010).

The distribution of secondary students by gender and field of study shows that girls are strongly represented in some fields but not in others. An analysis of final-year students in the academic year 2008/09, for example, shows that girls accounted for almost 72% of all arts and humanities students, over 70% of experimental science students, and 63.5% of economics and management students. They were also quite well represented in computer studies, at 43.4%, but much less so in technical studies (26.7%) (Ministry of Education, 2010).

4.2.3 Vocational training

While girls outnumber boys in secondary education centres, they account for only about a third of all vocational training students, with trends showing that this gap is increasing. While the gender differences are less pronounced in apprenticeship programmes than in standard vocational training programmes, the number of female students enrolling on such courses is decreasing while that of male students is increasing.

There are also signs of even greater qualitative gender gap in vocational training than in secondary education, with large numbers of girls enrolled in textile and clothing courses or courses that prepare students for the tertiary sector (office jobs and a range of careers in industry and the service sector). The recent crisis in the textile industry partly explains the decline in the number of girls enrolling in vocational training.

FIGURE 4.1 PROPORTION OF GIRLS IN PUBLIC VOCATIONAL TRAINING (%)

Source: Tunisian Agency of Vocational Training, 2009

TABLE 4.2 VOCATIONAL TRAINING ENROLMENT RATES BY SPECIALISATION AND GENDER (%)

	2002			2006			2008		
	Female students	Male students	Total	Female students	Male students	Total	Female students	Male students	Total
Building and public works	6.1	93.9	100	8.6	91.4	100	5.0	95.0	100
Textile and clothing	82.0	18.0	100	80.2	19.8	100	77.9	22.1	100
Leather and shoes	82.0	18.0	100	80.2	19.8	100	77.9	22.1	100
General mechanics and metal construction	0.7	99.3	100	2.0	98.0	100	2.6	97.4	100
Electricity/electronics	26.1	73.9	100	30.9	69.1	100	29.1	70.9	100
Transport, driving, and vehicle and engine maintenance	7.2	92.8	100	1.1	98.9	100	0.8	99.2	100
Arts and crafts	20.5	79.5	100	21.7	78.3	100	20.2	79.8	100
Office work	36.8	63.2	100	48.4	51.6	100	41.0	59.0	100
Diverse services and industry	38.7	61.3	100	36.3	63.7	100	31.4	68.6	100
Total	38.5	61.5	100	37.0	63.0	100	37.3	62.7	100

Source: Tunisian Agency of Vocational Training, 2009

4.2.4 Higher education

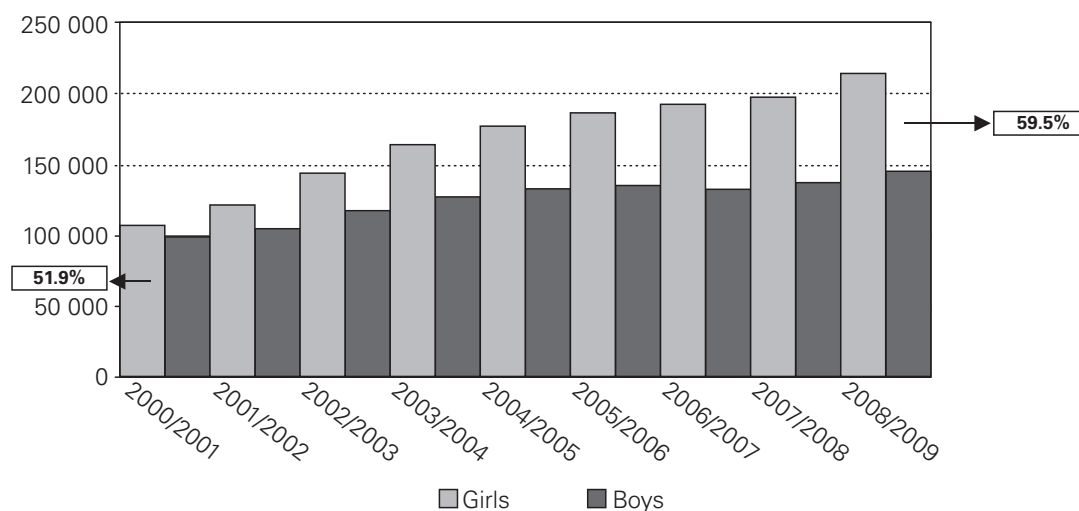
The greatest advances that have been made in women's education in Tunisia have been in higher education, where now, in line with the trend in Europe, women outnumber men at university. Over the past 40 years, there has been a marked increase in the number of female university students. In the academic year 2008/09, women accounted for 59.5% of all university students, contrasting with 19.4% in 1965/66 (see **TABLE 4.3**).

TABLE 4.3 PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION (%)

Academic year	Higher education
1965/66	19.4
1970/71	22.0
1986/87	36.0
2003/04	56.4
2006/07	59.1
2008/09	59.5

Source: Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology

FIGURE 4.2 CHANGES IN STUDENT NUMBERS BY GENDER



Source: Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology

There are still gaps, however, in scientific and technical areas, where women are still a minority. According to data for the academic year 2007/08, women accounted for 81% of all humanities and applied languages students, 74% of life sciences students, 72% of educational sciences students and 69% of arts, humanities and human sciences students. This contrasts with the lower figures in scientific and technical areas, where women accounted for 32% of all students enrolled in engineering and related technical areas, 38% of those enrolled in architecture and construction and 39% of those enrolled in mathematics and statistics. The most popular fields of study for women seemed to be management (17% of all female students and 65% of all management students), humanities and applied languages (11% and 81%, respectively), and information and communication sciences (10% and 46% respectively) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2009).

4.3 WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE

In view of current Tunisian legislation, which asserts equality between men and women in all aspects of work and provides protection to working women and working mothers, and considering the remarkable advances that have been made in attainments by women at all levels of vocational training and education (particularly in higher education), one would expect to see Tunisian women working and actively involved in the development of various sectors of the economy. Their participation rate, however, (24.5% in 2009), is still very much below the desired levels.

TABLE 4.4 LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION RATE BY GENDER (%)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Men	67.8	68.6	68.5	68.8	69.1	69.6
Women	24.2	24.4	25.0	25.3	25.5	25.4
Combined	45.8	46.3	46.6	46.8	47.1	47.3

Source: INS

The participation of women in the labour market is higher in urban than in rural zones, and reaches its maximum in urban areas along the coast (Monastir, Nabeul, Ben Arous, Ariana, Tunis) (Euromed, 2006a).

In 2007, women accounted for 55% of all public sector employees and 37% of private sector employees. The strong presence of women in the public sector can be explained by the feminisation of certain sectors such as health and education. Indeed, 21% of all women in the public sector work in health and education (INS, 2007).

TABLE 4.5 PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AND SECTOR (%)

Public sector	Men	Women
Agriculture and fishing	0.8	1.4
Manufacturing industry	1.1	1.1
Mining, energy	0.3	1.2
Building and public works	0.3	0.1
Trade	0.8	0.3
Transport, telecommunications	2.9	2.6
Hotels, financial and real estate activities	3.0	2.9
Public administration	4.2	4.8
Public education	71.9	63.0
Health and community services	12.4	22.9

Source: INS, National population and employment survey, 2007

In the private sector, women are more frequently found in small companies (mainly in small manufacturing enterprises) and they outnumber men in the health and community service sector and the manufacturing industry (mainly because of their high participation in textile companies).

TABLE 4.6 PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AND SECTOR (%)

Private sector	Men	Women
Agriculture and fishing	1.2	0.9
Mining, energy	2.0	0.7
Manufacturing industry	30.3	22.5
Building and public works	7.7	3.1
Trade	17.4	17.2
Hotels, financial and real estate activities	13.4	16.8
Transport and telecommunications	9.9	5.9
Health and community services	11.8	20.5
Private education and private courses	5.2	9.7

Source: INS, National population and employment survey, 2007

Tunisia's female workers are increasingly well educated. In the 1980s, one of every two female workers was illiterate, and after the economic boom, most of the members of the female workforce were illiterate, unskilled or poorly educated. They worked mainly in the manufacturing industry or took over from men in the agricultural sector.

As shown in **TABLE 4.7**, the proportion of illiterate women in employment fell by 23.5% (from 44.3% to 20.8%) between 1984 and 2005. Accordingly, the proportions of working women with secondary education and higher education have increased, from 22.1% to 33.5% (almost 11%) in the case of the former and from 4.3% to 17.5% (just over 13%) in the case of the latter. The chances of a woman finding a job increase with education level. For example, 56% of women with higher education are employed.

TABLE 4.7 PROPORTION OF FEMALE WORKERS BY EDUCATION LEVEL (%)

	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2005
Illiterate	44.3	38.0	27.1	25.2	17.3	20.8
Primary	29.3	29.3	32.0	32.1	30.3	28.3
Secondary	22.1	26.7	31.8	31.0	34.7	33.5
Higher	4.3	6.0	9.1	11.7	17.8	17.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: INS, General population and housing census, 1984, 1994 and 2004; and National population and employment survey, 1989, 1999 and 2005

Nonetheless, there are still more illiterate female workers than male workers in Tunisia (according to the INS, 12.7% of Tunisia's workforce was illiterate in 2007) and also more women without any education (INS, 2007). The proportion of working women with secondary education or higher has increased from 24.1% to over 55% and 17.5% of all female workers in 2005 had higher education (the corresponding proportion for men was 10.9%) (Euromed, 2006a). These figures demonstrate that there is still a considerable number of unskilled and/or illiterate female workers in Tunisia, which, in turn, means that there are more women than men in unskilled, poorly paid jobs. At the same time, there are more female than male workers with secondary and particularly higher education. In view of the differences in employment rates for men and women, this possibly indicates that women have greater difficulty finding a job than men.

Women are more affected by unemployment than men. While the unemployment rate for men and women combined decreased by 2.2% between 1984 and 2008, the rate for women increased by 3.8% in the same period. Furthermore, female unemployment rates have been higher than male rates for the past 15 years, with an increasingly widening gap (6% in 2008).

TABLE 4.8 CHANGES IN UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY GENDER (15+)

	1984	1994	1999	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Men	16.9	15.3	15.6	13.2	13.1	13.2	12.8	12.6
Women	14.8	17.5	17.2	17.1	17.3	17.3	17.8	18.6
Difference men-women	2.1	-2.2	-1.6	-3.9	-4.2	-4.1	-5	-6
Combined	16.4	15.8	16.0	14.2	14.2	14.3	14.1	14.2

Source: INS, General population and housing census, 1984, 1994 and 2004; and National population and employment survey, 1999, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008

The increase in the number of female job seekers registered with the National Agency for Employment and Self-Employment (Agence nationale pour l'emploi et le travail indépendant – ANETI) clearly shows that women are becoming an increasingly important part of the active population. According to ANETI, the proportion of women looking for work has increased more rapidly than that of men. Between 2000 and 2008, for example, the proportion of female job seekers registered with this agency increased from 43.7% to 53.9%. Regardless of their education level, however, women are more affected by unemployment than men.

Young people are particularly hard hit by unemployment, with two-thirds of the unemployed population aged under 30. The proportion is particularly high for women (>73%) (ANETI, 2009).

Unemployment is also on the rise among young people with higher education, increasing from 3.8% in 1994 to 17.5% in 2006 (Ministry of Employment, 2008a). In 2006, 81% of the 41 000 university graduates registered with ANETI were under 30.

It should be noted that not all job seekers are registered with ANETI as Tunisia has multiple recruitment networks. According to a 1995 survey on economic behaviour in the family (CPS Survey), only about a third of all job seekers were registered with this agency.

II. RESEARCH FINDINGS

5. WOMEN IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

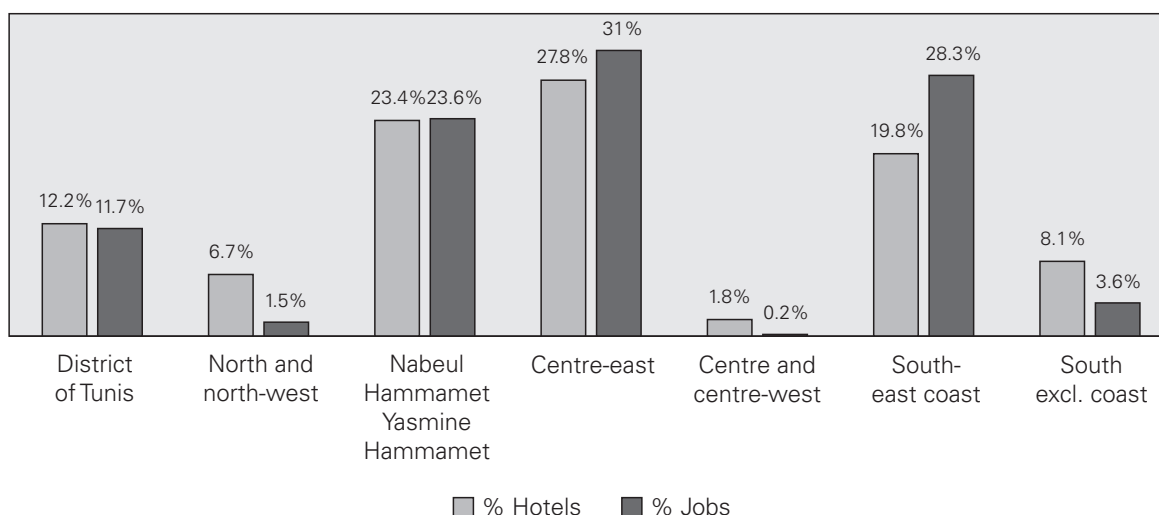
5.1 SECTOR PROFILE

Tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors in the Tunisian economy. Apart from its direct impact on the economy, it has a knock-on effect on other sectors such as air transport, crafts, trade and building and public works. The tourism industry started to grow in the 1960s. In 1962, for example, with a bed capacity of 4 000 and 52 000 visitors, the tourism industry generated just TND 2 million, contrasting sharply with the situation in 2006, when, with a bed capacity of 231 838 and 6 549 549 visitors, it was the country's main source of foreign earnings. The sector now contributes to 6.5% of the GDP and generates 340 000 jobs, 85 000 of which are direct jobs. In other words, the industry employs 11.5% of the working population and also generates a large number of seasonal jobs (ONTT, 2008).

The tourism sector embraces hotels, travel agencies and restaurants. It was decided to focus on the hotel industry for the purpose of this study, as it is by far the most important employer in the sector and it also covers a variety of professions and jobs. According to the ONTT (2007), there are 834 hotel establishments in Tunisia, most of which are concentrated on the eastern coast (District of Tunis, Yasmine Hammamet, Hammamet, Sousse, Monastir, Mahdia and Djerba). According to estimates from the National Observatory of Employment and Qualifications (Observatoire national de l'emploi et des qualifications – ONEQ), there were 50 183 workers alone employed by the 570 hotels enumerated in the 2008 census. It could thus be considered that the total number of people employed directly by the hotel industry is close to the total employed by the tourism sector as a whole (85 000) (ONEQ, 2008).

The crossing of data from the ONTT (2007) and the ONEQ survey¹⁴ shows that the centre-east of the country (Sousse/Monastir/Mahdia) is the most important source of jobs, followed by the south-east (Djerba) and Nabeul/Hammamet. These three regions combined employ over 80% of all workers in the Tunisian hotel industry.

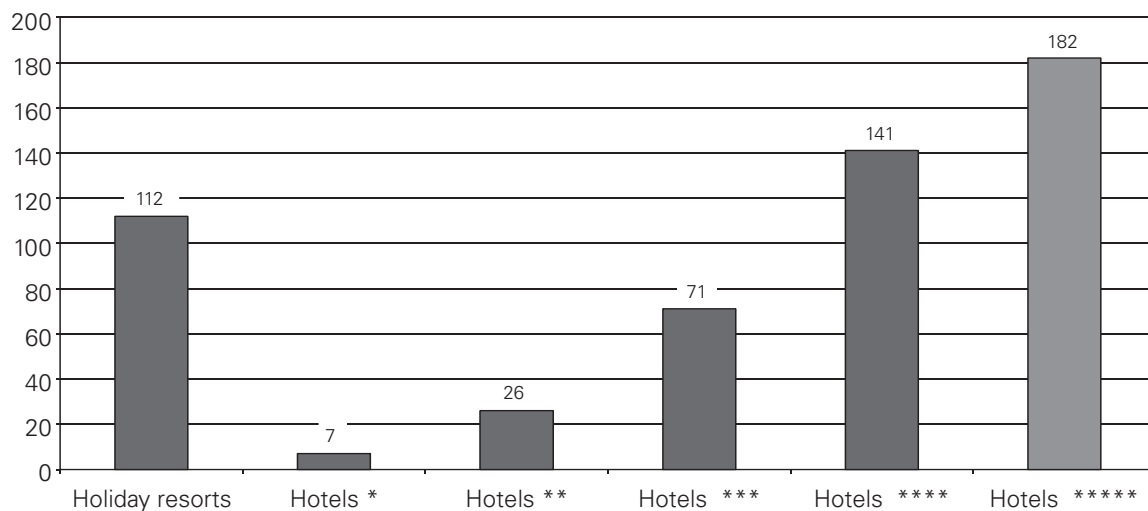
FIGURE 5.1 HOTEL EMPLOYMENT BY REGION



Source: ONTT, 2007 and ONEQ, 2008, compiled by COMETE Engineering

The data show that 64% of hotels employed fewer than 100 employees while just 15% employed over 200. The average number of employees per hotel was 88 but this figure varied greatly from one hotel category to the next. For example, the average number of employees in a one-star hotel was seven, contrasting with 71 in a three-star hotel and 182 in a five-star hotel. Most of the hotels in Tunisia have three or four stars. The census showed that almost 62% of those employed by the hotel industry were working in four-star hotels or higher (almost 36% of all the hotels analysed).

FIGURE 5.2 HOTEL EMPLOYMENT BY HOTEL CATEGORY



Source: ONEQ, 2008

Recruitment data for January to April 2008 show that 40% of new recruits in the hotel industry were employed by four-star hotels. The figures for three-star and five-star hotels were 28% and 23%, respectively. However, a closer analysis shows that only 39% of these positions were permanent.

The hotel industry is affected by practices that have a negative impact on its image and limit its potential contribution to fighting against unemployment, particularly among young people. In most hotels, only 5% of employees are in managerial positions (ONTT, 2007). Furthermore, two-thirds of graduates from the country's main tourism schools choose to work in other, more stable sectors that are not dependent on the tourism season, and most hotels generally prefer to recruit young people with no training in tourism. The Tunisian hotel industry employs large numbers of unskilled workers. According to data from the INS (2007), almost 90% of hotel and restaurant workers have secondary education or lower. The figures show that the overall trends are similar for both sexes, but there are differences, with a third as many women as men with higher education and also more women than men with primary education or lower. This seems to confirm that there are more women than men in poorly paid, unskilled jobs and also that women more than men are required to have higher education in order to access skilled positions.

