



# POLICIES FOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT JORDAN

AN ETF **TORINO PROCESS**  
ASSESSMENT

## Disclaimer

This report was prepared in the framework of the Torino Process 2018-20 by Mihaylo Milovanovitch, ETF.

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# PREAMBLE

The European Training Foundation (ETF) assessment provides an external, forward-looking analysis of the country's human capital development issues and VET policy responses from a lifelong learning perspective. It identifies challenges related to education and training policy and practice that hinder the development and use of human capital. It takes stock of these challenges and puts forward recommendations on possible solutions to address them.

Such assessments are a key deliverable of the Torino Process, an initiative launched by the ETF in 2010 with the aim of providing a periodic review of vocational education and training (VET) systems in the wider context of human capital development and inclusive economic growth. In providing a high-quality assessment of VET policy from a lifelong learning perspective, the assessment process builds on four key principles: ownership, participation, and holistic and evidence-based analysis.

For the ETF, human capital development is about supporting countries to create lifelong learning systems that provide opportunities and incentives for people to develop their knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes throughout their lives in order to help them find employment, realise their potential and contribute to prosperous, innovative and inclusive societies.

The main purpose of these assessments is to provide a reliable source of information to enable the planning and monitoring of national education and training policies for human capital development, as well as offering a foundation for programming and policy dialogue in support of these policies by the European Union and other donors.

The ETF assessments rely on evidence from countries that is collected through a standardised reporting template (the National Reporting Framework – NRF) within a participatory process involving a wide variety of actors with a high degree of ownership. The findings and recommendations of the ETF assessments have been shared and discussed with national authorities and beneficiaries.

The assessment report starts with a brief description of the strategic plans and national policy priorities in Jordan (Chapter 1). It then presents an overview of issues related to the development and use of human capital in the country (Chapter 2), before moving on to an in-depth discussion of problems in this area that in the view of the ETF require immediate attention (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 sets out the overall conclusions of the analysis. The annexes provide additional information: a summary of the recommendations in the report (Annex 1) and an overview of Jordan's education and training system (Annex 2)

The Torino Process national report compiled by the country itself can be found here:

<https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/trp/torino-process-2018-2020-jordan-national-report>

This assessment was prepared by Mihaylo Milovanovitch, ETF Senior Specialist in VET Policies and Systems, based on the Torino Process national report and consultations with Jordanian stakeholders, including active international organisations and donors. ETF thanks all those who contributed to this consultation.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This European Training Foundation (ETF) assessment was prepared in 2020 on the basis of a national report produced by the national authorities of Jordan with the help of a standardised framework questionnaire (the National Reporting Framework – NRF).

The assessment process included an extensive phase of desk research based on information provided by Jordan in its Torino Process national report<sup>1</sup> and the preparation of an issues paper with an overview of themes for discussion in the assessment. These efforts were then finalised in consultations within the ETF.

Jordan is a country of 10 million inhabitants (10.1 million in 2019) with limited natural resources and a high degree of dependence on foreign assistance. In only a few years since 2015, the population of Jordan has increased by 9% because of a massive influx of refugees from neighbouring countries.

The population of Jordan is young. A sizeable share of the population (52.9% in 2019) is below the age of 25, and youth aged 15–24 account for 19.4% of the total population. However, a considerable proportion of these young people (38.1% in 2017) are not in employment, education or training. Another challenge for the economy is that only 34.3% of the working-age population is economically active, whereas 19.1% of them were unemployed in 2019.

Demographic and migration developments create economic pressures that have a negative impact on the country's economic development. Political instability in the region and its associated refugee flows are among the most significant factors to have an impact on the society and economy. This is because they complicate the pressing task of catering to the needs of a large, increasingly diverse group of vulnerable people who require attention, support, and sustainable policy solutions. The group also includes people living below the poverty line, who account for 16% of the Jordanian population. At the same time the need for employment among Jordanians, especially among young people, is increasing at a rate that exceeds the supply of jobs.