There are 10 public hotel schools in Tunisia, eight of which are overseen by the ONTT in matters of administration and two of which are overseen by the Tunisian Agency of Vocational Training in matters of administration and pedagogy. There are a further 10 private centres that offer training in this sector. Tourism and hotel studies are also offered by numerous higher education centres, including the Sidi Dhrif Higher Institute of Touristic Studies, overseen by the Ministry of Higher Education (baccalaureate plus three years), and the École supérieure de commerce de Tunis and the Institut des hautes études commerciales de Carthage, which both offer a Master's degree in tourism and hotel management and are subsidised by the ONTT. Finally, there are ten private higher education institutions.

The 10 Tunisian hotel schools offer the following qualifications:

- CAP (vocational aptitude certificate), a qualification accessible to students who have completed the basic education cycle of nine years);
- BTP (vocational training certificate), a vocational qualification accessible to students who have completed nine years of basic education plus an additional one or two years);
- BTS (higher vocational training certificate), a vocational qualification accessible to students who have completed the baccalaureate).

Tunisia had 878 tourism graduates in 2007 (ONTT, 2008); of these, 23 students had a master's degree in hotel and tourism management, 123 had a BTS, 601 a BTP, and 131 a CAP. According to the Tunisian Federation of Hotels, the country's ten public hotel schools had 3 077 male students and 739 female students (19% of total) in the academic year 2009/10. According to data from the Ministry of Higher Education, just 2.3% of all university students in the 2008/09 academic year were enrolled in courses related to tourism, leisure, sports and services; 40% of these students (n=3311), however, were women. According to an analysis of university students by gender and the overseeing ministry, just 850 students (of a total of 360 172) were studying tourism; of these, 274 were women (Ministry of Higher Education, 2009).

These data indicate that:

- There are three times as many tourism students in vocational training as there are in higher education.
- Female students are greatly outnumbered by male students in hotel training schools (vocational training)¹⁵, with proportions even lower than those seen for vocational training in general, where almost a third of students are female.
- Just 32% of university tourism students are women, even though 59% of all university students are female.

5.2 WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

5.2.1 Characteristics of women's employment

Employment by gender

Women are greatly outnumbered by men in the hotel industry. The survey shows that women account for just 22.5% of the total workers in this sector, which is lower than the national employment rate for women (26%). On analysing the situation by regions, it was seen that the rate of participation of women in the hotel industry is higher in the District of Tunis and in the north and north-west regions of the country but relatively lower in the south, particularly in the tourist areas of Djerba, where it is 15.9%.

TABLE 5.1 EMPLOYMENT BY REGION AND GENDER IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

	Nabeul Hamamet		District of Tunis		North and north-west		Centre and centre-east		South-east		South		Total	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
Men	5 930	77.1	4 209	69.5	1 457	64.7	12 972	77.2	10 354	84.1	1 327	79.5	36 249	77.5
Women	1 758	22.9	1 844	30.5	795	35.3	3 836	22.8	1 959	15.9	342	20.5	10 534	22.5
Total	7 688	100.0	6 053	100.0	2 252	100.0	16 808	100.0	12 313	100.0	1 699	100.0	46 783	100.0

There appear to be no differences in female employment rates between different categories of hotels, with a similar percentage (22%) found across the board.

Men are more likely than women to be engaged in shiftwork and seasonal work, with 43% of men contracted to work during the tourist seasons only; the corresponding percentage for women was 36%. Both seasonal work and shiftwork are particularly common in the food and beverage department (where there are very few women) and slightly less common in the reception and housekeeping departments.

Employment by gender and job level

The analysis of male and female employment rates by job level revealed slight differences between sexes, with a higher proportion of men than women in executive and senior and middle management positions (9.7% vs 8.5%) and working as professionals¹⁶ (23% vs 17.7%). In contrast, there were more women than men in unskilled positions (16.4% vs 12.7%).

The face-to-face interviews were mostly held with staff managers (63.4%) or human resources managers (13.2%). Almost 88% of those interviewed were men and almost 95% of the hotels contacted were managed by men. These figures show the dominant role played by men in the hotel industry in general and in management and recruitment positions in particular.

TABLE 5.2 EMPLOYMENT BY JOB LEVEL AND GENDER IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

	Total	Total (%)	Men	Men (%)	Women	Women (%)
Directors/senior managers	1 015	2.2	867	2.4	148	1.4
Middle managers	3 330	7.2	2 590	7.3	740	7.1
Professionals	10 001	21.7	8 167	22.9	1 834	17.7
Skilled workers	23 653	51.3	17 962	50.4	5 691	54.8
Unskilled workers	6 229	13.5	4 521	12.7	1 708	16.4
Apprentices, trainees	1 835	4.0	1 566	4.4	269	2.6
Total	46 063	100.0	35 673	100.0	10 390	100.0

Employment by gender and department

An analysis of jobs by gender and department revealed clear differences between men and women, and indicated a tendency towards gender segregation. The majority of women (almost 70.4%) were employed in the housekeeping department, where they held 56% of all jobs. Most of the jobs they hold in this department (chamber maids, housekeepers, laundry managers and laundry workers, etc.) do not require them to work in the evenings. The majority of men in this department, however, worked as receptionists, room attendants or welcoming officers.

Men are most common in the food and beverage department, where they occupy positions such as chefs, chefs de rang, commis chefs and waiters, barmen and floor staff, head dishwashers, etc. These jobs require physical effort but above all they require flexible working hours and availability. In the food and beverage department, 93% of all jobs are held by men, which represents 38.3% of all jobs held by men in the sector. Finally, the survey showed that women were relatively well represented in the administrative support department but less so in the finance and accounting department.

¹⁶ Those interviewed for the survey (mostly staff managers) were not always able to accurately distinguish between professionals and skilled employees. They tend to classify jobs at these levels/categories: skilled workers (in French, *agents d'exécution*), supervisors, and middle-managers. The figures thus for professionals mainly correspond to supervisors with responsibilities that require more skills and qualifications than those required by skilled workers.

TABLE 5.3 DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYEES BY DEPARTMENT AND GENDER IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

	Total	Total (%)	Men	Men (%)	Women	Women (%)
Sales and marketing	677	1.5	449	1.26	228	2.19
Reception and housekeeping	13 036	28.3	5 718	16.03	7 318	70.43
Food and beverage	17 643	38.3	16 444	46.10	1 199	11.54
Maintenance	3 849	8.4	3 833	10.74	16	0.15
Finance and accounting	2 312	5.0	1 881	5.27	431	4.15
Administrative support	1 598	3.5	1 102	3.09	496	4.77
Others	6 948	15.1	6 246	17.51	702	6.76
Total	46 063	100.0	35 673	100.00	10 390	100.00

Employment by gender and education level

The figures regarding education level should be interpreted with caution as in most of the hotels contacted, the staff managers did not have statistics disaggregated by gender or education level. In most cases, a best-guess estimate was made. According to the estimates, 11.2% of employees had higher education (lower than the national figure of 14.2% for 2007), with a slight difference between sexes. This estimate does not correspond to figures issued by the INS in 2007, which reported that there were a third as many women with higher education as there were men in the hotel industry. Women with vocational training accounted for 36.5% of all female employees. The corresponding figure for men was 44.7%. In contrast, almost 54% of female employees and 41% of male employees had secondary education or lower, which is in agreement with INS statistics.

TABLE 5.4 EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATION LEVEL AND GENDER IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY (ESTIMATED FIGURES)

	Total	% Total	Men	% Men	Women	% Women
University	5 178	11.2	4 146	11.5	1 032	9.9
Vocational training	20 730	44.7	16 916	47.1	3 814	36.5
Secondary	15 372	33.1	11 368	31.6	4 004	38.3
Primary or lower	5 112	11.1	3 512	9.8	1 600	15.3
Total	46 392	100.0	35 942	100.0	10 450	100.0

Changes in staff numbers by gender

Of the ICT companies included in the survey whose staff numbers had changed in the previous 12 months, 18% had taken on staff and 28% had laid off staff. Overall, the changes corresponded to a 1.4% decrease (637 jobs) in total jobs with respect to the previous year.

Most of the positions created were occupied by skilled workers (almost 50%) and professionals (24.1%). An analysis of the new recruits by gender reflects the general dominance of male employees in the hotel industry, with 73% of the jobs created assigned to men and just 27% to women. The allocation of jobs by gender also reflects the gender segregation that is typical of this sector, with the majority of jobs in the housekeeping department allocated to women and the majority of those in the food and beverage department allocated to men.

With respect to plans for the immediate future, almost one third of the hotels surveyed planned to step up investments and create new jobs in the coming 12 months. In all, they expected to employ 1 435 new employees, which corresponds to a growth rate of almost 3% with respect to the current year. Most of these jobs were skilled jobs in restaurants, kitchens, the reception, and the housekeeping department.

Training of new recruits by gender

Not all new recruits receive training.

- Almost 35% of the hotels interviewed stated that only a few of the new staff received training and almost 20% said that they offered no training.
- The training of new recruits does not appear to be automatic in the two regions with the greatest growth potential in this sector (Nabeul/Hammamet and the centre-east region). In Nabeul/Hammamet, for example, 73% of the hotels stated that they offered little or no training to new recruits.
- On analysing the situation by hotel category, four-star and five-star hotels were the most active in this area, which seems logical in view of the greater demand for quality service in these hotels. Most of the training offered was conducted on the job during working hours.

According to 60% of the hotels interviewed, most of the employees, especially women, participate in the training. Nonetheless, considering that 7 out of 10 women work in the housekeeping department and that there are not enough tourism graduates to cover the needs of all the hotels in the country, particularly during peak season, new female recruits in this department mostly receive accelerated training.

5.2.2 Recruitment

Seventy percent of the hotels surveyed said that they had more male than female applicants. Generally speaking, women do not apply for jobs that require them to work nights because they are not always able to get home due to transport difficulties. They also avoid jobs that could have a negative impact on their reputation (such as jobs in the food and beverage department). According to some of the hotels, women also avoid jobs in which there is a risk of sexual harassment from male colleagues (e.g., jobs in kitchens and bars). The discrimination that already exists in this sector is exacerbated by employer practices, with 60% of employers specifying the gender of the person they are looking to recruit in their advertisements (36% for most positions and 24% for all positions).

Recruitment channels

To recruit new employees, most employers rely on personal contacts or use employment agencies, and some (38.3%) have agreements with hotel schools for hiring trainees and apprentices¹⁷. Just under a third of employers advertise in the press and only 3.1% use temporary work agencies. Finally all the hotels rehire former workers when the tourist season starts. They estimate that approximately 80% of such contracts are renewed from one season to the next.

Selection criteria for new recruits

Discipline, qualifications, diplomas/degrees, experience, language skills, job-specific skills, physical appearance, education centres attended and age are the most important criteria applied when hiring young employees. Factors such as religion, marital status, having young children and availability to work overtime are not considered crucial.

The main selection criteria applied when hiring women are largely the same as those used for applicants in general, regardless of gender, but there are some differences in areas such as availability to work night shifts, marital status and having young children.

- Availability to work night shifts is not considered to be a key factor when hiring women for 30% of hotels. The corresponding percentage for workers in general is almost 65%.
- Marital status is considered to be important by almost 58% of hotels in the case of women and by 41% in the case of workers in general.
- The respective percentages for having young children or not are 52.3% and 25.2%.

When asked about the effect of wearing a veil, 11% of employers interviewed did not answer. For the rest, opinions seemed to be divided. It was considered an impediment for jobs in which workers had contact with clients but not for laundry, cleaning or kitchen work.

¹⁷ These types of agreement are more common in the centre-east region and in Nabeul/Hammamet.

FIGURE 5.3 RECRUITMENT CHANNELS IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

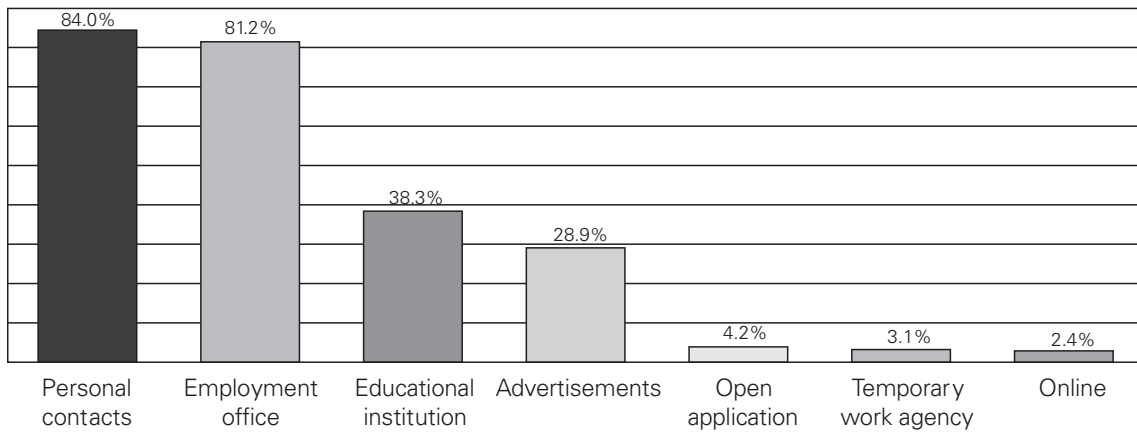
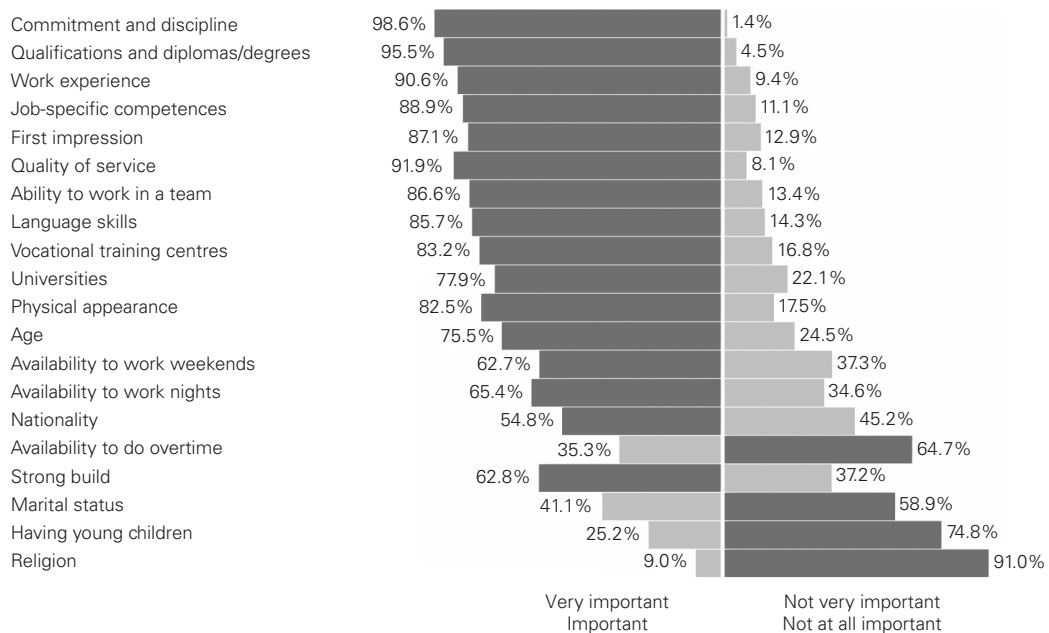


FIGURE 5.4 SELECTION CRITERIA IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY



5.2.3 Competences and needs

Lack of competences

Almost 75% of the hotels interviewed reported a lack of competences and knowledge among potential young recruits.

This problem was greatest in the region of Nabeul/Hammamet and in the east, but less so in the centre-east (Sousse, Monastir, Mahdia). A large proportion of workers in Nabeul/Hammamet (an estimated 80%) are not from the region. Most of them come to Hammamet from the north-west (Jendouba/Kef) or centre-west (Kairouan) to work during the mid and peak seasons.

A lack of competences was less common in university graduates, but it was reported to be a problem in young workers with secondary education or lower. Half of the hotels in the survey reported that graduates from vocational training centres also had shortcomings in terms of skills and knowledge.

FIGURE 5.5 RECRUITMENT CRITERIA FOR WOMEN IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

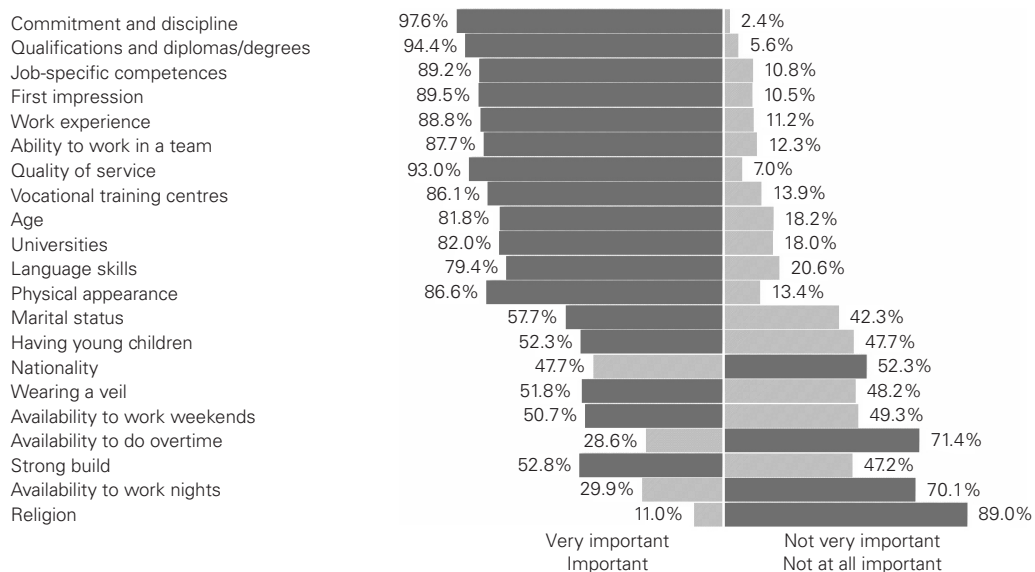
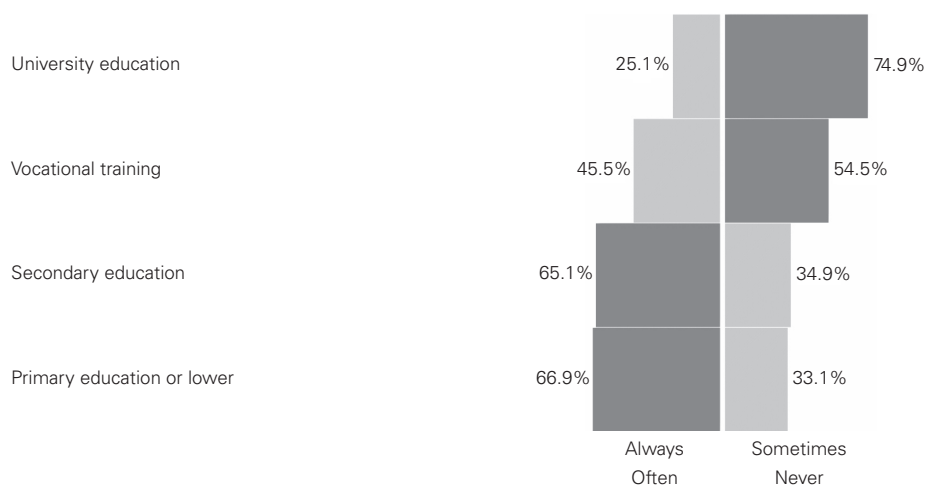


FIGURE 5.6 LACK OF COMPETENCES BY EDUCATION LEVEL IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY



A lack of competences among new employees was most evident in the reception, housekeeping, and food and beverage departments. Almost 45% of the hotels interviewed reported shortcomings in this area when recruiting young staff for the food and beverage department. The corresponding percentage for the reception and housekeeping department was 47%. The jobs that posed most problems were receptionist, head chef, chef de rang, commis chef and waiter, chamber maid, valet and barman¹⁸.