Jordan has put in place a range of strategies for social and economic development in all sectors under the responsibility of its government. The National Employment Strategy (NES), for example, commits to improving the standard of living for Jordanians through increased employment, wages and benefits and higher productivity. To this end, education and training providers are called to graduate a 'skilled and motivated labour force, armed with employable skills and technical know-how in demand by the labour market'. The Council of Ministers has also instigated a comprehensive implementation/action plan and an implementation team for the NES under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour, while the VET-related effort mostly focuses on governance-related reforms that include changes to the composition of the Employment, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ETVET) board and the inclusion of TVET providers in the system of accreditation under the responsibility of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education (AQACHEI). Broadly, the goal of the governance-related reforms is to raise the attractiveness of VET for Jordanians and boost work-based learning.

The National E-TVET Strategy 2014–2020, which links to the broader human capital development (HCD) commitments in the NES, covers five pillars: governance; the labour market relevance of

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<sup>1</sup> National report of Jordan, prepared in the framework of the Torino Process, 2020. Accessible at <https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/trp/torino-process-2018-2020-jordan-national-report>

education and training; the inclusion of women, youth, and people with disabilities; better monitoring systems; and sustainable funding for TVET.

At the time of this assessment, the strategic goals have been translated into several long-term reform undertakings. One of them is the development of the National Qualifications Framework or NQF (TVET qualification levels extend from level 2 to level 6 of the new 10-level NQF), while another is the establishment of national sector skills councils (SSCs) with the support of international donors (GIZ, ILO, EU and EBRD). The authorities have also embarked on building a labour market information system (LMIS) with the purpose of informing strategic decision-making in TVET. However, the most important governance-related change is the establishment of the Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission (TVSD Commission), which will replace the ETVET Council. The TVSD Commission will have its own council headed by the Minister for Labour and most of the council's members (8 of 14) will come from the private sector.

All HCD priorities and commitments are clearly dependent on a robust contribution of TVET to an ambitious national agenda for prosperity and economic advancement, and they are all based on an expectation that TVET can become a relevant, accessible and responsive segment of the country's skills development system. However, a number of challenges remain. Some are inherent to the TVET system, while others are external socio-demographic or political factors that bring considerable pressure to bear on the adjustment and modernisation of approaches to human capital development in Jordan, particularly in relation to TVET.

## Challenges for human capital development

Some of the more prominent challenges are posed by migrant and refugee flows, the limited continuity of (and progress with) reforms in education, and more recently the combined impact of school closures and the Covid-19 pandemic.

For years now, Jordan has been experiencing a tremendous influx of working-age people. In 2017, the total number of immigrants and refugees in Jordan was over 3.2 million, which was about one-third of the total population that year (10.05 million) and represented a 19% increase compared to 2010. Owing to its proximity to areas in turmoil, Jordan has been a traditional destination for refugees, mostly from Palestine, Iraq and Syria.

In this situation, a number of emerging challenges prevent migrants and refugees from contributing to the Jordanian economy and labour market to the fullest. One problem is the capacity of Jordan's public budget and its education and training system to absorb the vast amount of refugees and effectively address the diversity of their needs. Another problem is that immigration appears to deplete the stock of human capital available to the economy instead of replenishing it, as immigrants to Jordan are considerably less skilled than the Jordanians who leave the country in search of economic opportunities abroad. Finally, the majority of refugees and migrants in Jordan tend to find employment in the informal sector, which promotes informality as a widespread form of employment, helps to establish a norm of precarious working conditions (e.g. lower pay), and diminishes the attractiveness of employment in the private sector for jobseekers from Jordan.

To address these and other problems, Jordan has embarked on numerous reforms. Indeed, reforms in education and training have been a priority for the Jordanian authorities for several decades now, leading to considerable financial investments and tangible improvement in key areas of commitment under the Millennium Development Goals and now the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Although Jordan remains committed to the implementation of numerous reform initiatives in the area of human capital development, the country faces persistent challenges in the design and implementation of reforms, which may diminish their effectiveness, their sustainability, and the traction



they gain on the ground. The challenges include the sheer number of reform commitments, the centralised focus of reform plans, and – last but not least – the Syrian refugee crisis, which forces a shift in attention to the immediate, daily needs of the TVET system and away from longer-term aspirations for change.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on the country's challenges and aspirations for change. In mid-March, Jordan closed all education and training providers until further notice. According to a recent survey, some 78% of students are using distance learning opportunities and the Ministry of Education has also prepared to carry out school graduation exams (Tawjihi) online. Despite all efforts, however, the risk of disruptions to the proper operation and continuity of education and training remains, especially in areas where providers were already struggling with equity, quality and resource challenges before the pandemic.

## Key human capital development issues and policy responses

The assessment also discusses two additional challenges related to human capital in Jordan: skills mismatch arising from the rigidity of VET provision, and underutilisation of human capital and of opportunities for human capital development through VET. These challenges are assessed in greater detail because the ETF believes that they require immediate attention as major human capital-related constraints to growth and at the same time concern policy areas that Jordan has declared to be of strategic importance.

### Issue 1: Skills mismatch arising from the rigidity of VET provision and content

Data and analysis of the employment prospects of youth in Jordan suggest that education and training, in particular VET, hold the promise of a quicker transition to employment, a lower likelihood of becoming unemployed or inactive, a higher return on education investment, and better employment conditions in the case of employment in the private sector (OECD, 2018).

At the same time, the potential of VET to deliver on this positive outlook for graduates is contingent on additional factors, some of which seem to pose a long-standing challenge for Jordanian practitioners and policy-makers alike: the extent to which students are provided with practical experience during their VET studies, the proper and regular involvement of employers, the attraction of a more diverse selection of students in terms of socio-economic background and aptitude, etc. These challenges are aspects of the same underlying problem with which Jordan (and other countries for that matter) have struggled for some years now: most graduates in Jordan leave education and training without having acquired skills that are in demand in the labour market. This in turn harms their prospects for social and economic participation, limits the growth potential of the Jordanian economy, and hampers the development of the private sector and its capacity to create jobs.

The authorities in Jordan are well aware of the challenges and have designed several sets of measures to address them: boosting the availability of evidence on labour market needs for the purpose of VET planning and programme updates; introducing an education sector-wide framework of qualifications; promoting partnerships with the private sector; and undertaking efforts to introduce entrepreneurial learning in TVET to improve its labour market relevance.

The development of education and training databases and labour market information systems (LMISs) is among the most prominent policy responses to the challenge posed by the limited labour market relevance of VET in the country. However, the results of evidence collection efforts have not yet proven particularly effective in informing any improvement in VET policy and programme content, because the mechanisms for identifying and anticipating labour market needs are still largely disconnected from the education and training sector and there are no clear procedures or

mechanisms to initiate change on the basis of such labour market insights. Labour market evidence has also proven of limited use in raising the relevance of VET, because the process of updating VET training programmes and making their provision more flexible appears to be slow, loosely coordinated (see Section 3), and too burdensome to allow for a quick enough response to external demand.

As for the National Qualifications Framework, the fragmentation of governance remains a major challenge. Jordan still struggles to make the transition to a sector-wide quality assurance and accreditation system that will replace the current three subsystems<sup>2</sup> and ensure the flexibility and adequate responsiveness of education and training to external demand.

A third group of policy responses to boost the relevance of TVET and adjust the content of its programmes is the promotion of partnerships with the private sector. Although employers are represented on the boards of directors and governing councils, they are still far behind in playing the leadership role that the various strategies aspire for them to take in VET governance, policy-setting and programme planning<sup>3</sup>. For one reason, there is a degree of reluctance on the part of authorities to properly involve employers. Also, the bodies representing the private sector do not necessarily capture the full range of employer needs. This is because they are mostly geared towards the needs of larger enterprises, whereas Jordan's economy is dominated by small and micro-enterprises of less than 20 employees.

Finally, Jordan is mobilising entrepreneurial learning (EL) to improve the labour market relevance of its education and training system. By identifying EL as a policy response to the limited relevance of education and training, Jordan is following a major international trend. However, there are also risk factors that may impede the effectiveness of these and other EL-related policies. The risks include structural problems such as red tape and fiscal and investment instability (World Bank, 2020), but also a persistently weak entrepreneurial culture among young people in Jordan, which is partly due to the absence of any focus on EL in most TVET and higher education programmes.