Those interviewed said that the greatest problems they detected when hiring young staff were insufficient language skills, a lack of discipline, professionalism, people skills, communication and operational skills, and a negative attitude to learning.

¹⁸ According to the survey conducted by ONEQ, shortcomings in terms of qualifications were most evident, in order of importance, in chamber maids, valets, head chefs, commis waiters and commis chefs (ONEQ, 2008).

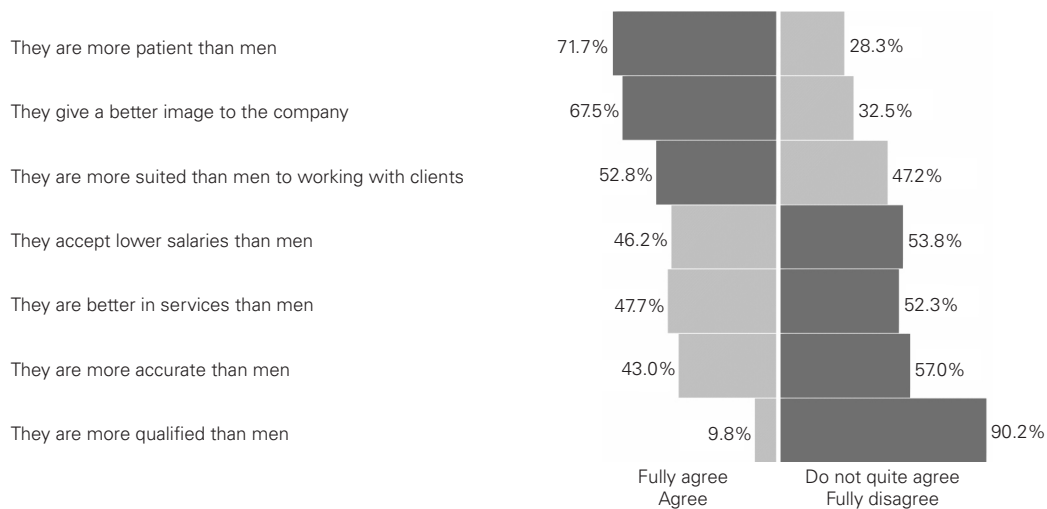
Positive aspects associated with women's work in the hotel industry

Over 50% of the hotels in the survey thought that women caused organisational problems due to absenteeism and limited availability. Furthermore, 36% stated that it was difficult to find women with the necessary qualifications and competences. In their opinion, vocational training centres do not provide sufficient training for head housekeepers or chamber maids and they added that few women chose these jobs, primarily because of the poor image with which they were associated.

With the exception of organisational problems related to availability and lack of qualifications, women's work was not considered to be problematic. The majority of employers did not consider that women were less committed or efficient than men. Neither did they think that women were not generally suitable for hotel work, although some did state that they were not at all suitable for certain jobs. Most of those interviewed did not believe that working with women caused men problems. Indeed, some employers stated that it was the women who did not want to work in a mostly male environment due to the risk of harassment.

The structured question regarding the positive aspects of employing women¹⁹ showed that employers recognised that women were patient and that they had a more positive impact on the image of the company. Over half of those that answered this section thought that women were more suited than men to working with clients and almost 47% considered that they were willing to accept lower pay. Nonetheless, only 9.8% of respondents believed that women were more qualified than men.

FIGURE 5.7 MAIN ADVANTAGES OF EMPLOYING WOMEN IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY (STRUCTURED QUESTION)



Benefits companies would like to receive in return for employing women

Only 72 hotels, i.e. 25% of the respondents, answered when asked what benefits they would like to receive in return for hiring women. Essentially, they would like to see improved training programmes for women in a wider range of areas. Indeed, for certain jobs (such as housekeeping jobs, entertainment, restaurant and kitchen work), it is difficult to find qualified young women. Furthermore, the companies would like to benefit from tax breaks and other government incentives in order to recruit more women. They added that to encourage women to work in this sector, it would be necessary to offer more facilities (especially for those doing night work) such as transport and accommodation in tourist zones that are not readily accessible by public transport.

¹⁹ Just 70 (24%) of the hotels interviewed provided a list of advantages associated with employing women when asked.

5.3 ASSESSING THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR: WOMEN SPEAK UP

5.3.1 Young female students in education or training

The main reason for choosing to study tourism mentioned by the young women who participated in the discussion groups was their interest in a sector that allows them to interact with others (contact, communication, new people, relationships, cultural exchange), that is growing (new fields), that blends modernity and tradition, and that offers the opportunity to practise and master foreign languages and to work and study at the same time. Another advantage mentioned was that it provided the opportunity to work in a tourist resort. The students thought that tourism offered job opportunities and opened up new perspectives and horizons.

For most of the students, it was a personal choice influenced by a variety of factors. For example, a friend or relative had had a successful experience in the sector, they themselves had had a job in another sector that had shown them the advantages of working in tourism, or they had been encouraged and sometimes even influenced by their family, the media or publicity to work in the sector. They rejected the idea of being a housewife and had decided to work, mostly because they wanted to achieve financial autonomy and independence. Some were afraid of being unemployed. Their plans for when they completed their studies varied considerably from one student to the next and included:

- starting to work immediately to achieve financial autonomy; gain experience and/or build knowledge for starting their own business later (travel agency); establish contact with hotels;
- continuing to study in another field of tourism or taking a language course to improve their job perspectives;
- working and studying at the same time;
- combining work with other projects (private life, marriage, children).

The students had a positive image of the tourism sector in terms of the jobs and career opportunities it offered. They thought that it provided opportunities that one needed to know how to seize. They also believed that it was necessary to be ambitious and professional (i.e., to separate work and family). Career progression was also considered to be easy and quick, unlike in other sectors, even with BTP certification.

‘Even with a simple qualification (a BTP, for example), you can advance in this career, you can start as a receptionist and quickly become head receptionist. In other sectors, however, it is difficult to advance so quickly.’

They also pointed out a major problem, which was the negative image associated with women working in tourism and the hotel industry in particular. This image is mostly due to the fact that they have to commute to work (and sometimes cannot get home in the evenings). The main shortcomings of the sector mentioned were the poor-quality service provided, attributed to the recruitment of underqualified or unskilled workers and the types of contract awarded. These are generally temporary contracts that have to be renewed every four years but this does not always occur. It is very difficult, for women and men, to get a permanent job.

‘I have a friend with a BTS in hotel management who, after seven years of working, still hasn’t been made permanent. He was laid off for a month at the end of the four years and then his contract was renewed. But this renewal isn’t automatic. Most people can’t afford to dream of a permanent contract as there are absolutely no guarantees.’

Young women are aware of the constraints they face, such as working hours, particularly in jobs such as hotel management (a particularly difficult area), night work (chamber maids and housekeepers work from 15.00 to 23.00) and even their responsibility towards clients (being attentive to their needs, familiar with their expectations and capable of responding to their demands). Nonetheless, they think that the tourism sector can be attractive to women because it offers interesting job prospects as well as the chance to create one’s own business (e.g., an Internet-based business such as a client welcome and transfer service) or to innovate (designing new routes, excursions). They also said that it gave them the opportunity to become independent and gain more freedom, and to show the best of themselves by looking after their appearance and using their skills to the maximum. Finally, the tourism sector is considered to offer more variety and better pay than other sectors.

The students from the travel agency field were generally of the opinion that the training they received was good and that it opened their minds and prepared them to work in the sector. Some of the participants saw it as an opportunity to be active in and in touch with the labour market. The work placement programmes were considered to be sufficient and to correspond to the theoretical training received. In the hotel management field, however, the emphasis on the practical side of work was considered to be insufficient. Furthermore, these students mentioned a gap between theory and practice during work placement programmes, which were considered insufficient both in terms of quantity (one placement in just one hotel) and quality (lack of guidance, training, cooperation and help from professionals).

Most of the participations would like to be advised by professionals with experience, preferably in a position of responsibility, or by qualified, competent people with a good knowledge of the sector (for example guidance officers). The students thought that family members, who are generally subjective, could offer guidance in the choice of studies but preferably not in the choice of career.

To get a job or even to be promoted or secure better working conditions, most of the young women interviewed were willing to work overtime, weekends and evenings, and to travel and work for a salary or wage that did not meet their expectations or match their qualifications, but only for a limited time²⁰. They would be more likely to concede in the above areas if the position was interesting and if they thought that the concessions would be taken into consideration and lead to benefits such as a bonus or a pay rise.

5.3.2 Young women working in tourism

The young women working in tourism who participated in the discussion groups considered that their training had helped them to find a job and that it was closely related to their current job. Most of those interviewed were of the opinion that their qualification was the determining factor in their getting a job. Training helps them to do a good job, but it also helps them to be flexible, to develop their analytical skills, and to spark their desire to succeed. Nevertheless, they believed that the training received should be reinforced by complementary training, work placement programmes and a period of adaptation to the working environment²¹.

Nonetheless, the experience acquired has been important for some of those interviewed. On another note, the reasons that led the employees in this sector to accept their current job were varied. Mentioned were the opportunity to form part of the labour market, to put into practice what they had learned, to achieve social status, to secure a job and to enjoy a good salary and social insurance (for some). Another reason mentioned was the non-seasonal nature of the sector (in the case of thalassotherapy centres).

The main methods used to find work were registration with an employment agency, participation in a work placement programme leading to recruitment, direct application for a vacancy at a hotel, competitive examinations, and personal contacts (hearing about an opening).

Those interviewed also stated that most of the jobs in the hotels where they worked were formal, declared jobs, albeit temporary (fixed-duration contracts, work placement contracts). They worked at a variety of levels (management, skilled jobs) but they mostly occupied low-level positions. Men have a greater chance of being promoted or appointed to management positions (thalassotherapy centres seem to be the exception to this trend).

'There are no female head chefs or maîtres d'hôtel in five-star hotels in Tunisia, with the exception of one maître in a restaurant in a big hotel in Sousse. The reason given is that high-end restaurants require training as a sommelier, which is a profession reserved for men.'

The seasonal workers interviewed worked as chamber maids and were employed from one year to the next. They thought that their pay was adequate and better than they would get elsewhere.

All of the young women interviewed thought that women could work anywhere and do all kinds of jobs, except those that required considerable physical effort or working at night. Most of the women did not want to work nights and furthermore it is something that is looked down on by society. Nonetheless, numerous jobs in the tourism sector are reserved for men and as such are inaccessible to women, even to those who are extremely interested and have the necessary qualifications. In addition to jobs that require working nights (maîtres d'hôtel, night porters) or physical strength (security guards), the jobs that are generally inaccessible to women are managerial or supervisory positions, head chefs, and entertainment officers (whose job it is to encourage customers to buy and consume, above all drinks, etc.)

On an interpersonal level, women said that they can have good relationships with loyal clients and difficult ones with some foreign clients, particularly men who do not follow the rules. (For example, some men refuse to wear a swimsuit in thalassotherapy centres or request services that do not exist under the pretext that they are allowed in other countries.) In the tourism sector perhaps more than in other sectors, women may be subject to sexual harassment from clients, colleagues and in particular superiors.

²⁰ Some of those interviewed said that if the pay was too low they would prefer not to work.

²¹ This adaptation to the working environment was essential for employees in a thalassotherapy centre who, after two years of training, were shocked to find out that they were going to work in the tourism sector as they had imagined that their training and work would be in the medical field. Thalassotherapy centres in Tunisia have officially formed part of the health sector rather than the tourism sector since 2008. This decision was taken in order to improve the image of the massage sector and to avoid problems such as those found in Thailand (sex tourism).

Most of the young women interviewed stressed that there was a strong feeling of solidarity among hotel staff. This environment made it difficult to confront someone, regardless of whether they were male or female. Generally speaking, relationships between colleagues are based on mutual respect. One of the seasonal chamber maids said that men respected their female colleagues but they would not go as far as marrying one. This is basically because of the poor image associated with women who work in tourism and in hotels in particular.

Those interviewed were of the opinion that employers discriminated against women in that they are generally given low-level jobs or jobs involving split shifts (9.00 to 15.00 and starting again at 19.00) that men prefer to avoid. In peak season, hotels prefer to hire men or single women, and avoid taking on married or pregnant women. Women lose their jobs more often than men and are also paid less.

According to the women interviewed, married women and particularly those with children have considerable and sometimes even insurmountable difficulties balancing family and work. Reasons mentioned vary.

- Most tourist facilities are open on Sundays and it is difficult to get a day off on this day, which is generally poorly tolerated by the family.
- Tourism activities require employees to return home late, which is also poorly tolerated by the family.
- The higher rate of absenteeism among married women with children means that they are more likely to be laid off.

The above factors explain why most women working in tourism are either single or divorced. Fully aware of the difficulties of balancing work and family, young women working in this sector leave their jobs as soon as they get engaged or married. This is also a means of protecting themselves and their families from the negative image that society has of women working in tourism.

The women interviewed think that to make the sector more attractive, it is necessary to change people's mentality, fight against prejudices and change society's image of women working in this sector. It is also necessary to find solutions to help families with childcare needs and allow women with the necessary qualifications and skills to access management and supervisory positions and to advance their careers in a normal fashion.

It appears that women in the tourism sector do not always enjoy the same rights as women in the general labour market. One example is the right to a one-hour breastfeeding break for those with nursing children. According to a manager of one of the thalassotherapy centres interviewed, employees do not have a lot of benefits or rights:

'Women dream of being given a breastfeeding break, but it is impossible to grant this; the only benefits they have are perhaps the fact that they can leave work early during the month of Ramadan or the evening before religious holidays such as the EIDE.'

All the women interviewed agreed that the biggest problem was the general lack of regard that society had for women working in the tourism sector and in the hotel industry in particular. One of the women interviewed offered another explanation to explain this negative image:

'In the 1960s, only women who were obliged to support their families worked in this sector: widows, divorced women, women who had not married and women without resources. They were looked down on and had difficulties finding husbands or wives for their children.'

People who look down on women working in hotels are not familiar with the reality of this sector. Their attitudes are shaped by prejudices, particularly in rural areas.

One of the participants said that she had had problems with her family at the beginning as they would not accept that she was working in a thalassotherapy centre. Two of the women's partners had left them because they did not want them to work in tourism. Most of the employees in the sector leave their jobs as soon as they get engaged or married, often at the request of their partners.

According to those interviewed, to work in the tourism sector, women need to have a strong personality, character, courage, confidence, determination, patience and good people skills. They should also be open-minded, tolerant and disciplined. The women interviewed were also of the opinion that more importance was given to women's personal qualities than to their professional qualifications.

5.3.3 Young women looking for work in tourism

The women in these discussion groups had studied tourism or already worked in the sector. The reasons they gave for being unemployed varied from one group to another, and accordingly, from one region to another. Those from Tabarka and nearby villages had studied tourism and hotel management at university. They were still unemployed, however,

despite their many attempts to find their first job and despite the fact that tourism was a growing industry in Tabarka. They believed that they were unemployed mainly because employers demanded one or two years' experience and because they were at a disadvantage compared to other candidates.

Young women from Sfax, which is a large non-tourist city in the south of Tunisia, also had major difficulties finding work in tourism. The main reasons they mentioned were their poor language skills (particularly in English) and a shortage of jobs due to the almost inexistent tourism industry in Sfax. One of the participants in the group who had experience thanks to work placement programmes and previous jobs had complemented her training by studying German (she had also practised Spanish a lot). She was still, however, unable to find a job in Sfax, which is what her family wanted.

'I completed my training by studying a year of German at Bourguiba School and I have practised Spanish a lot. I have participated in work placement programmes and worked in hotels in Djerba and Sousse and also in travel agencies in Tunis. My problem is that I can't find a job in Sfax.'

The chances of finding a job in tourism appear to be better in the capital than in Tabarka or Sfax. Most of the participants from Tunis were not looking for their first job. They were unemployed because they had left their first jobs for varying reasons²². While some were looking for a job in the hotel sector, others, who were sceptical of this sector, particularly after their experiences in the housekeeping department, wanted to work in another sector:

'I want to change sectors, for a young woman it might be interesting, but for a married women, it is difficult, even for accommodation the conditions are irregular. You have to work from 7.00 to 15.00. This is difficult for married women, unless they are married to someone from the same environment.'

Unemployment has numerous negative effects on the women themselves and on their relationships with their families. It causes them psychological problems such as anxiety, stress, disappointment, depression and humiliation; they also feel scorned. Another effect of unemployment highlighted by all the women interviewed was their lack of autonomy and their financial dependence on their family. This was a particularly heavy burden for them. Families are also affected by the difficulties faced by unemployed members of the household. The women also said that there were tensions in the family as they often felt that they were held responsible for the situation they were in and also felt under pressure and sometimes even badgered. These effects were practically identical in the different regions, although they were perhaps more pronounced in isolated areas such as the north-west where financial difficulties can impede women's ability to move around while looking for a job. This lack of mobility partly explains why it takes women in this area such a long time (between two and four years) to find a job.

The methods used to find a job varied from person to person but were practically identical in the three regions (the north-west, Sfax and Tunis). The basic methods included:

- registering at an employment agency and dropping by regularly to see if anything new has come up;
- consulting job advertisements in the press and on the Internet and posting job-sought advertisements;
- participating in work placement programmes to gain experience;
- applying for business start-up loans at the Tunisian Solidarity Bank. (Women, however, often run into difficulties because they have no funds of their own or are unable to find a premises);
- posting job-sought advertisements at the National Executive Employment Office (Bureau national d'emploi des cadres – BNEC) and in companies, agencies and hotels;
- doing competitive examinations, going for interviews, using cold calling techniques (visiting travel agencies for example);
- looking for help from an influential person;
- accepting small jobs temporarily;
- doing business-start up and entrepreneur training courses (done by almost half of the participants in the Tabarka discussion group).

When asked about what employers sought in terms of competences and qualities, the participants stressed experience and skills, particularly language skills, (mostly French and English but also Italian and German). Next on the list were availability, mobility, motivation, communication skills and the ability to work in a team. Furthermore, women are expected to be friendly and to have a good appearance. To be better equipped to meet these requirements, some of the participants have taken extra courses, particularly in languages.

'I worked as a trainee for seven months after my final project and I am registered with an employment agency. I've looked for a job on the Internet and in the press. Most jobs require one or two years' experience. I've applied for jobs at travel agencies, asked relatives and friends... I plan to improve my skills in the area of children's entertainment with the idea of working in a nursery as a last resort.'

²² Namely, attitude of employers during recruitment or at the workplace, type of job, career guidance following the baccalaureate towards an unchosen field such as tourist entertainment.