## Issue 2: Underutilisation of human capital and of opportunities for human capital development for youth and women

Equitable access to education, training and employment opportunities is a strategic priority in all policy plans for human capital development in Jordan. Despite this long-term commitment, however, certain groups of Jordanian citizens continue to be disadvantaged in terms of access to education and employment. This in turn prevents them from contributing to the social and economic development of the country and hampers their prospects for individual prosperity and well-being. The two most affected groups in this respect are women and youth of secondary-school age. The rate of female participation in employment is persistently low (the lowest of any ETF partner country), while the propensity of youth to avoid technical and vocational education as a choice of study hampers the effectiveness of policies to promote human capital development through TVET. The latter also limits the employment prospects of young people, especially young women.

The Jordanian authorities have introduced measures to address a variety of challenges concerning education, training, and labour market participation, and some of them target the difficulties of youth and women to enter the labour market.

A number of these measures address the challenge of low participation in human capital development opportunities through VET, but their success remains limited. Female enrolment rates in VET remain persistently low and fluctuate from year to year, sometimes by as much as 12% from one year to the

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/torino-process-2014-jordan>

<sup>3</sup> NRF B.2.II

next. Jordan also has a high rate of early leavers, which is considerably higher than in EU countries, and its rate of participation in VET is persistently low in international comparison (11.5% in 2018), especially for young women (8.6% in the same year).

Such data suggest that the intended effect of the policy measures may be susceptible to the adverse influence of factors that have not yet been fully taken into consideration. One of these factors is the lack of proper support for students, particularly female students, during training. Another factor is fragmentation in the implementation of strategic priorities across the various bodies in charge of VET in Jordan. In the past and more recently, efforts have been put into creating umbrella institutions (initially an ETVET secretariat and later, in 2019, the Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission, or TVSD Commission). However, there is little evidence of coordination or integration in the implementation of these and other priorities among the various TVET systems. Other reasons may be the relative marginalisation of VET in comparison with other segments of the education and training system, and the lack of flexibility in VET provision to accommodate the different learning needs and circumstances of at-risk learners.

Another set of measures targets low youth and female participation in the labour market. Some of the actions rely on the participation of women and youth in formal education and training, while others involve training provided in the form of active labour market policy (ALMP) measures. Finally, a third set of actions is organised and implemented in the context of projects supported by bilateral donors.

While these actions are rich in detail and ambition, there is also scope for improvement to increase their effectiveness and impact. A shared weakness of the current solutions in the domain of formal education and training is that they fail to reach some of their target populations, notably women who are inactive or in search of employment. According to the Torino Process national report, the rate of enrolment in apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning (WBL) remains unsatisfactory, mostly because of cultural limitations and the failure of providers and partner enterprises to provide appropriate working conditions for women.

The ALMP-related measures also leave some scope for improvement. Their focus is narrow and aimed only at the economically active population. None of the actions addresses economic inactivity, especially among women of working age, which is a far more widespread challenge than unemployment. According to data from the Department of Statistics, the share of women of working age who may potentially be left out because they are inactive was over 96% in 2019.

Finally, this assessment concludes that overall the policy responses to the challenge of low youth and female participation do not pay sufficient attention to the diversity of their intended beneficiaries. The needs of young female graduates looking for first-time employment are likely to be different from those of women who are forced to leave their jobs and become inactive, while the needs of both groups also differ from the needs and possibilities of women who have been economically inactive for a prolonged period of time. At the time of this assessment, there was no evidence that such a differentiation by target group had gained any traction in policy planning and implementation in the area.

## Recommendations

The recommendations in the report are grouped into two clusters, one for each key issue discussed in the assessment.

### Recommendations addressing issue 1

#### **R.1 Raise the responsiveness of TVET to labour market needs by focusing on evidence**

The ETF recommends establishing a process of regular (annual) reviews and – where needed – updates of TVET programmes in all TVET subsectors based on regular screening and consideration of evidence on labour market needs provided by the LMIS. This could be done by reinforcing the mandate of already existing bodies, such as the newly established sector skills councils, to coordinate with the private sector. In this respect, it would be important to put the annual review of programme relevance on the basis of labour market evidence high on the agenda of the councils that are responsible for governing the various segments of TVET in Jordan, most notably the TVSD Commission in keeping with its mandate to support youth and address unemployment through better TVET.

Additionally, the ETF recommends a revision of the process for updating TVET programmes to bring the process closer to VET providers and make it faster and more agile. The modularisation of programmes could be an important element in this effort.

#### **R.2 Prioritise small and micro-enterprises in the promotion of partnerships between TVET and the private sector**

The ETF recommends expanding the involvement of employers to include their participation in the setting of TVET standards, the design of training content, and the testing of competencies provided by TVET. Extra effort should be invested in capturing the needs of small and micro-enterprises, which at the time of this assessment were the dominant drivers of job creation in the country. This could be done by diversifying the current profile of private-sector representatives on the TVSD Commission in order to reflect the composition of the labour market more accurately.

In addition to financial incentives and support, the key to involving small and micro-enterprises would be to provide them with the prospect of training that links to their business needs.

#### **R.3 Harmonise the provision of entrepreneurial learning across the TVET system**

The ETF recommends prioritising EL in all segments of TVET irrespective of the division of governance responsibilities for the sector, and ensuring that there is a unified approach to the integration of EL in TVET curricula across the TVET system.

This could be done by committing to minimum standards for EL provision, such as a comparable number of hours and a comparable choice of EL elements, which may include the current focus of the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) on communication, vocational tracks, self-marketing, problem-solving, life skills, entrepreneurship and self-employment.

### Recommendations addressing issue 2

#### **R.4 Improve and diversify support for at-risk students in TVET**

The Jordanian authorities have introduced a range of policy measures to attract youth and women to HCD opportunities through VET, but there are also limitations that prevent these measures from gaining traction and supporting their intended beneficiaries. One of the limitations is the lack of proper support for students, particularly female students, who may be struggling with their VET instruction, given that the only form of support that they received at the time of this assessment was to extend the length of their training.

The ETF recommends developing solutions that address a wider selection of risks to participation, such as the poor quality of teaching, the fact that the family situation of students may call for greater flexibility in the timing of courses, the lack of an individualised approach to teaching, etc. A renewed discussion of these challenges should be put high on the work agenda of the TVSD Commission as well.

### **R.5 Improve the conditions for female participation in mainstream TVET courses**

The ETF recommends improving the conditions for female participation in mainstream TVET courses. The effort should include improving the course offer, making it more gender-sensitive, raising awareness and gender sensitivity among TVET teachers and trainers, and establishing more gender-friendly training environments.

The ETF also suggests setting up a comprehensive, national career guidance system that includes a focus on course counselling that encourages women to expand their options when choosing educational fields of study.

### **R.6 Prioritise HCD measures that support the reintegration of inactive women into the labour market**

At the time of this assessment, there were several ALMP initiatives to reduce the high unemployment rate of youth and women through training and retraining. This chapter notes that their impact is positive and tangible, but also finds that they benefit only those women and youth who are economically active.

The ETF recommends expanding these measures to include inactive women and youth in support of their reintegration into the economy, for instance by investing in the development of a CVET offer in accordance with labour market demand across the country and by mainstreaming CVET as a policy priority in the work of bodies that govern the TVET sector, starting with the TVSD Commission.

Examples of prioritisation measures could include preparing information and incentive packages for women, youth, and their families in support of labour market participation, and addressing the non-monetary obstacles to labour market participation. These obstacles are largely neglected and include working environments where there is a lack of responsiveness to the needs of women for flexible working arrangements and part-time employment, and where employment decisions tend to discriminate against female candidates for employment.

## **Conclusions**

Jordan has achieved remarkable progress in challenging circumstances, but some problems persist and require continuing attention. Still, the evidence analysed in preparation of this assessment suggest that there are strong reasons to conclude that TVET is set on a good course to become a highly responsive and relevant segment of the human capital development system in Jordan, as envisaged in most of the country's national plans for prosperity and economic advancement. For this to happen, a key condition is to ensure consistency, continuity, and a steady commitment to improvement across the board among the institutions and stakeholder groups that are involved in HCD and TVET-related reforms. The establishment of the new Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission is a cause for much hope in this respect.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 About this assessment

Prepared in 2020, this ETF assessment provides an analysis based on the outcomes of the Torino Process national report for Jordan, which drew on a standardised framework questionnaire for national reporting (the National Reporting Framework – NRF). The national report was compiled by a national expert under the supervision of the Torino Process national coordinator in the TVSD Commission, and it incorporates comments and evidence generated in face-to-face and written consultations with national stakeholders.