Overall, the women interviewed were of the opinion that they did not meet the requirements of employers in the area of language skills, with the majority acknowledging that they had serious shortcomings in this area, even in French. Some of them, mostly university graduates, explained that they had difficulties in this respect because of the lack of work placement programmes and opportunities to practise.

'I have great difficulties with languages because I have not had enough practice speaking English and because I have to compete with those with vocational training who do a lot more practice and participate in more work programmes; at university, we do a lot of theory, general knowledge, we do one "hands-on" work programme and one "technical" work programme, which seem quite inadequate to us. Students at vocational training centres do two months in efficient work placement programmes.'

A second problem for those looking for their first job is that they lack the experience required; this is seen as a vicious circle that is impossible to break. A third obstacle mentioned by some participants was the inadequacy of their qualification with respect to the needs of the labour market. This problem affected those who had done language and multimedia studies, which is still largely unfamiliar to employers.

Some employers prefer to recruit women because they are more flexible, less demanding in terms of pay, and more willing to do jobs requiring versatility (for example, operate the switchboard, tend to the reception and manage reservations at the same time). They also seem to be trusted more to attend a cash desk, for example. Nonetheless, those interviewed did not think that women were treated on an equal footing with men during recruitment.

- Even though it is illegal, certain job offers published in the press or posted in employment agencies are limited to men, as are certain competitive examinations. 'In some employment agencies, we are told that such and such a job is for men only, perhaps because they have greater flexibility in terms of working hours or have a driving licence. This is very disappointing for us.'
- Women are generally offered lower pay than men.
- Employers avoid hiring married women.
- Employers behave differently to women than to men: they tend to be more neglectful of them, even when they are more competent than their male colleagues. During recruitment, some women are subject to sexual harassment from their employers. This occurred to one of the participants who had been hired as a personal assistant after working in the tourism sector.

Most of the participants would like a job in tourism because it is their field but also because they feel attached to it.

'I love tourism, I don't want to change; it is a very enriching sector in terms of cultural exchange, diversity, contact with clients, and there are also interesting travel opportunities.'

'I am proud of and really happy to work in the tourism sector, I would choose my career before my partner, but I would prefer to work in a travel agency than in the hotel industry.'

Nonetheless, if their demands are not satisfied, they are prepared to work in other sectors.

'I want to improve my level of training, if I don't find something suitable in tourism, I will do something else.'

The participants are willing to make numerous concessions in order to find a job. They would agree to:

- accept a salary that was beneath their expectations or not commensurate with their qualifications or skills, particularly at the beginning of their careers in the hope that their situation would improve;
- do overtime, as long as it was not taken for granted that they would always do it;
- be mobile and travel within reason;
- accept jobs requiring them to perform multiple functions, particularly in Tunis.

'I posted my CV on the Internet, I worked for just one week after my work placement programme because I was required to have experience or to travel abroad, and I didn't accept this. I had no knowledge but at that time I wasn't too keen, I have done two interviews without success; now I have decided to work in any field to continue my studies in interior architecture, and I am going to rely on people I know to help me to get a job.'

In Tunis and in the north-west of Tunisia, it is largely accepted that you need to be mobile, but most of the participants from Sfax do not want to travel, especially long distances. It seems that the more confidence that women have in their qualifications and the more experience they have, the less willing they are to accept low pay. In contrast, the women interviewed agreed that they would reject anything that affected their dignity or physical and psychological integrity (lack of respect, abuse, sexual harassment, degrading tasks, night work without compensation, or a job without a contract or with a false contract)²³.

²³ Some employers force their employees to accept false contracts so that they can benefit from government subsidies; some of the group participants had been offered this type of contract but they had refused to sign.

According to the women interviewed, there are many measures that could be taken to improve women's chances of finding a job. The answers given in the different regions were complementary. In the opinion of the women from the north-west of Tunisia, it is particularly necessary to:

- offer better information about the labour market and its needs and improve the training offered to young graduates;
- provide more information about employment and work placement programmes;
- implement mechanisms to help young graduates gain professional experience;
- evaluate employment programmes (initiation to professional life internships, the National Employment Fund 21-21, etc.) and their contribution to women and the tourism sector, and prevent employers from exploiting these programmes to their benefit only;
- make recruitment more objective and give priority to recruitment based on competitive examinations;
- help women to benefit from employment programmes within the framework of international technical cooperation programmes²⁴.

The young women interviewed in Sfax highlighted the need for improved access to credit for women and the importance of transparency in employment agencies, which they said should also take into account how long job seekers had been unemployed. In Tunis, the participants thought that it was first necessary to change people's mentality so that women could first be considered capable of proving that they were competent. They should then be given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills on the job; they also said that it was important to reduce the amount of experience demanded by employers and to give them the opportunity to participate in work-based training programmes.

5.4 SUMMARY

5.4.1 General employment situation in the hotels surveyed

1. The tourism sector employs a large number of workers. It should be recalled that the hotel industry alone generates approximately 100 000 direct jobs and employs 10% of the Tunisian workforce. These direct jobs, in turn, generate approximately 350 000 indirect jobs. In other words, the sector supports 2 million people (20% of the population). This is just the hotel sector.
2. An initial analysis of the employment situation in the hotel industry shows that the number of graduates with vocational training in this area is insufficient to cover the employment needs of Tunisia's hotels. The rest of workers are trained on the job and receive no formal outside training. Furthermore, tourism is a seasonal activity, which causes problems for skilled workers due to the unstable, insecure nature of the work. Seasonal work accounts for almost 41.5% of the total jobs in this sector. It is particularly high in the north/north-east region, where the tourist season is very short. Another problem encountered by employers is the difficulty in ensuring that work contracts comply with current legislation.
3. The Tunisian tourism industry, which is still dominated by the spa sector, is most active in the summer, with hotels preferring to hire unskilled staff during the off season. A more serious problem, however, is that they also employ unskilled staff during the peak season. This has a considerable impact on the quality of service, which is reflected by the small percentage of holidaymakers who choose to return to Tunisia.
4. The percentage of staff in managerial positions is very low. Managers in the hotel industry are not offered sufficient guarantees or clear, well-established career plans. This leads most workers, particularly those who are experts in their fields, to leave the sector. Indeed some of the employers interviewed confirmed that a large proportion of workers who train in tourist establishments choose to work in another sector where their rights will be better protected.
5. Another problem is the uneven geographical distribution of the country's tourist areas as this leads to an influx of workers to coastal regions.
6. Many hotel workers work rotating shifts, particularly those employed in food and beverage departments. Reception workers are also affected but to a lesser extent. Women do not generally do shiftwork.

5.4.2 Employment situation in the hotel industry by gender

1. The hotel industry is largely dominated by men. Women account for 22.5% of the total workers in this sector, which is slightly lower than the national employment rate for women (26%). The rate of participation of women in the hotel industry is higher in Tunis and in the north and north-east regions of the country but much lower in the south, particularly in the tourist zones of Djerba, where it is 15.9%.
2. The survey showed that 11.2% of hotel employees had higher education (lower than the national figure of 14.2% for 2007), with a slight difference between sexes. Women working in the hotel industry have a slightly lower education level than men: 15.3% of the women and 9.8% of the men in the hotels surveyed had primary

²⁴ Several participants had reservations about certain countries with reportedly abusive, non-professional practices affecting young women, particularly in the tourism sector.

education or lower. The corresponding percentages for those with secondary education were 38.3% for women and 31.6% for men. Finally just 36.5% of women in the sector had vocational training. This percentage was 47.1% for men.

3. According to the young women employed in the hotel industry who we interviewed, the under-representation of women in this industry was due to two factors: firstly, the poor image that Tunisian society in general has of women who work in hotels, and secondly the fact that employers prefer to hire men for many positions such as head chefs, *maîtres d'hôtel*, entertainment officers, and management and supervisory jobs. Women, in contrast, generally occupy low-level positions such as chamber maids and laundry workers. An additional problem is that women avoid jobs that require them to work nights because this is often poorly tolerated by their partners or families.
4. The survey also showed several differences between men and women in terms of employment at different jobs levels, with a slightly greater proportion of men than women in executive and senior and middle management positions (9.8% vs 8.5%) and also in professional categories (23% vs 17.7%). In contrast, women outnumber men in unskilled jobs (16.4% vs 12.7%). While women are present at different job levels (management, skilled positions), they mostly work in low-level jobs. Furthermore, men have a greater chance of being promoted to management positions, although *thalassotherapy* centres seem to be the exception in this respect.
5. The young students interviewed, however, think that the hotel industry offers good career prospects: 'Even with a simple qualification (a BTP, for example), you can advance in this career, you can start as a receptionist and quickly become head receptionist. In other sectors, in contrast, it is difficult to advance so quickly.'
6. The survey showed that 43% of male employees and 36% of female employees were seasonal workers. This might be because seasonal work is particularly common in the food and beverage department, where men are dominant. Reception and housekeeping work is also seasonal but to a lesser extent²⁵.
7. The analysis of roles by department shows a clear gender segregation of jobs in the hotel industry. Most women do jobs that do not require them to work evenings. The majority (70.4%) of female hotel workers work in the housekeeping department, where they occupy 56% of all jobs. They are mostly employed as chamber maids, housekeepers, and laundry managers and workers. Men, in contrast, are strongly represented in the food and beverage department, where they occupy positions such as chefs, *chefs de rang*, *commis chefs* and waiters, barmen and floor staff, head dishwashers, etc. In this department, 93% of all jobs are held by men; these jobs, in turn, account for 38.3% of all jobs held by men in the hotel industry. They are positions that require physical effort but above all availability and flexibility in terms of working hours.
8. This gender segregation of jobs is not viewed favourably by the young women interviewed, most of whom were of the opinion that Tunisian women were capable of doing all types of jobs – except perhaps those that require considerable physical strength or night work. They also thought that thanks to the education they had received, they were more than qualified to do the same work as men, and in some cases to even outperform them. Nonetheless, numerous jobs in the tourism sector are reserved for men and as such are inaccessible to women, even to those who are extremely interested and have the necessary qualifications. In addition to jobs that require working nights (*maîtres d'hôtel*, night porters) or physical strength (security guards), the jobs that are generally inaccessible to women are managerial or supervisory positions, head chefs, and entertainment officers (whose job it is to encourage customers to buy and consume, above all drinks, etc.).
9. Their strong desire to work in the tourism sector, which they view as a modern sector that offers new horizons and perspectives, very good employment prospects, and the opportunity to gain independence and freedom, combined with their determination to procure a job commensurate with their qualifications and training in different fields contrasts sharply with the roles reserved for them by employers in the sector.
10. Women are relatively well represented in the administrative department but less so in the finance and accounting department. This relatively high representation of women in administrative departments is probably due to the fact that this type of work is not frowned upon by society, unlike other jobs that require women to be in contact with alcohol or people drinking alcohol, or even jobs that require them to work at night and as such are considered inappropriate.

5.4.3 Women and changes in staff numbers in the hotel industry

1. There was a slight reduction (1.4%) in overall staff numbers in the hotels surveyed in comparison to the previous year. There is a risk that female tourism students might feel disappointed by this trend, unless it is the result of a temporary downturn in the economy. Almost one third of the hotels surveyed planned to step up investments and create new jobs in the coming 12 months (growth rate of almost 3% with respect to the current year).
2. Most of the jobs created were skilled jobs (almost 50%) and jobs for professionals (24.1%). The difference between the proportions of new male recruits and new female recruits reflects the general dominance of male employees in the hotel industry, with 73% of the jobs created assigned to men and just 27% to women. The allocation of jobs by gender also reflects the gender segregation that is typical in this industry, with the majority of jobs in the housekeeping department being allocated to women and the majority of jobs in the food and beverage department being allocated to men²⁶.

²⁵ This explains why the discussion group formed by seasonal workers mostly consisted of chamber maids, who returned practically every year during the peak season to work in the hotel industry. While forming the discussion group of seasonal workers, we wanted to include different types of workers, including entertainment officers, but those who were most familiar with the sector said that most of the seasonal workers were chamber maids.

²⁶ According to one woman working as a manager in the tourism sector, women have started to enroll in hotel and tourism studies, particularly in areas related to the food and beverage department, and this might encourage them to steer their careers towards hotel and restaurant work. Hotels, in contrast, seem to be content to continue with their traditional recruitment practices.

3. The above results provide a good example of the serious difficulties that young female graduates face when looking for a job in the sector. Some of those interviewed had been looking for four years. The women interviewed did not hesitate to explain that one of the reasons they were unemployed was because employers preferred to hire men for the majority of positions, with the exception of housekeeping jobs.
4. Other reasons given for their failure to enter or reenter the job market, despite numerous and varied attempts and methods (registration with employment agencies, publication of job-sought advertisements in the press and on the Internet, participation in work placement programmes, competitive examinations, and interviews) were, notably, their lack of experience and language skills, the inadequacy of their qualifications, and a shortage of jobs, particularly in Sfax, where tourism is still underdeveloped, and in Tabarka, even though this is a growing tourist region. This problem was also encountered in the District of Tunis, but to a lesser degree. Furthermore, the proportion of women employed in tourism in Tunis is higher than in other parts of the country.

5.4.4 Obstacles to the employment of women

1. The employers interviewed stated that the most common recruitment channels they used were personal contacts and employment agencies. Agreements with hotel schools were used by 38.3% to contract trainees and apprentices. Press advertisements were also used (almost 29%), as were temporary work agencies but to a much lesser extent (3.1%).
2. All of the women interviewed use employment agencies and the press to find a job. They also contact hotels and travel agencies directly, but eventually realise that this is not enough and that they need to find an influential person within their circle of family and acquaintances who could recommend them to potential employers. They also realise that information about job openings does not always reach potential candidates but is reserved for a small circle of people.
3. Most (70%) of the employers interviewed consider that they received fewer applications from women than from men. In general, women do not apply for jobs in departments that require them to work nights as they are unable to get home due to transport difficulties. They also avoid jobs that could have a negative impact on their reputation (such as jobs in the food and beverage department).
4. Whether by personal choice or due to constraints imposed by society and employers, the reality is that almost 60% of hotels specify the gender of the person they are looking for when advertising for the majority of positions. The young women interviewed deplore this attitude and feel that this practice, whether employed in job offers or competitive examinations, apart from being illegal, is discriminatory. They do not hide their strong feelings of disappointment, particularly in view of the fact that the progress that has been made in Tunisia over the past decades in the area of women's education and equal opportunities is a major source of pride for the country.
5. As recognised by the women interviewed, young women are often hired by hotels because they are less demanding in terms of pay and also because they generally accept jobs where they are required to perform multiple tasks. Many employees in the tourism sector are expected to perform several tasks within the same job function (such as operating the switchboard, managing the reception, reservations).
6. According to the hotels interviewed, the main selection criteria applied when hiring women are the same as those used for applicants in general, namely, discipline, qualifications/diplomas/degrees, experience, physical appearance and age.
7. The young women interviewed had a good understanding of what potential employers looked for in women during recruitment. Those who had already worked in the sector were of the opinion that the main requirement was a diploma/degree as they believed that this had played a determining role in their getting a job²⁷. Both those studying and those looking for work in the sector emphasised the importance of experience and language skills, as well as other factors such as discipline, initiative, group spirit and the ability to work in a team, good appearance, etc. None of them mentioned age.
8. There were also some differences in areas such as availability to work night shifts, marital status, and having young children. Hotels appear to have adapted to the difficulties that women have in terms of working nights and consider it normal to allow them to go home at a reasonable time. It appears that hotels prefer to recruit single women rather than married women as they have fewer time constraints. They consider that married women have more family obligations and thus cause more organisational problems. Having young children was also considered a barrier to recruitment, although it was not considered to be one of the most important factors.
9. According to the participants in the discussion groups, most women are strongly aware of the attitude of employers towards married women. Indeed some conceal the fact that they are married to improve their chances of getting a job or to keep their current jobs. Others, in contrast, leave their job of their own accord or at the request of their fiancés or husbands to protect both themselves and their families from the censure of society. Job loss is most common in married women, particularly when they have young children, due to absenteeism. This demonstrates just how difficult it is for married women to balance family and work.
10. Despite the above obstacles and particularly despite the negative image associated with women working in tourism and the hotel industry in particular, the women interviewed believed that the sector could offer them

²⁷ Unskilled seasonal employees such as chamber maids believed that they were hired during the peak season because of the training they had received on the job and their experience.

opportunities. They believed that to get a job, they needed to demonstrate their suitability, and that to succeed and advance rapidly, they needed to have a strong personality and self-confidence and to be open-minded and tolerant.

5.4.5 Training, competences and needs

1. Training is generally not provided for new recruits in the hotel industry: 35% of hotels reported that they trained some employees while 20% said that they offered no training whatsoever to new recruits. As has already been mentioned, because the tourism business in Tunisia is seasonal, with peak demand between April and October, employers prefer to hire unskilled staff during the off season. A more serious problem, however, is that they also employ unskilled staff during the peak season. The fact that these workers receive no training has a considerable impact on the quality of service offered. The training of new recruits does not appear to be widespread in the two regions with the greatest growth potential in this sector (Nabeul/Hammamet and the centre-east region).
2. According to 60% of the hotels interviewed, most of the employees, especially women, participate in training. In most cases, the training offered is an accelerated course for female employees joining the housekeeping department. Those working in the sector believe that their training helped them to get a job but that it was insufficient in relation to the job they had to do. They were obliged to complement their basic training with additional courses. In most cases, they had to learn on the job and do their best to adapt to working conditions.
3. Almost 75% of the employers interviewed reported a lack of skills and knowledge among potential young recruits. This problem was more common in the region of Nabeul/Hammamet and less so in the centre-east of the country. A large proportion of workers in Nabeul/Hammamet (almost 80%) are not from the region. Most of them come to Hammamet from the north-west (Jendouba/Kef) or centre-west (Kairouan) to work during the mid and peak seasons. The unstable nature of employment in the sector also poses a problem for hotels, which are obliged to renew staff from season to season. That said, some of their employees return on a yearly basis.
4. The lack of competences among new employees is most evident in the reception, housekeeping, and food and beverage departments. The jobs that posed most problems were receptionist, head chef, chef de rang, commis chef and waiter, chamber maid, valet, and barman.
5. Those interviewed said that the greatest problems they detected when hiring young staff were insufficient language skills, a lack of discipline, professionalism, people skills, communication and operational skills, and a negative attitude to learning.
6. The young women interviewed recognised that their language skills were poor and attributed this to the fact that they had not been given sufficient opportunities to practise while studying. This was particularly true for students who had studied at public universities and vocational training centres. They are thus aware that they do not respond well to this particular job requirement and also know that it is one of the most important skills sought by employers. Consequently, most of the women looking for work take language courses in specialised centres to improve their skills in this area and at the same increase their chances of getting a job.
7. The women interviewed were also aware that employers attach great importance to discipline and people and communication skills but they also believe that can easily respond to these expectations. Women looking for work or still studying do not appear to attach as much importance as employers do to professionalism, operational skills and attitude to learning. Nonetheless, several thought that their training was insufficient and poorly adapted to the needs of employers, primarily because of deficient work placement programmes and shortcomings in other practical and operational aspects.

5.4.6 Obstacles facing women in the area of human resources policies

1. Over 50% of the hotels in the survey thought that women caused organisational problems due to absenteeism and limited availability. Furthermore, 36% stated that it was difficult to find women with the necessary qualifications and skills.
2. With the exception of organisational problems related to availability and lack of qualifications, women's work was not considered to be problematic. Indeed, 41% of the establishments considered that women were more productive and competent than men and 37% considered them to be more professional and disciplined. The employers also recognised that women were patient and that they had a more positive impact on the image of the company. Over half of the hotels that answered this section thought that women were more suited than men to working with clients and 47% thought that they were willing to accept lower pay. Nonetheless, only 9.8% of respondents considered that women were more qualified than men.
3. The main benefits that hotels would like to receive in return for employing women are improvements in training programmes. They would also like to benefit from tax breaks and other government incentives in order to recruit more women. They added that to encourage women to work in the hotel industry, it would be necessary to offer more facilities (especially for those doing night work) such as transport and accommodation in tourist zones that are not readily accessible by public transport.

6. WOMEN IN THE ICT SECTOR

6.1 SECTOR PROFILE

In September 1997, the Tunisian government introduced a strategy to accelerate the growth of the ICT sector to respond to the growing needs for diversified services. The strategy was built around the following core elements:

- the development and modernisation of industries and services;
- the implementation of a developing organisational and regulatory platform to strengthen outsourcing and offer support to the private sector;
- the development of human resources;
- the integration of Tunisia into the intangible economy.

The ICT sector has continued to grow steadily and in 2008, it contributed to 10% of the country's GDP. In the country's 11th development plan (2007-11), it was estimated that the sector would grow at an annual rate of 17% and contribute to 13.5% of GDP by 2011. Exports in this area are expected to increase from TND 53 million to TND 500 million between 2007 and 2016. Finally, the number of annual ICT students is expected to increase from 8000 to 15000 over the course of this decade²⁸.

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Competitiveness Report 2008-2009, Tunisia topped the competitiveness ranking among Maghreb and African countries and ranked 38th out of a total of 134 countries. This report, which provides expert insights into investments in the ICT field, based its ranking on three key elements: the country's political and economic environment, the level of technological readiness and the level of use of ICTs.

The sector is formed by approximately 675 companies of which 265 are software engineering and consultancy firms. According to a study published in March 2007 by the Agency for the Promotion of Industry and Innovation (API), the ICT sector is mainly composed of small companies (almost two thirds have fewer than 20 employees), most of which were created after the late 1990s.

On analysing the activities of the companies surveyed for the current study, it was seen that almost half of the companies were active in at least two areas. The largest subsector was the call centre business, which is an emerging sector with a strong potential for job creation. The second largest subsector was the IT and related service sector, which encompasses companies offering services in computer equipment, diverse IT services, IT equipment, business and management engineering and system and network integration. The telecommunications sector was the third largest sector and encompassed the country's two telephone operators (the biggest employers in the sector) and telecommunications engineering companies.

According to a recent study by the Ministry of Communication Technologies, women accounted for 25% of all employees in the ICT industry, although the figure that emerged from our study was 41%. In 2004, the sector employed 18000 people, which corresponded to just 0.6% of the working population.

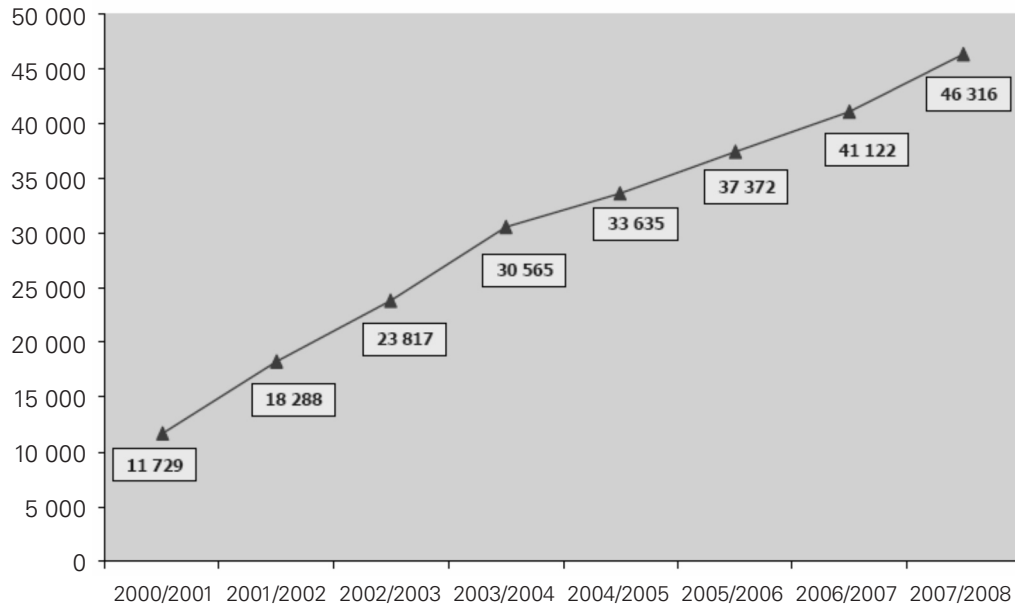
Call centres are now a major employer in Tunisia's ICT sector. The Tunisian Federation of Information and Communications Technologies has estimated that 55% of higher education graduates in ICT firms are non-specialists working in call centres (where 90% are working in level 1 jobs). Those employed in computer or telecommunications companies, in public services or other private sectors are generally well qualified and have well-paid, stable jobs. The working conditions in call centres, in contrast, which mostly employ women in level 1 or 2 jobs²⁹, are less satisfactory. Call centres, however, are an important source of employment in Tunisia, and provide half the jobs available in the ICT sector.

Tunisia has included ICT studies at all levels of education; computer studies are offered to students in their second year of secondary education and computer science studies are available to students starting in their third year of secondary education, and also in the two basic education cycles. It also intends to offer computer studies across all branches of higher education.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of university students enrolled in computer, multimedia and telecommunications studies. In the academic year 2008/09, there were 49363 students, which accounts for approximately 13% of all students enrolled at university. In 2008, 50% of the 9568 students who graduated in computer, multimedia and telecommunications studies were female. This indicates that the gender gap is smaller in ICT education than in tourism/hotel studies (Ministry of Higher Education, 2009).

²⁸ Source: <http://it.utica.org.tn/site/fr/>

²⁹ On a scale of 1 to 4, with requirements for expertise and qualifications increasing with level.

FIGURE 6.1 CHANGES IN STUDENT NUMBERS IN COMPUTER, MULTIMEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS STUDIES

Source: Bureau des études, de la planification et de la programmation

In addition to Tunisia's 13 public universities, the following centres also offer ICT training:

- the Higher Communications School (SUP'COM);
- the Higher Institute of Technology Communications Studies (ISET'COM);
- the Centre of Information, Training and Communication Technology Documentation and Studies, which provides continuing training and retraining for workers in the ICT sector;
- the national telecommunications operator, Tunisie Télécom, which has a training centre in the technological park Cité technologique des communications.

6.2 WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE ICT SECTOR

6.2.1 Characteristics of women's employment

Employment by gender

Women are well represented in the ICT sector, where they account for almost 41% of all workers. Most of the employees in this sector are university graduates, who are in their majority female.

TABLE 6.1 EMPLOYMENT BY REGION AND GENDER IN ICT COMPANIES

	District of Tunis		Centre-east		South		Total	
		%		%		%		%
Men	9 553	59.7	224	50.6	47	24.1	9 824	59.1
Women	6 441	40.3	219	49.4	148	75.9	6 808	40.9

Nonetheless, the survey also showed that men were dominant in management and recruitment positions. The face-to-face interviews were held mainly with CEOs/company directors or human resources managers; 37% of those interviewed were women and 90% of the companies were run by men.

Employment by gender and job level

On analysing employment by job level, it was seen that engineers and managers accounted for a large proportion of staff. In our sample, executives, senior managers, middle managers and professionals accounted for almost 72% of all employees (78.6% of all male employees and 62.9% of female employees).

TABLE 6.2 EMPLOYMENT BY JOB LEVEL AND GENDER IN THE ICT COMPANIES

	Total	Total (%)	Men	Men (%)	Women	Women (%)
Directors/senior managers	912	5.5	693	7.1	219	3.2
Middle managers	5 709	34.6	3 688	37.8	2 021	29.9
Professionals	5 295	32.0	3 283	33.7	2 012	29.7
Skilled workers	4 414	26.7	1 991	20.4	2 423	35.8
Unskilled workers	161	1.0	86	0.9	75	1.1
Others	31	0.2	11	0.1	20	0.3
Total	16 522	100.0	9 752	100.0	6 770	100.0

There is a clear difference between genders, with men occupying 76% of executive/senior management positions, almost 65% of middle management positions and 62% of professional positions (engineers, project managers, etc.). Women, in contrast, were more numerous in the category of skilled workers.

Employment by gender and department

The largest department in the ICT companies surveyed was the production department, which provided 72% of all jobs. The second and third largest departments, respectively, were the administrative support department (9.3% of all jobs) and the sales and marketing department (9.1%). The distribution of work by department and gender was quite balanced, although there were some differences, with relatively fewer women in the production department and more in the sales and marketing, administrative support, and finance and accounting departments.

TABLE 6.3 DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYEES BY DEPARTMENT AND GENDER IN THE ICT COMPANIES

	Total	Total (%)	Men	Men (%)	Women	Women (%)
Sales and marketing	1 502	9.1	690	7.1	812	12.0
Production	11 911	72.1	7 205	73.9	4 706	69.5
Maintenance	885	5.4	700	7.2	185	2.7
Finance and accounting	497	3.0	216	2.2	281	4.2
Administrative support	1 541	9.3	833	8.5	708	10.5
Others	186	1.1	108	1.1	78	1.2
Total	16 522	100.0	9 752	100.0	6 770	100.0

Employment by gender and education level

The survey showed that the majority of employees (over 75%) in the ICT sector have higher education. The distribution of men and women by education level was quite balanced but there was a higher proportion of men with vocational training and a slightly higher proportion of women with higher education.

TABLE 6.4 EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATION LEVEL AND GENDER IN THE ICT COMPANIES

	Total	% Total	Men	% Men	Women	% Women
University education	11 112	73.88	6 408	72.64	4 704	75.63
Vocational training	2 781	18.49	1 892	21.45	889	14.29
Secondary education	1 044	6.94	478	5.42	566	9.10
Primary education or lower	104	0.69	43	0.49	61	0.98
Total	15 041	100.0	8 821	100.0	6 220	100.0

Changes in staff numbers by gender

Of the ICT companies included in the survey whose staff numbers had changed in the previous 12 months, 86% had taken on staff and 15% had laid off staff. The overall difference was a net increase of 1 895 employees, which corresponds to a growth rate of almost 13% with respect to the previous year. Half of the jobs were created in the call centre sector, which mainly recruits female university graduates or women still in training. Almost 64% of the vacancies created in the call centres surveyed were filled by women.

The fact that many of the new jobs were created in call centres explains why women benefited more than men from the increase in jobs in the 12 months prior to the survey (54.3% of new recruits were women). On analysing the new jobs by gender, it was seen that more men were appointed to executive/senior management and middle management positions while more women were recruited for skilled positions (call centre operators).

TABLE 6.5 INCREASE IN STAFF BY JOB LEVEL AND GENDER IN THE ICT COMPANIES

	Men	% Men	Women	% Women
Directors/senior managers	31	3.5	15	1.4
Middle managers	228	25.5	171	16.1
Professionals	195	21.8	216	20.4
Skilled workers	436	48.8	654	61.6
Unskilled workers	4	0.4	5	0.5
Total	894	100.0	1 061	100.0

The distribution of new recruits by gender was quite balanced in all departments except in the sales and marketing department, where women outnumbered men, reflecting the gender segregation that exists in this field (see **TABLE 6.3**).

Almost 68% of the companies interviewed planned to continue to step up investments and create new jobs in the coming 12 months, which shows that the sector is in good health and anticipates further growth. The companies expected to recruit 1 121 employees, which corresponds to a 6.8% increase with respect to the current year. Most (almost 72%) of the new jobs anticipated were skilled jobs in call centres.

Training of new recruits by gender

Unlike the hotel sector, most new recruits in the ICT sector (almost 80%) receive training, which is provided in the company during working hours. Nonetheless, numerous companies send engineers abroad for training; this is particularly common in companies working with state-of-the-art technologies for which there is a shortage of specialised trainers in Tunisia. The companies interviewed generally agreed that the existing ongoing training system was satisfactory for general training but not for specialist training.

According to 80% of the companies surveyed, the majority of women participated in training programmes. The call centre sector, which is the largest employer in the ICT industry, offers training to all employees, regardless of gender.

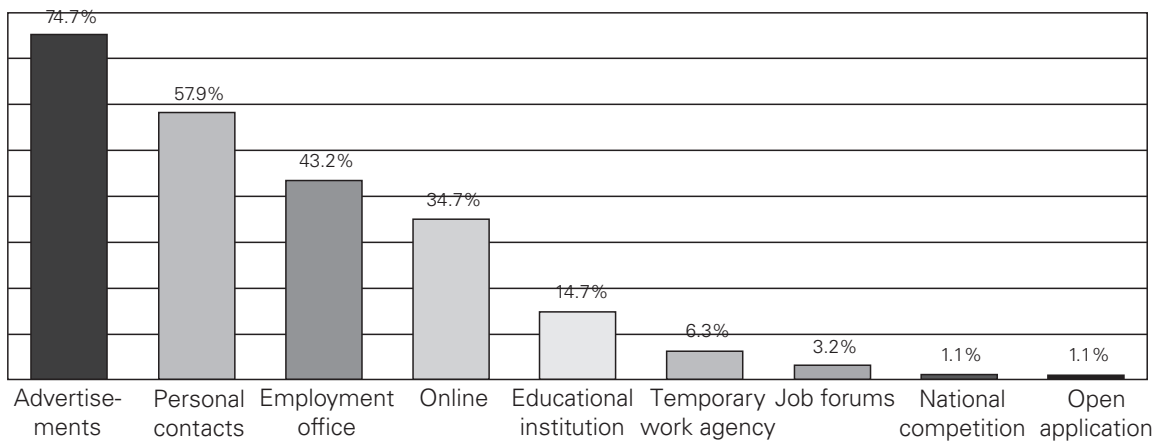
6.2.2 Recruitment

More women apply for jobs in the ICT sector than in the hotel sector. Under half of the companies surveyed (41%) considered that they had more female than male applicants. A closer analysis by type of activity showed that relatively more women than men sought work in call centres and Internet service provider companies. It should be noted that 40% of the companies specify the gender of the workers they are looking to recruit.

Recruitment channels

Almost 75% of the companies interviewed advertise vacancies in the press. They rely on personal contacts to a lesser extent than hotels do, but the proportion is still relatively high at almost 58%. Under half of the companies use the services of employment agencies and only 14.7% use their contacts with educational centres. Online job applications were used by 34.7% of the companies interviewed.

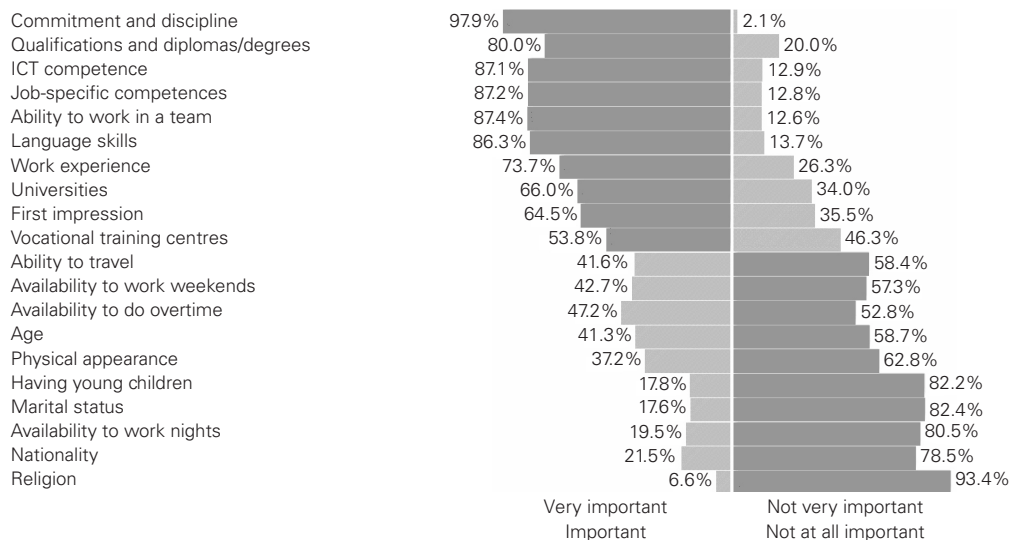
FIGURE 6.2 RECRUITMENT CHANNELS IN THE ICT COMPANIES



Selection criteria for new recruits

Discipline, qualifications, diplomas/degrees, experience, ICT competence and language skills were among the most important criteria applied when recruiting young employees. Factors such as religion, marital status and having young children were not considered crucial.

FIGURE 6.3 SELECTION CRITERIA BY GENDER IN THE ICT COMPANIES



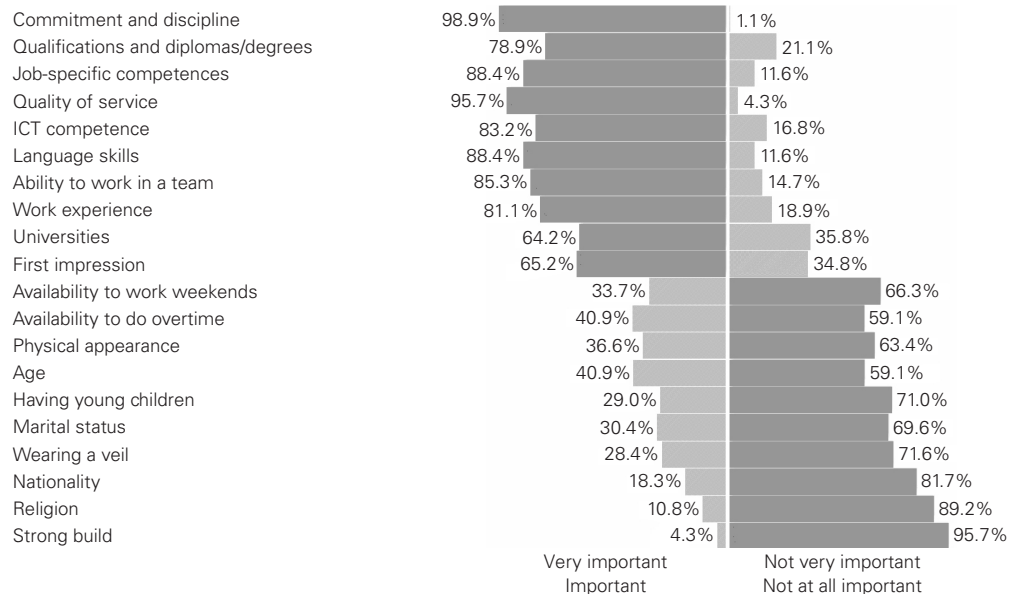
Selection criteria for new female recruits

The main selection criteria applied when hiring women are the same as those used for all applicants, regardless of gender. These are primarily discipline, qualifications, diplomas/degrees, experience, ICT competence and language skills.