The ETF assessment starts with a country overview and a brief description of the strategic plans and national policy priorities of Jordan (Section 1, Subsections 2 and 3). This is followed by an overview of the issues related to the development and use of human capital in the country (Section 2) and an in-depth discussion of problems in this area that in the view of the ETF require immediate attention (Section 3). Section 4 presents conclusions.

The assessment process involved an extensive phase of desk research based on responses to the NRF and the preparation of an issues paper with an overview of themes for discussion in the present report, which were then finalised in consultations within the ETF. An advanced draft of the ETF assessment was circulated to national stakeholders and international partners to verify the findings and recommendations, after which the assessment was discussed at a virtual dissemination event with stakeholders on 9 December 2020.

From the standpoint of regional policy dialogue, the findings and recommendations of the ETF Torino Process assessment provide elements to inform future regional initiatives within the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean area, as well as ongoing discussions on post-2020 programming. The findings of the report will also feed into the current dialogue, led by the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Commission, on monitoring the progress of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour, which underlines a range of issues, including the importance of reforming education and training systems in order to respond to the challenges posed by ensuring employment, employability, and decent work<sup>4</sup>. A cross-country report will consolidate all the outcomes of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Torino Process assessments and contribute to the monitoring and evaluation framework to be developed as a concrete output of the Declaration<sup>5</sup>.

Like other ETF assessments, this paper is not meant to be exhaustive. The national report for Jordan covers a broad selection of problems revolving around human capital development and use, while the focus of this assessment is on challenges that the ETF recommends addressing as a matter of priority.

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<sup>4</sup> For the importance of investment in education, higher education and training systems, including vocational education and training (VET), as well as lifelong reskilling and upskilling of workers to prepare them for constant changes in the world of work, see Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour, April 2019, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> The Labour Ministers asked the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat, with help from volunteer countries, to coordinate the setting up of a framework for national monitoring processes, notably by organising meetings, providing relevant information, making contacts and engaging in networking, and cooperating with country stakeholders and international organisations. The Ministers invited the European Commission and the relevant EU agencies, in particular the European Training Foundation, to provide their expertise. See the Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour, paragraph 29, April 2019.



## 1.2 Country overview

Jordan is a country of 10 million inhabitants (10.1 million in 2019) with limited natural resources and a high degree of dependence on foreign assistance. Three-quarters of the population live in three of the 12 governorates in which the country is divided: Amman (42%), Irbid (18.5%) and Zarqa (14.3%). In only a few years since 2015, the population of Jordan has increased by 9% owing to a massive influx of refugees from neighbouring countries. At the time of this assessment, Jordan hosted approximately 1.3 million Syrians, 636 000 Egyptians, 130 000 Iraqis, and 200 000 refugees and migrants of other nationalities<sup>6</sup>.

The population of Jordan is young. A sizeable share of the population (52.9% in 2019) is below the age of 25, and youth aged 15–24 account for 19.4% of the total population (Table 1). However, a considerable proportion of these young people (38.1% in 2017) are not in employment, education or training. Another challenge for the economy is that only 34.3% of the working-age population is economically active, while 19.1% of them were unemployed in 2019 (Table 1).

**TABLE 1. SELECTED COUNTRY CONTEXT INDICATORS**

Indicator	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$)	9 331	9 284	9 841	10 086	10 317
GDP, real growth rate (%)	2.4%	2.0%	2.1%	1.9%	2.0%
Population (thousands)	9 267	9 551	9 779	9 956	10 102
Youth population (15-24), in % of the total population	19.3%	19.3%	19.3%	19.3%	19.4%
Unemployment rate (in % of those aged 15+)	13.0%	15.3%	18.3%	18.6%	19.1%
Activity rate (in % of those aged 15+)	36.7%	36.0%	39.2%	36.2%	34.3%
Enrolment in VET, in % of total upper secondary enrolment (ISCED 3)	m	m	14.0%	11.5%	m
Share of youth (15-24) not in employment, education or training	m	m	38.1%	m	m