Age is not an important factor when recruiting either gender, unlike marital status, which is important for 30.4% of companies when recruiting women and for 17.6% of companies when recruiting workers in general. Other important factors taken into account when recruiting women are having young children (29% vs 17.8% for workers in general) and to a lesser extent religion (10.8% vs 6.6%). The employers interviewed attached less importance to women’s availability to work weekends or do overtime.

When asked about the effect of wearing a veil, 7.4% of employers interviewed did not answer. For the rest, wearing a veil did not appear to be an obstacle when it came to recruiting new employees, although it was mentioned that the veil was not desirable for certain jobs such as those in marketing and sales. Some companies considered that wearing a veil did not interfere with the company’s activities as most jobs in the ICT sector involved contact with a machine (a computer) rather than with people.

FIGURE 6.4 SELECTION CRITERIA FOR RECRUITING WOMEN IN THE ICT COMPANIES



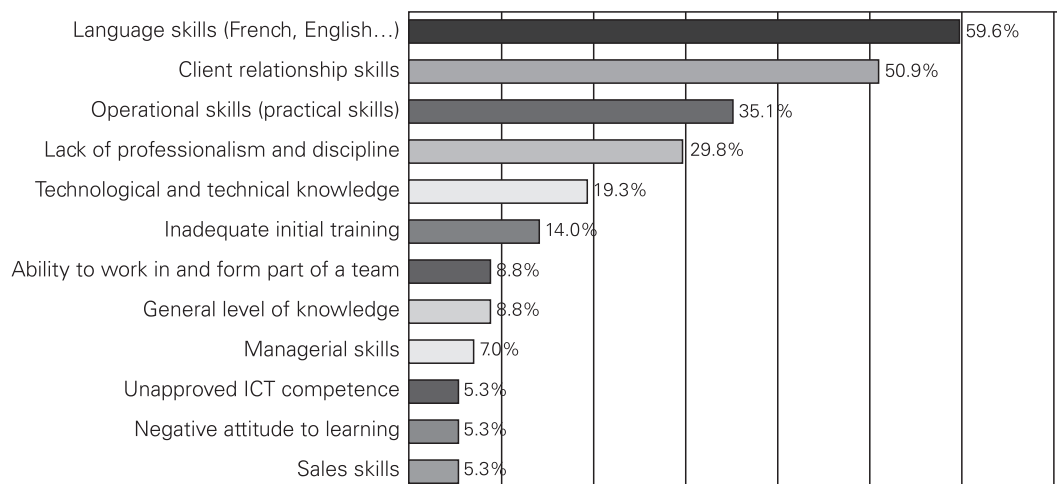
6.2.3 Competences and needs

Lack of competences

Three-quarters of the employers interviewed reported a lack of competences and knowledge among potential young recruits³⁰. Companies in this sector have more problems trying to recruit experienced workers. The scarcity of project managers is a particular problem as they are required to have technical qualifications combined with team management and planning skills, with particular importance attached to project status updating skills. Problems related to the recruitment of sales and marketing staff were also mentioned. Some companies found that young people lacked discipline, professionalism and communication skills.

Overall, the companies recognised that young recruits had a good level of basic education and training. The main concern expressed was the need to improve management and language skills (mostly in English but also in French). The companies also highlighted the need to continually adapt technological courses to developments in the market.

FIGURE 6.5 LACK OF COMPETENCES AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE ICT SECTOR (OPEN QUESTION)



Positive aspects associated with women's work in the ICT sector

Most of the companies did not agree with the different statements they were given regarding women's work in the ICT sector. Women are not considered to be less committed or efficient than men, and they were appreciated by both male colleagues and clients, who had no difficulty interacting with them – quite to the contrary, in fact. The general tendency shows that companies are increasingly appreciative of women's work and even prefer them to men in terms of efficiency, professionalism and commitment. These positive aspects perhaps explain the large number of female workers in the ICT sector. Only 30% of companies considered that women caused organisational problems and 23% stated that it was difficult to find women with the necessary qualifications and competences.

The structured question regarding the positive aspects of employing women³¹ shows that companies recognise that women are patient and that they help to improve the image of the company. Nonetheless, just 14% of respondents considered that women were more qualified than men. Opinions were divided regarding women's attitude to pay and their ability to work with clients.

³⁰ Considering that the majority (75%) of young workers in the ICT sector have higher education, it would seem that the 77% of companies that reported shortcomings in the area of competences and knowledge when recruiting young people were referring to shortcomings among higher education graduates. Indeed, 60% of the companies reported that they always or frequently encountered problems when recruiting university graduates and 33% reported the same problem when recruiting students with vocational training. In contrast, 38% said that they were not affected. The corresponding percentages for companies recruiting secondary school graduates were 32% and 46%, respectively.

³¹ When asked about the advantages of employing women, only 46 of the 95 companies provided an answer. Of these, almost 48% considered that women were more productive than men, and 41% stated that they were more professional and disciplined. For 35% of the companies, women were appreciated for their work because they were more assiduous, constant, and trustworthy.

FIGURE 6.6 POSITIVE ASPECTS ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE ICT SECTOR

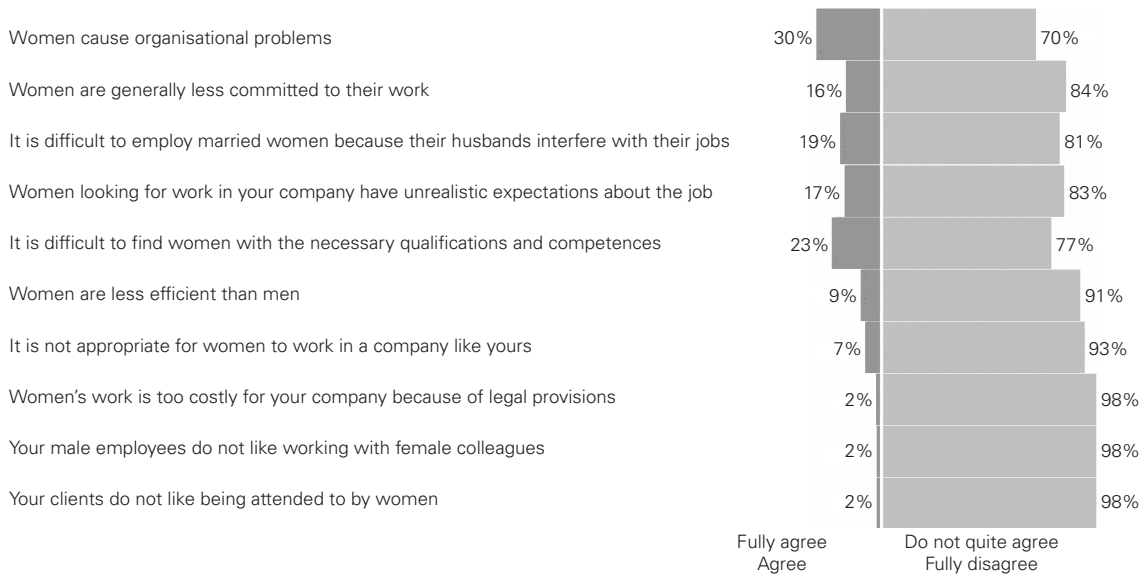
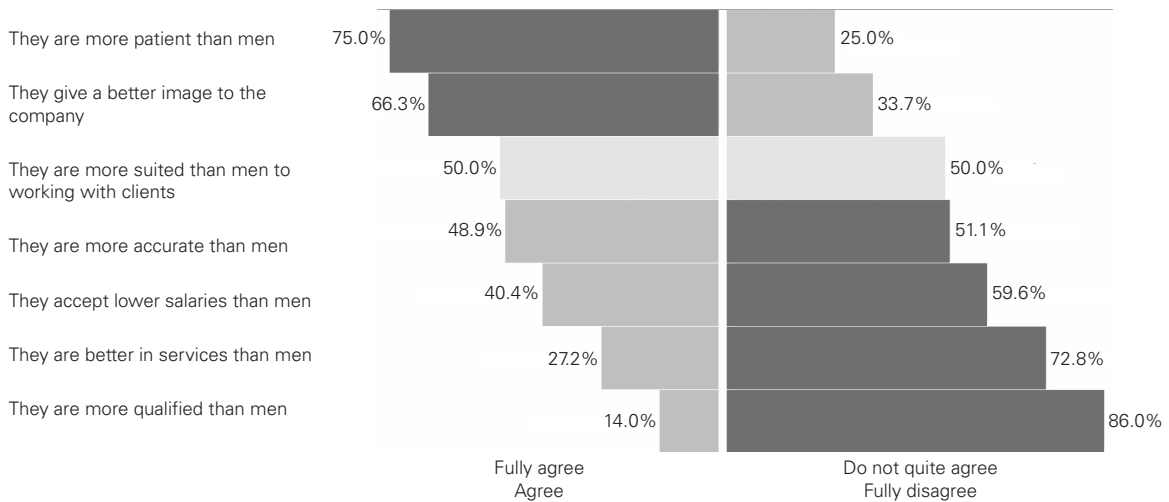


FIGURE 6.7 MAIN ADVANTAGES OF EMPLOYING WOMEN IN THE OPINION OF THE ICT COMPANIES (STRUCTURED QUESTION)



Benefits companies would like to receive in return for employing women

Only 27 companies provided an answer when asked about the benefits they would like to receive in return for employing women. The main benefits mentioned were tax breaks and other incentives and help from the state to pay maternity leave. Indeed, the companies considered that women's work was beneficial in all aspects as long as they did not have children. The employers added that women became less productive and thus more costly when they had to look after children, particularly during the maternity period.

6.3 ASSESSING THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR: WOMEN SPEAK UP

6.3.1 Young female students in education or vocational training

The young women in the discussion groups formed by ICT students in education or vocational training explained that they had chosen this field because it was relevant to all sectors, was growing fast and offered very good job prospects. Some of the women said that they had chosen to study ICT because it allowed them to study to quite a high level (master's or doctoral degree) and possibly follow on to do a degree in engineering and get a job as an engineer with a good salary, commensurate with their qualifications. In many cases, the choice was influenced by teachers, parents, friends or acquaintances.

The women in these groups basically wanted to do two things: to continue studying and work in order to be financially independent. The priorities varied from person to person and consisted of:

- finding a job immediately and returning to their studies later;
- continuing their studies while working;
- continuing their studies if possible, and if this were not possible, finding a job;
- continuing their studies and working as a teacher.

'I am very ambitious, I want to obtain a doctoral degree and other qualifications, I want to study and work at the same time to be independent, have pocket money and be active.'

The ICT sector is very demanding in terms of qualifications and competences. To pursue a professional career in this field, one needs to study continuously to keep up to date with the constant changes. Also required is the continual renewal of equipment and knowledge as workers in this sector have to work with new technologies and improve continuously.

According to the young women interviewed, what would make the ICT sector even more attractive would primarily be a change in the mentality and behaviour of employers as these still prefer to recruit men.

'This sector has the capacity to absorb a large number of unemployed people, particularly unemployed men, as men in Tunisia tend to have better ICT skills than women; there is also a tendency to believe that men are naturally more at home with machines than women.'

Some of the women considered that the instruction they were receiving was highly satisfactory and offered many openings. Others thought that it was average, badly organised and insufficient in terms of preparing them for the job market. The main criticism was that the courses were highly theoretical, did not include enough practical work and training in companies in the sector, and were far removed from the realities of the labour market.

In this respect, we noticed a difference between university students and students from high-ranking higher education institutions (*grandes écoles*) who had previously done two years of preparatory training and an entrance examination. The first group considered that their education was highly theoretical and far removed from the needs of the labour market, although they did consider that it was highly consistent:

'In our field, there is a considerable shortage of practical training and the study load is poorly organised time wise. The faculty system does not help you to keep up to date or to prepare yourself as you go along, it doesn't prepare you for the future.'

Those studying at the *grandes écoles*, in contrast, found that their training offered them numerous opportunities and also permitted them to, among other things, work and study at the same time.

Like the young women studying tourism, those studying ICT would also like to receive clear and transparent advice and guidance from experts in the field. Meetings should be organised for graduates who have just finished their baccalaureate and students at vocational training schools and universities to offer them support throughout their studies and to guide them in their choice of career. These young women in particular would like to be better informed on programme and curriculum content in the different fields of study and also about the requirements for entering a particular field and the advantages and disadvantages of different choices. In the area of employment, they suggested the creation of an online yearbook where they could consult the websites of companies offering jobs and see the requirements for the different positions available.

Confident of their qualifications, the young women interviewed stated that they would be willing to make concessions to get a job but with certain conditions. They generally thought that pay should be commensurate with their skills and qualifications. Some of them said that they would not accept low pay while others said that they would if:

- it was within acceptable limits and did not detract from the value of their qualifications;
- they were starting out in their careers, in the hope that this would improve their professional situation or lead to a promotion;
- they gained experience in return.

They also said that they would work overtime and at weekends or in the evenings if the job was very important and if the pay was right. Under these conditions, some of them would also be willing to relocate. Relocation was an option for some but not for others, who preferred to stay where they were. Relocation was also something that would need to be worked out depending on family constraints.

6.3.2 Young women working in the ICT sector

It is important to point out that the participants in the discussion groups formed by young women working in the ICT sector had come from different fields of studies: some had studied ICT while others had studied economics, management or other courses. The majority were working in call centres, with varying levels of responsibility. When asked about the link between their work and the training they had received, and particularly about how this had contributed to their getting a job and in particular their current job, all of those interviewed said that their qualifications had helped them in both cases. However, they felt that there was not a very close link between their jobs and the education they had received. Some of the workers used only a small proportion of the knowledge and skills they had acquired, notably communication skills, French and basic computer skills. The main components of their training, however, such as programming skills, were not of use.

'If you're working in a call centre, you don't use any of your skills, unless you have studied languages.'

Call centres, which have expanded rapidly in Tunisia in recent years, are increasingly attracting young graduates and are now known by most young people and students, many of whom work there for a trial period or on work placement programmes before joining the job market. Some young women are put in contact with these centres by employment agencies, while others apply directly for a trial period, sometimes before they have even completed their studies. Some of the participants interviewed started to work in a call centre after failing to find or leaving another job³².

While most of the women interviewed agreed that their qualification was the most important factor in their getting a job, they did not think that it was enough. Other important factors are language skills (particularly French and English), communication skills, computer skills, a good level of general knowledge and the ability to perform multiple tasks. Other factors mentioned were appearance, elegance, friendliness and politeness. According to the young women questioned, apart from objective requirements related to skills and personal qualities, recruitment is also influenced by subjective factors (connections, bribes, etc.). This explains why one should not be too demanding or ambitious when looking for one's first job.

The types of job held by women in the ICT sector vary depending on the attitude of the employers. Some offer formal labour agreements. Women are also offered formal agreements but lower pay. Others hire women under fixed-term contracts (sometimes without social insurance) and benefit from state subsidies (such as those offered for initiation to professional life internships), but they do not hesitate to lay them off before they are entitled to a permanent position.

Call centres guarantee an initial training period of one month for new recruits³³. The recruits are then made permanent and given formal contracts. The general tendency is to recruit young, dynamic workers who are punctual, available, and have good language and computer skills. The pay is satisfactory and employees receive social insurance. One of the call centre workers interviewed said:

'I am earning money, my situation is quite stable, but there are no interesting or enriching prospects for the future. Our human capital is heavily exploited, when you're at work, you forget who you are and what you are doing, it's mind-numbing. It's true that some people... think that it's a very good job compared to jobs in quite a few Tunisian companies which pay managers TND 100 or 150. Public service work has dried up and the big ICT companies offer jobs that pay TND 250 and are sometimes undeclared. The personal element doesn't count, what counts are the indicators.'

³² While the pay in call centres is attractive in Tunisia, employees earn less than a third of what someone doing the same job in France earns. The working conditions are extremely stressful and people are viewed as machines. One of the workers explained that because of her job, which involved spending most of the time working in a room with 60 other people all talking on the phone, under the surveillance of cameras, she had lost much of her sweet temperament and relaxed nature and had become increasingly stressed, anxious and tense, both mentally and physically.

³³ The cost of this training is estimated at TND 2 000.

The situation is different in other companies in the sector, where the salaries are low, despite the quality of the employees. Nonetheless, they enjoy certain stability and the work they do is quite closely related to their qualifications. Formal labour agreements are not always offered and salaries are paid late or not at all, as sometimes occurs with website or after-sales services companies.

It is clear that, for young women, the main reasons for working in a call centre is that it pays better than other companies in the sector and offers formal contracts and social insurance. The sector also has good job prospects, unlike the public sector, where recruitment is very limited.

According to the participants in the discussion groups, Tunisian women can do all types of jobs and be highly competent, even in jobs that are traditionally associated with men (such as management or industrial IT jobs). Women can do all types of jobs and they want to prove it. They can also be more efficient than their male colleagues.

In call centres, men outnumber women in technical departments and women outnumber men in sales. Sales work is avoided by men as it requires more patience and is considered more tiring and even humbling. Women, in contrast, do well in this type of work. In certain subsectors such as general services and offshore companies, women are preferred to men as they are regarded as being more reliable, responsible, honest and trustworthy.

One of the participants working in a company specialised in networks said that her employer had not been very convinced about taking her on³⁴. Nevertheless, she proved that she was perfectly capable of doing all the tasks that she was given. She did better than both her male and female colleagues and because of her success, she was labelled 'masculine'.

The call centre workers we interviewed did not think that there was any discrimination between men and women in their companies. They believed that people were treated in accordance with their competences and that language and other skills were determining factors when it came to recruitment. They were, however, of the opinion that there was discrimination in employment agencies, which, in theory, are in favour of equality.

Some companies, such as those that specialise in networks (installation, programming, etc.), prefer to hire men than women as the work requires mobility and frequent travelling to different regions; it also involves the transport of heavy material and the use of material and tools such as drills. Generally speaking, it is true that men are more willing than women to travel and do this type of work. It is also a fact that more young men than women in Tunisia have a driving licence.

While one of the participants, who was still single, thought that she could organise things and balance her family and working life, the rest of the group practically all agreed that it was very difficult, even impossible, for young women working in call centres to do this as they work 48 hours a week, do obligatory overtime, and work until 22.00, leaving no time for the family.

'We are shut in all day. We often don't even have time to do the shopping we need. I have gone for three months without seeing my family, I get home late, at 22.00, I don't see my family. It would therefore be difficult to balance my family and working life. My fiancé wants me to give up my job.'

The women described the work they did in call centres as mind-numbing and said that it did not offer any interesting or enriching prospects for the future. They are quite seriously exploited at work and their identity is also obliterated (they are nearly always obliged to change their first names and they are not allowed to speak Arabic, even during breaks or outside working hours).

'At the beginning, I was on the verge of a breakdown; I couldn't stand sitting down for eight hours and having to concentrate continuously. I was really stressed and I nearly had a breakdown.'

The participants mentioned several difficulties inside and outside the company. The difficulties inside the company were related to relationships between colleagues, mainly rivalry and competition, and working conditions, which were described as very difficult to put up with.

With respect to difficulties encountered outside the company, women working in call centres, just like those working in the tourism and hotel industry, are affected by the negative image associated with these centres. This negative image is linked to the organisation of work in the centres and the exploitation of employees, who become stressed and depressed. In particular, it is also linked to the fact that employees work nights, to the fact that women working there arrive home late, and to the fact that workers smoke outside the building (often in the street). This all leads to social pressure. One of the participants had been asked to stop working by her fiancé (see testimony above). Another had to lie to her mother-in-law about the fact that she was working in a call centre for fear that she would stand in the way and hold her in poor regard.

34 Companies of this type generally prefer to recruit men because the work requires frequent travelling and sometimes physical effort.

Furthermore, these young employees must also deal with a lack of understanding among clients regarding the nature of the services offered by call centres. Some of these clients can even become aggressive, disagreeable, and awkward. Some customers, for example, confuse clairvoyance services and personal contact services and feel then can harass the operator.

The women interviewed were aware that they needed to strive to constantly keep up to date and improve their skills as the ICT sector is a fast-changing sector characterised by important changes. They were aware that meeting standard job requirements (including ICT training and related skills) was no longer enough.

The main advantage of working in the ICT sector for the women interviewed was the opportunity to be part of a leading-edge industry that was traditionally reserved for men and also the opportunity to demonstrate their worth and to earn recognition for their skills, intelligence and *savoir-faire* while at the same time benefiting from the innovative projects and developments in this field.

To make working in this sector more attractive for women, the young women interviewed suggested offering more guarantees of job stability, more free time by improving the organisation of working hours, more opportunities to express their opinions and demonstrate their abilities, and finally, better pay.

6.3.3 Young women looking for work in the ICT sector

Most of the young women interviewed in the north-west and south of Tunisia and in the District of Tunis had a university qualification (a three-year qualification [*licence*], a four-year degree [*maîtrise*] or a master's degree) and were looking for their first job. The main reasons they gave for being unemployed despite numerous attempts to find a job were practically identical from one region to the next.

- Insufficient jobs to meet the demand. This was the main reason given. In the case of Tabarka, the shortage of jobs was attributed to the region's weak economy and the small number of companies that recruit young people specialised in ICT. The number of jobs on offer in Sfax, however, was also insufficient to match the demand from young ICT graduates, despite the region's strong economy.
- Preference for men. The unemployed women interviewed from both Sfax and Tunis thought that ICT companies preferred to hire men, mostly because it was easier for them to travel.
- Lack of correspondence between qualifications and market needs. Some of the participants in the discussion groups said that they were unemployed because their qualifications did not correspond to the requirements of the jobs on offer. This was the case of graduates who had studied languages and multimedia, a course that is still not well known in the market. These graduates have difficulty convincing employers during job interviews.
- Lack of correspondence between job and candidates' qualifications and competences. Many job vacancies bear no relationship to the graduates' qualifications or competences in terms of the work involved or pay offered. For example, one participant from Sfax, who had a four-year degree and a master's degree in multimedia studies rejected an offer from an employment placement agency to work as a medical secretary for TND 150 a month.
- Other reasons. A lack of information about vacancies, the demand for one or two years' experience (which they could not offer), poor language skills (which is often brought to their attention), and the fact that recruitment was often based on subjective criteria. Furthermore, some participants reported that they had failed to get a job at the end of a work placement programme or after an interview.

The effects of unemployment on their personal and family situations are the same as those described in the tourism sector. The personal effects are financial dependence and psychological problems such as disappointment, lack of confidence, etc. Within the family, tensions arise and family members and friends further weaken the already fragile nature of those who are unemployed by subjecting them to considerable pressure and blaming them for the situation they are in (their qualifications are of no use, they aren't trying hard enough, etc.). These effects were practically identical in the different regions, but they appeared to be more pronounced in isolated areas such as the north-west, where a lack of financial means limited women's ability to move around looking for a job.

'It's your decision not to work, if you wanted to, you could.'

'When you have a master's degree and are offered a job that pays TND 100, it's really humbling, humiliating and depressing.'

The young women interviewed used a range of methods to find a job. The methods were practically identical in the groups from the three areas (north-west Tunisia, Sfax and Tunis). They were also identical to the methods used by the young women in the tourism sector, namely, registration with employment agencies and the National Executive Employment Office, advertisements in the press and on the Internet, work placement programmes, competitive examinations, interviews, training, microcredits, cold calling, etc. When they see that these methods are unsuccessful, some of the graduates decide to continue their studies while others take on small temporary jobs while waiting for

something to their satisfaction. They continue their job-hunting efforts and also try to get an influential person from among their family and acquaintances to recommend them to an employer.

In the women's opinion, employers basically demand experience, high-level competences, mobility, availability, motivation, communication skills and the ability to work in a team. Furthermore, women are expected to be friendly and to have a good appearance. Overall, the women interviewed were of the opinion that they did not meet the requirements of employers, particularly with respect to work experience and language skills, and particularly in the north-west region. Finally, they also believed that their qualifications were not matched to the needs of the labour market. It should be noted that in Tunis, which has a more favourable economic and social climate, some of the young women who had just graduated as engineers and had not been unemployed for a long time were more confident than women from other regions and said that they were ready to take up the challenge and to respond to the demands of employers.

The participants also said that a distinction was made between women and men (in favour of men), particularly during recruitment. Indeed, in their opinion, some job offers and competitive examinations were restricted to men, even though this is illegal. While considerable importance is generally attached to applicants' curriculum vitae and consequently to their skills and knowledge, for certain jobs in the telecommunications and technical service sectors, employers prefer to recruit men because of the cultural associations between men and technology. Other employers prefer to recruit women because they are more flexible and particularly because they are less demanding when it comes to pay. Women are generally offered lower wages/salaries than men are. Furthermore, employers appear to behave differently towards women: they tend to be more neglectful of them, even when they are more competent than their male colleagues.

Most of the participants in the three regions surveyed would like to work in the ICT field because it was what they had studied. The unemployed women in Tabarka, however, are prepared to change fields if they are unable to find a job in the ICT sector as their situation is very precarious because they have been looking for a job for a long time. The most important thing for them is to find a job.

The computer studies graduates from Sfax also want to work in the ICT sector and they do not think that they will have any difficulty doing this. One of the participants also mentioned financial constraints.

'I would love to work in an ICT company. But for young women with experience, it is practically impossible to satisfy the conditions for starting a good business, even with support from the Tunisian Solidarity Bank. Apart from the cost of the project, which is around TND 150 000, you have to deposit an additional TND 25 000 in a blocked account!

In Tunis, the participants seem to be in less of a hurry; they want to work in the ICT sector and prefer to improve their skills by studying and working at the same time.

'Of course I want to work in my field, I'm all for innovation and there is innovation in new technologies. My aim is to continue studying until I get a degree in engineering. I don't want to stop at the level of a BTS.'

The concessions that the women are willing to make to get a job vary from one region to the next. In Tabarka, they would accept a relatively low salary with respect to their qualifications and competences, but only at the beginning of their careers in the hope that their situation would improve. They would also agree to be somewhat mobile and to be flexible in terms of working hours. In Sfax, the women would be willing to make concessions in the area of pay and number of working hours but they are not willing to travel long distances. Finally, in Tunis, the women said they would work overtime and accept a relatively low salary with respect to their expectations and the value of their qualifications in order to advance their careers. Generally speaking, the concessions that the women were willing to make in the different regions were similar in terms of pay and working hours but not in terms of mobility. While the majority of women in north-west Tunisia and Tunis were willing to be mobile, most of those in Sfax were not willing to travel, particularly long distances.

Most of the women interviewed agreed on the concessions that they would not be willing to make. They all said that they would not tolerate being mistreated, disrespected or sexually harassed; nor would they agree to work for nothing, without a contract or with a false contract so that the employer could benefit from government subsidies, with nothing in return for them.

According to the women interviewed, there are many measures that could be taken to improve women's chances of finding a job. The answers given in the different regions were complementary. The women from the north-west suggested:

- providing young graduates with better training by improving the information available about job demand and work placement and employment programmes;

- helping them to gain professional experience;
- evaluating existing employment programmes and analysing how they help women and the ICT sector, as well as implementing control mechanisms to prevent these programmes from being misused;
- making recruitment more objective by giving priority to competitive examinations.

The young women looking for work in Sfax stressed the need for improved access to credit for women and the importance of transparency in placement agencies, which they said should also take into account how long job seekers had been unemployed.

In Tunis, the participants thought that it was first necessary to change people's mentality so that women would be seen as capable and competent. They would then like to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their competences on the job and to benefit from work-based training. They also believed it was important to reduce the amount of experience demanded by employers.

'Women have so far demonstrated their abilities in the area of education. All they need now is to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in the professional field.'

6.4 SUMMARY

6.4.1 General employment situation in the ICT companies surveyed

- On analysing the activities of the companies surveyed for the current study, it was seen that almost half of the companies were active in at least two areas. The largest subsector was the call centre business, which is an emerging sector with a strong potential for job creation. The second largest subsector was the IT and related services sector, which encompasses companies offering services in computer equipment, diverse IT services, IT equipment, business and management engineering and system and network integration. The telecommunications sector was the third largest sector and encompassed the country's two telephone operators (the biggest employers in the sector) and telecommunications engineering companies.
- An analysis of the distribution of jobs by subsector shows that the telecommunications sector offers good job prospects as it provided almost 60% of the jobs analysed yet accounted for barely 8.4% of all the companies surveyed. The second and third largest sources of work were call centres and IT companies, which provided 19.3% and 12.6% of all jobs, respectively.
- Most of the workers in this sector are under 30 years old because 70% of the jobs have been created in the last 10 years and mostly require personnel with recent qualifications in IT and telecommunications.
- The majority of employees (over 75%) in the ICT sector have higher education.

6.4.2 Employment situation in the ICT sector by gender

- The survey showed that 41% of the workers in the ICT sector are women³⁵. Most of the employees in this sector are university graduates, who are in their majority (60%) female. Nonetheless, the question remains as to whether women are well represented or under-represented in this sector. The answer depends on the angle at which the question is analysed. If we consider that women account for 26% of the entire Tunisian workforce, the conclusion would be that they are well represented in the ICT sector. However, if we consider that 46% of all ICT graduates are women and that only 41% of the workers in the sector are women, the opposite conclusion could possibly be drawn.
- On comparing the education level of the workers in this sector by gender, it was seen that there were few differences, although there was a higher proportion of men than women with vocational training.
- Engineers and middle managers account for a large share of the workers in this sector. In our sample, executives, senior managers, middle managers and professionals accounted for almost 72% of all employees. Nonetheless, men held most of the high-level jobs while women were concentrated in the low-level jobs. The analysis of job distribution by level and gender showed a clear difference between sexes, with men occupying 76% of executive/senior management positions, almost 65% of middle management positions and 62% of professional positions. Women, in contrast were more numerous in the category of skilled workers or unskilled workers working at call centres.
- Unequal access to supervisory and management positions cannot be explained by a lack of qualifications or competences among women. The explanation might lie in the existence of a certain level of discrimination against women, not only in the ICT sector, but also in the labour market in general³⁶. Furthermore, the work in call centres is

³⁵ This figure is an overestimate of the true participation rate of women in the sector as we excluded ICT companies with fewer than 15 employees (mostly small companies run by men) from the survey. According to a recent study by the Ministry of Communication Technologies (2008), the estimated rate of female employment in ICT companies is 27%.

³⁶ According to the Global Employment Trends for Women report published by the International Labour Office in 2008, the global unemployment rate among female graduates was 32% while that among male graduates, even though they were much more numerous, was much lower, at 14%.

mundane, unskilled, and held in low esteem. The women in these centres rarely occupy positions higher than that of team manager.

- The largest department in the ICT companies surveyed was the production department, which provided 72% of all jobs. The second and third largest departments, respectively, were the administrative support department (9.3% of all jobs) and the sales and marketing department (9.1%). The distribution of work by department and gender was quite balanced, although there were some differences, with relatively fewer women in the production department and more in the sales and marketing, administrative support, and finance and accounting departments.
- According to the women working in the sector, there was some discrimination against women for certain jobs. Some of them said that companies automatically assumed that women could not do certain operational or technical jobs that required full-time availability and that it was easier for them to specialise in routine jobs (management, finances, accounting, etc.) or in sales. In these fields, women are considered to be more patient with clients and are preferred to men because they are renowned to be more reliable, responsible, trustworthy and honest.

6.4.3 Women and changes in staff numbers in the ICT sector

- The survey showed that employment in the ICT sector had grown by almost 13% with respect to the previous year. This increase had benefited women more than men as they filled 54.3% of the positions that had become available. Half of the jobs were created in the call centre sector, which mainly recruits female university graduates or women still in training (64% of new recruits in call centres are women).
- It appears that the sector is in good health and anticipates further growth as almost 68% of the companies interviewed planned to continue to invest and create new jobs in the coming 12 months. These new jobs will primarily be jobs for skilled workers, mostly in call centres.
- The main problem facing young, unemployed women is a lack of financial autonomy and their dependence on their families. This seems to be the greatest burden for these women. Disappointment leads members of the family to underrate the value of the education they have invested in, often leading to considerable social pressure and, more importantly, a tendency for the family to blame the women for the situation in which they find themselves.
- Unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, also has harmful effects on the mental and physical health of women looking for work in the sector. Other consequences are constant stress and sometimes even feelings of humiliation. This frustration is more pronounced in the north-west of Tunisia, and particularly among women from rural environments, many of whom have been unemployed for over two years. The time required to find a job in Tunis appears to be shorter.

6.4.4 Obstacles to the employment of women

- The ICT sector is a very attractive sector for women, although over half of the companies interviewed considered that they had more male than female applicants. Call centres and Internet service providers are considered to be the most attractive companies for women.
- The search for a job in the sector is a long process. The women from the discussion groups said that they spared no effort in looking for work. They start by registering with placement agencies, consulting advertisements in the press and on the Internet and also posting advertisements themselves. They also contact companies directly and participate in work placement programmes to gain experience and facilitate their integration into the labour market.
- Almost 75% of ICT companies advertise vacancies in the press while almost 58% rely on personal contacts. Under half of the companies use the services of employment agencies and only 14.7% use their contacts with educational centres. Online job applications are used by 34.7% of the companies interviewed.
- According to the employers interviewed, there is no discrimination between men and women during recruitment. Nonetheless, the study showed that 40% of companies specify the gender of the workers they are looking to recruit.
- It is difficult to find a job in certain regions, even for computer graduates. There is still a strong 'family clan' mentality and information about vacancies is often confined to a small circle. An additional problem, of course, is that there is a general preference for hiring men.
- The young women interviewed said that the fact that companies demanded experience was a difficult obstacle to overcome, particularly for those looking for their first job. Furthermore, they tend to think that it is easier for a man than a woman to find a job. When it comes to choosing between a man and a woman with the same or similar qualifications, it is often the man who is recruited. Nonetheless, the women's accounts also revealed a tendency, albeit less pronounced, for ICT companies and in particular those looking to fill positions requiring specific qualifications, to base their decisions on the applicants' curriculum vitae.
- The main selection criteria applied when hiring women are the same as those used for applicants in general, regardless of gender. These are primarily discipline, qualifications, diplomas/degrees, experience, ICT competence and language skills.
- Factors such as religion, marital status, and having young children are not considered to be crucial by employers when recruiting new employees. Nonetheless, marital status is important for 30.4% of companies when recruiting a woman but for only 17.6% when recruiting workers in general. Other important factors taken into account when

recruiting women are having young children (29% for women vs 17.8% for workers in general) and to a lesser extent religion (10.8% vs 6.6%).

- Furthermore, because most jobs in the ICT sector involve contact with a machine (a computer) rather than with people, some companies consider that wearing a veil does not interfere with the company's activities and is not a major obstacle when recruiting new employees. Nonetheless, it was mentioned that the veil was not desirable for certain jobs such as those in marketing and sales.
- Opinions were divided regarding women's attitude to pay. Some companies considered that for high-level positions, women, just like men, negotiated their salaries well, particularly if they had experience. In contrast, for jobs requiring few qualifications and positions for new recruits, it was easier to negotiate with women than with men.

6.4.5 Training, competences and needs

- Companies generally recognise that young recruits have a good level of basic education and training. The reservations mentioned were mainly related to the need to develop management, language and communication skills.
- Companies have more problems trying to recruit experienced workers. The scarcity of project managers is a particular problem as they are required to have technical qualifications combined with team management and planning skills, with particular importance attached to skills related to high-technology solutions and applications.
- The women interviewed think that it is important to have a diploma/degree in order to get a job but that this alone is not sufficient. Apart from training and field-specific competences, which are some of the requirements, they are aware that they need to strive to keep up to date and constantly improve their skills. To be hired or indeed to succeed at work, women must also be able to do different jobs at the same time, master languages and computer skills, have a good level of general knowledge and be elegant, friendly, polite, etc.
- Young women with training in ICT or related fields believe that the education level in their area is generally very satisfactory. For those who were working, opinions on how useful their training was varied depending on the type of training and the subsector in which they were employed. Those who had studied ICT believed that their training had helped them to find a job and that some of the skills they had learnt (communication skills, French, and basic computer skills) were of use to them in their jobs. Nonetheless, they gave the impression that they were frustrated by the fact that their skills were underutilised. Those working in call centres, in contrast, who were from different training fields, said that they did not have the opportunity to put into practice what they had learnt.
- Most of the companies interviewed said that they organised training for the majority of new recruits, regardless of gender. Most of the training offered is conducted on the job during working hours. The call centre sector automatically offers training to all employees, regardless of gender. Nonetheless, some companies from the IT, computer networks and telecommunications sector send engineers abroad for training in state-of-the-art technologies for which there is a shortage of specialised trainers in Tunisia. It is mostly men who benefit from these programmes. Women and particularly single women still require authorisation from their parents to travel abroad.

6.4.6 Obstacles facing women and human resources policies

- Most companies do not consider it necessary to implement specific measures to favour the employment of women as they believe that the most important recruitment criteria are qualifications and competences. The benefits that companies would like to receive in return for hiring women are tax breaks and other incentives and help from the state to pay maternity leave.
- Overall, the general tendency shows that companies are increasingly appreciative of women's work and even prefer them to men in terms of efficiency, professionalism and commitment. Companies also recognise that women are patient and that they had a more positive impact on the image of the company. Nonetheless, just 14% of companies consider that women are more qualified than men.
- Of the companies interviewed, 30% considered that female employees caused organisational problems because of absenteeism. The employers also think that women became less productive and thus more costly when they have to look after children, particularly during the maternity period.
- To improve their chances on the labour market, women are prepared to make certain concessions as long as these do not affect their dignity or person. The concessions mentioned, which varied just marginally depending on individual circumstances, were related to pay, flexibility in terms of working hours, travel, etc. They specified that the concessions they were willing to make should never exceed a limit beyond which they would damage their reputation or detract from the value of their degrees, and that if they accepted them, it would be in the hope that their situation would improve. In contrast, they were intransigent on the issue of tolerating sexual harassment or accepting a job without a contract or with a false contract that only worked to the employers' benefit.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the employment situation in Tunisia shows that women are increasingly participating in the labour market. Nonetheless, the participation rates are still below the desired levels and indeed the levels that women themselves would like to see. Despite the progress that has been made in women's employment, with female labour force participation rates increasing from 20% in 1984 to almost 26% today, it cannot be overlooked that the level is still low in view of the efforts that have been made at personal, family and state levels, and particularly in view of the unquestionable achievements that have been made by women in terms of success at school and the attainment of higher education qualifications.

'School enrolment rates are the same for girls as for boys, girls do better in their studies and outnumber male students at university, but they are clearly more vulnerable to unemployment, and even pay discrimination when they do find a job.' (INS, 2008)

In Tunisia, women are better represented in the public sector than in the private sector. It is important to guarantee equal employment opportunities for women in the private sector and thus ensure returns to investment in the education and training of women at both microeconomic and macroeconomic levels. This is particularly important in view of the shrinking role of the private sector and the increasing importance of the public sector. The aim of this study was to analyse the employment opportunities and obstacles experienced by women in two prominent sectors of the Tunisian economy: the hotel industry and the ICT industry. Using strategies adapted to a gender-based analysis of the labour market in Tunisia, this study sought to highlight and explore issues specific to these two industries with respect to the supply and demand for female labour and the opportunities and obstacles faced by women in these sectors.

7.1 JOB CREATION POTENTIAL FOR WOMEN IN THE TOURISM AND ICT SECTORS

The hotel and ICT sectors are two of the most dynamic sectors in Tunisia. According to the ONTT (2008), 11.5% of Tunisia's working population is employed in the tourism sector, which, in turn, has a knock-on effect on other sectors such as air transport, crafts, trade and building and public works. While the ICT sector is a less important source of jobs, it is expected to grow at an estimated annual rate of 17% and in 2008, it accounted for 10% of the country's GDP.

Tunisia has invested in tourism as it is aware that it provides a means of fighting against unemployment. Nevertheless, Tunisian women have not succeeded in gaining access to the hotel industry on an equal footing to men. Indeed, according to the survey, women represent only 22.5% of the total of employees in the sector, less than the female labour force activity rate at the national level (25.6%). In the ICT sector, in contrast, based on the results of our survey, women account for 41% of the workforce, which is well above the national average. This share, however, falls to 35% if we exclude call centres. Furthermore, this participation rate of 41% detected by our survey would appear to be an overestimate because ICT companies with fewer than 15 employees (mostly small companies run by men) were excluded from the survey³⁷.

The ICT sector has a greater job creation potential than the hotel sector and does not seem to be as affected by the crisis. Indeed, among the hotels surveyed whose staff numbers had changed in the 12 months prior to the survey, the overall result in job was a reduction of 1.4%. This contrasts with the situation in the ICT sector, where jobs had grown by 13% with respect to the previous year. Only a third of the hotels surveyed planned to step up investments and create new jobs in the coming year compared to two thirds of the companies in the ICT sector. Furthermore, the expected rate of job creation for the 12 months following the survey was 3% for the hotel sector but 6.8% for the ICT sector.

Based on the results of the survey, the ICT sector would appear to offer women greater job prospects than the hotel sector. Proportionally, there are more women in the former than in the latter. According to data from the companies surveyed, the jobs created in the ICT sector in the 12 months prior to the survey went to a marginally higher proportion of women than men (54% vs 46%), while those created in the hotel industry went mostly to men (73% vs 27%). Nonetheless, it should be noted that over half of the ICT jobs were in call centres and were assigned to a greater proportion of women than men (64% vs 36%). Employment opportunities for women, thus, are not equally distributed among the different subsectors of the ICT industry, which there is a tendency towards greater horizontal segregation and gender stereotyping.

³⁷ According to a recent study by the Ministry of Communication Technologies (2008), the estimated rate of female employment in ICT companies is 27%, hence close to the national female employment rate (26%).

Horizontal segregation, however, seems to be more common in the hotel industry. The distribution of jobs by department and gender shows that there is a greater gendered division of labour in the hotel sector than in the ICT sector. In the ICT sector, women are relatively well represented in all departments, although they have a slightly greater presence in departments such as sales and marketing, administrative support, and finance and accounting. In the hotel industry, in contrast, over 70% of the female employees work in the housekeeping department, where they account for 56% of all staff. Over 93% of the jobs in the food and beverage department (restaurants, kitchens, and bars) are held by men; the corresponding figures for the maintenance and finance/accounting departments are 99.6% and 81.4%, respectively. It should be noted that this type of gender discrimination in the hotel industry is not limited to Tunisia. In France, for example, 70% of middle managers in the hotel and restaurant business and 75% of chefs and commis chefs are men³⁸ (Marcon, 2010).

Vertical segregation, in contrast, appears to be more pronounced in the ICT sector. While women are concentrated in skilled jobs, just 3% are in senior management positions (contrasting with 7% of men). The corresponding percentages for women and men in middle-management positions are 30% and 38%, respectively. In the hotel industry, there are slightly more men than women in executive and senior management positions; women, in contrast, outnumber men in unskilled jobs. The differences between men and women at other levels are minimal.

While there are employment opportunities for women in both the hotel and ICT sectors, the chances of finding a job in the ICT sector are only slightly higher than those of finding a job in general, and they are even lower in the hotel sector. Furthermore, companies recruit women for female-gendered jobs, which are often inferior to positions occupied by men. Considering that young women in Tunisia today are highly educated, this situation cannot be explained by differences in competences between women and men. Indeed, both sectors attract young people: almost 60% of the hotels and almost 75% of the ICT companies surveyed calculated that 50% or more of their employees were under 30.

7.2 THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON FEMALE EMPLOYMENT IN THE TOURISM AND ICT SECTORS

On analysing job distribution by education level in the companies surveyed, it was estimated that 11% of those employed in the hotel industry have higher education, which is lower than the national average of 14.2%. On comparing the situation by gender, a marginally higher proportion of men than women (11.5% vs 9.9%) had higher education. The corresponding percentages for those with vocational training were 47.1% for men and 38.3% for women. Over half (53.6%) of the women employed in the hotel industry have at most secondary education; the corresponding figure for men is 41.4%. Considering the education level of young women in Tunisia, it can be concluded that the hotel industry employs women with lower-than-average education. This is not the case in the ICT sector, where most employees are university graduates, who, in turn, are in their majority (59%) female. Of all the women employed in the ICT sector, 75.6% have higher education; the corresponding figure for men is 72.6%.

Young women account for only a very small proportion (approximately 20%) of all the students in Tunisia's public hotel training schools, which prepare most of the future employees for this sector. Yet if one considers that 54% of all the women working in the hotels surveyed had secondary, primary or even less education, it is evident that a large proportion of the women graduating from the hotel training schools are not working in the hotel industry (either because they cannot find a job in the sector or because they have opted out of the labour market). Women would also appear to be under-represented in the ICT sector (where they hold 41% of all jobs) if we consider that 46% of ICT university students are female. If we also consider that women, even those with better qualifications than men, are under-represented at the different job levels within this sector – 76% of executive/senior management positions, 65% of middle management positions, and 62% of professional positions are occupied by men – and that, regardless of their education level, they outnumber men in skilled or low-skilled jobs, mostly in call centres, it would appear that neither education nor training have an evident impact on women's participation in the ICT or indeed the hotel sector. That said, in Tunisia, there is a positive correlation between education (at all levels) and participation in the labour market for both sexes, but particularly for women. In 2007, for example, just 16% of the female workforce was uneducated while 56% had higher education. The corresponding figures for men were 70% and 74%, respectively (INS, 2008).

Education, thus, has an impact though contrasted one on female employment. The benefits appear to be greater in the ICT sector than in the hotel sector, which attracts fewer women and also women (and men) with lower qualifications. Considering that the rate of female employment is highest among women with university qualifications, it is logical that the ICT sector employs more women than the hotel sector as many of the competences required are acquired through third-level education. That said, considering that many women in this sector hold jobs for which they are overqualified, one might wonder if education has a positive impact on the rate of participation of women in the labour market in general or rather if education increases their chances of finding a job because of the skills and qualifications they have acquired. In other words, does education make women more active in the labour market or does specific education increase their employability? Most of the young women working in call centres believed that their qualifications had

38 Nonetheless, over two-thirds of waiter work is done by women.

helped them to find a job but felt that there was no association between what they had learned and the job they were doing.

Nonetheless, there are still more illiterate female workers than male workers in Tunisia (according to the INS, 12.7% of Tunisia's workforce was illiterate in 2007) and also more women without any education (INS, 2007). These figures demonstrate that there is still a considerable number of unskilled and/or illiterate female workers in Tunisia, which, in turn, means that there are more women than men in unskilled, poorly paid jobs. At the same time, there are more female than male workers with secondary and particularly higher education.

While unemployment rates increase with education level for both sexes reflecting the labour market tensions, nonetheless, more women are unemployed than men, regardless of education level. In conclusion, education has a greater impact on women's participation in the workforce than on men's. Despite this, women have greater difficulty accessing the labour market and when they do succeed, their qualifications are less highly regarded by employers. Indeed, women are often given inferior jobs, even though they have a higher education level than their male counterparts. Considering that young women in Tunisia today are well educated and based on the information provided by the companies surveyed, it would appear that the lower rate of women's participation in the hotel and ICT sectors in Tunisia and their under-representation in managerial positions cannot be explained by their lack of preparation compared to men. The explanation would appear to lie in the existence of a certain degree of discrimination against women, not only in the ICT and hotel sectors, but also in the labour market in general.

7.3 WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT: OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The relatively low proportion of women workers in the hotel industry may seem puzzling given that hotel work is particularly attractive to young women, as was confirmed during the group discussion sessions. Nonetheless, there are several sociocultural factors, particularly related to the prevailing mentality in Tunisian society that can explain this apparent contradiction. Firstly, women are deterred by the negative image associated with working women in Tunisian society. The image is particularly negative in the hotel industry, where there is a clear preference for hiring men for the majority of jobs. Most of the vacancies and training opportunities for women in this sector are in the housekeeping department. The strong association between women and housekeeping work explains women's reticence to work in the sector and also their low numbers in other departments.

They do not apply for jobs in departments that require them to work nights due to transport difficulties. They also avoid jobs in which there is a risk of sexual harassment from male colleagues (e.g., jobs in kitchens or bars). Despite its potential as a service sector employer, thus, the hotel industry still offers few career opportunities for women and employs low-skilled women for few years. Because of the negative image associated with women in the hotel industry, women often leave their jobs when they get married and as a result, hotels do not consider it worthwhile investing more than is necessary in on-the-job training. Nevertheless, the young female graduates we interviewed from hotel training schools reported that they were extremely interested in working in this sector and also expressed their frustration with not being able to find a suitable job.

Women with higher education are strongly attracted to the ICT sector. As an explanation for the poor participation of women with third-level ICT qualifications in the ICT sector and the persistence of vertical segregation, the companies interviewed mentioned that women's lack of mobility poses a barrier to their recruitment and promotion within the company and also to their access to positions of responsibility. Some companies mentioned that women actually avoided such positions because of their double workload (at work and at home) and the lack of support systems to help with childcare and household chores. The employers also stated that women became less productive and thus more costly when they had to look after young children and particularly during the maternity period. This does not explain, however, why women's work is more highly regarded in the call centre sector.

Discriminatory employment practices still exist at the recruitment stage, with almost 60% of hotels specifying the gender of the person they are looking to recruit, even though this is illegal. The corresponding percentage in ICT companies is 40%. Young women looking for work often use employment agencies or advertisements in the press. In their opinion, information about vacancies is not always available to interested parties but rather limited to a small circle. Indeed, most of the companies interviewed (84% of hotels and almost 58% of ICT companies) said that they relied on personal contacts to recruit new employees. The young women interviewed would prefer more transparent recruitment procedures, or even competitive recruitment examinations.

The main determinants of women's participation in the hotel and ICT sectors are largely identical to those that affect recruitment in general. Nonetheless, there are some differences such as availability to work nights, marital status, and having young children. Hotels appear to have adapted to the difficulties that women have in terms of working nights and consider it normal to allow them to go home at a reasonable time. It seems that both hotels and ICT companies prefer

to recruit single women rather than married women as they have fewer time constraints. They consider that married women have more family obligations and thus cause more organisational problems. Job loss is most common in married women, particularly when they have young children, due to absenteeism. This demonstrates just how difficult it is for married women to balance family and work.

Transport and accommodation problems also contribute to the difficulties that women (particularly those living in rural environments) face in the labour market. An additional problem is the concentration of tourism activities in certain parts of the country. Tunisia's tourism industry is concentrated in the centre-east of the country, along the south-east coast and in the region of Nabeul/Hammamet. The ICT industry, in contrast, is mainly located in the urban centre of the District of Tunis.

With the exception of organisational problems related to availability and lack of qualifications, women's work is not considered to be problematic. Women are appreciated for their patience and the role they play in portraying a good image of the company. Over half of the hotels thought that women were more suited to working with clients than men and almost 47% considered that they were willing to accept lower pay. Nonetheless, only 9.8% of respondents considered that women were more qualified than men and 36% had difficulties finding women with the necessary qualifications and skills. Most of the ICT companies interviewed recognise the same qualities in women as those in the tourism sector (their patience and their role in improving the image of the company). Some employers consider that women perform better than men in terms of efficiency, professionalism and commitment. Nonetheless, just 14% consider that women are more qualified than men and 30% think that women cause organisational problems due to absenteeism.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations, which were drawn up in consultation with the Tunisian consultative group for the Women and Work project, relate to women's employment both in the private sector in general and in the tourism and ICT sectors in particular.

General recommendations

1. Improve compliance with general labour laws and legal provisions relating to maternity protection and career plans for married women and mothers; ensure compliance with legislation prohibiting job advertisements excluding women in employment agencies and companies (Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, ANETI).
2. Organise awareness campaigns in favour of gender equality and against sexual harassment in the workplace (Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, Tunisian Union for Industry, Trade and Crafts (Union tunisienne de l'industrie, du commerce et de l'artisanat – UTICA), Tunisian General Labour Union (Union générale tunisienne du travail – UGTT)).
3. Mainstream gender analysis across all sectors and design and implement systems to collect and process gender-disaggregated statistics.
4. Protect against gender discrimination to satisfy the employment demands of both young men and women (Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, ANETI).
5. Organise open days in education and training centres in collaboration with professional organisations to evaluate the competences of young graduates; increase awareness of employers' needs and the 'products' offered by education and training centres, and provide better guidance to students regarding choice of study (professional associations, UTICA, teaching and training institutes).

Recommendations for the hotel industry

Education and training

1. In order to reduce dropout rates and increase returns to investment in the education and training of women and men, implement a two-week induction and career guidance week targeting young women in all hotel training centres and institutes to increase awareness of training prospects from the moment they become part of the vocational training system (vocational training centres, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment).
2. Increase the focus on practical skills in higher education tourism courses to align training with the realities of the sector; increase post-baccalaureate qualifications (BTS) in tourism (Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment).
3. Encourage the recruitment of women (with the establishment of minimum quotas) to participate in work-based training programmes in hotels to provide them with experience in the sector, facilitate their subsequent access and provide them with the opportunity to try jobs traditionally reserved for men; promote the benefits of working in the food and beverage department (vocational training centres and institutions, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, Tunisian Federation of Hotels).

Employment

4. Promote a positive image of women in the hotel industry in society and strengthen initiatives by sector representatives in this area (Tunisian Federation of Hotels, UTICA, civil society).
5. Improve working hours to facilitate the balance between work and family life and ensure that mothers remain in their jobs (employers).
6. Organise collective transport for workers by types of jobs/working times and create residences for women and men who have no means of getting home or who live far from their place of work (government, Ministry of Transport).
7. Introduce tax breaks and other incentives to encourage hotels in the private sector to hire more women (government).

Recommendations for the ICT sector

Education and training

1. Develop campaigns to encourage female secondary school graduates to study ICT and inform them about the sector (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, National ICT Federation).
2. Establish close cooperative ties between teaching and training institutions in the different fields of ICT and the profession to ensure gender equality within the context of a joint training-employment strategy (Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, National ICT Federation).
3. Develop profession-specific training modules to strengthen project management skills among young women with ICT qualifications (Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, National ICT Federation).
4. Promote work-based training programmes, particularly targeting women and jobs traditionally reserved for men (Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, vocational training centres and institutions).
5. Encourage companies to take on female students in work placement programmes (with the establishment of minimum quotas) and help young women to participate in these programmes (vocational training centres and institutions, professional organisations).

Employment

6. Inform young women about the different employment support policies that exist, particularly in the ICT sector; this information could be made available through leaflets or other means and given to young women by ANETI, employment agencies, etc. (Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, Ministry of Higher Education).
7. Design campaigns to attract women to higher positions within the company, in particular technical and decision-making positions (National ICT Federation, Ministry of Higher Education).
8. Develop services with medium and high added value such as hotlines (advice and engineering) (skills levels 2 and 3) to take advantage of available skills and develop new skills (management, engineering, health) and thus prevent the accumulation of young women with higher education in low-level positions in call centres (employers, Ministry of Communication Technologies).
9. Promote entrepreneurship with a view to fostering telework and create company support programmes and expertise partnerships to help female entrepreneurs, particularly in rural Tunisia where there are few opportunities to work in ICT companies (Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, Ministry of Trade and Crafts, UTICA).
10. Guarantee a minimum quota of administrative and middle and senior management positions to be occupied by women (positive discrimination) (National ICT Federation).
11. Introduce objective recruitment criteria (competences, length of time unemployed, etc.) in employment agencies (ANETI).
12. Improve working hours in ICT companies (particularly in call centres) to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family for both men and women (employers).
13. Improve society's image of women working in call centres (UTICA, UGTT, civil society).
14. Introduce tax breaks and other incentives to encourage ICT companies in the private sector to hire women (government).

Recommendations for donors

International donors are also responsible for promoting gender equality in their actions. With respect to the role of the EU or other donors in Tunisia, the following recommendations are made.

1. Include gender mainstreaming in employment projects or sectoral approaches with a particular emphasis on active employment measures.
2. Mainstream gender analysis across all sectors and help to implement a system for collecting and processing gender-disaggregated data.
3. Implement employment programmes targeting sectors in which women are under-represented (specific actions).
4. Promote social partnership in all programmes to facilitate the transition from education and training to work.
5. Include specific indicators in all programmes to measure progress made in gender equality.

ACRONYMS

ANETI	National Agency for Employment and Self-Employment (Agence nationale pour l'emploi et le travail indépendant)
BTP	Vocational training certificate (brevet de technicien professionnel)
BTS	Higher vocational training certificate (brevet de technicien spécialisé)
CAP	Vocational aptitude certificate (certificat d'aptitude professionnelle)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CREDIF	Centre for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women (Centre de recherches, d'études, de documentation et d'information sur la femme)
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
ICT	Information and communication technology
INS	National Statistics Institute (Institut national de la statistique)
IT	Information technology
MAFFEPA	Ministry for Women, the Family, Childhood and the Elderly (Ministère des Affaires de la Femme, de la Famille, de l'Enfance et des Personnes âgées)
ONEQ	National Observatory of Employment and Qualifications (Observatoire national de l'emploi et des qualifications)
ONTT	National Office of the Tunisian Tourism (Office national du tourisme tunisien)
TND	Tunisian dinar
UGTT	Tunisian General Labour Union (Union générale tunisienne du travail)
UTICA	Tunisian Union for Industry, Trade and Crafts (Union tunisienne de l'industrie, du commerce et de l'artisanat)

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