Source: ETF database

Demographic and migration developments create economic pressures that have a negative impact on the country's economic development. The most pressing economic imperative faced by Jordanian authorities continues to be the need to increase investment, create jobs and reduce poverty. GDP per capita has grown from USD PPP 9 331 in 2015 to USD PPP 10 317 in 2019. The economy of Jordan is considered to be open and the country itself an emerging market<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, the World Bank reclassified Jordan as a low middle-income country in 2017. Other economic challenges include a shortage of natural resources, a high rate of unemployment and underemployment, and a large informal sector, which accounts for 25% of national income according to a recent estimate (Al Deen Al Nawas, 2020).

The workforce in Jordan counts close to 2.1 million people and includes those who work, those who are unemployed, and immigrants who hold a work permit. The activity rate is rather low (36.2% in

<sup>6</sup> NRF A.1.1

<sup>7</sup> NRF A.1.1



2018 on average), particularly for women (15.4% in the same year). Youth between the ages of 15 and 24 account for the biggest share of unemployment (39.2%).

The national report for Jordan describes several major labour market challenges. The challenges include persistently high youth unemployment, the low activity rate of women, a lack of reliable information about labour market needs, weak career guidance, weak private-sector involvement in shaping the focus and priorities of human capital development through VET, a high degree of informality (26% of GDP before the Syrian refugee crisis), and unfavourable employment conditions in most sectors and professions<sup>8</sup>.

According to the Torino Process national report, political instability in the region and its associated refugee flows are among the most significant factors to have an impact on the society and economy of Jordan. This is because they complicate the pressing task of catering to the needs of an increasingly diverse and populous group of vulnerable people who require attention, support, and sustainable policy solutions. The group also includes people living below the poverty line, who account for 16% of the Jordanian population<sup>9</sup>. At the same time the need for employment among Jordanians, especially young people, is increasing at a rate that exceeds the supply of jobs. There are 60 000 new entrants into the labour market each year and this number is on the rise, whereas roughly 50 000 jobs have been created annually over the most recent years (ETF, 2016b).

These and other challenges have prompted Jordanian authorities in different sectors to develop a number of strategic responses and plans and engage in various partnerships with the donor community to ensure their implementation. The next section sets out a detailed description of the responses and plans, as well as the strategic context and priorities in Jordan at the time of the assessment.

### 1.3 Strategic context: strategic commitments, reforms and donor participation

Jordan has put in place a range of strategies for social and economic development in all sectors under the responsibility of its government. Four of the strategies lay out the country's priorities and commitments in the area of human capital development and the contributions expected from its TVET sector: the National Agenda 2006–2015, which sets the priorities for all subsequent strategies on human capital development<sup>10</sup>; the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020; the National E-TVET Strategy 2014–2020; and the National Human Resources Development Strategy 2016–2025 (NHRD). Overall, education and training reforms in Jordan are taking place in a strategic context that was established before the most recent refugee crisis and thus focus almost exclusively on a long-term vision for the development of the country and its human capital.

The National Employment Strategy (NES), for example, commits to improving the standard of living for Jordanians through increased employment, wages and benefits and higher productivity. To this end, education and training providers are called to graduate a 'skilled and motivated labour force, armed with employable skills and technical know-how in demand by the labour market'<sup>11</sup>. The NES uses an integrated approach that targets investment, fiscal and monetary policies, education and higher education, vocational training, and social welfare through the lens of employment (ETF, 2014), as shown in Box 1.

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<sup>8</sup> NRF B.1.1

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> NRF A.2.4.1

<sup>11</sup> National Employment Strategy 2011–2020

## **BOX 1. NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY 2011–20: GOALS AND ACTIONS**

### **Short-term goal (2014): Start absorbing the unemployed**

1. Commit to predictable foreign labour and management policies
2. Expand access to credit for micro and SME enterprises
3. Evaluate and scale up active labour market programmes with proven track records
4. Curtail public sector employment and align wage structures

### **Medium-term goal (2017): Better skills matching and micro/SME growth**

1. Scale up school-to-work transition programmes
2. Reform the E-TVET sector
3. Introduce health insurance benefits and expand social security coverage to SMEs

### **Long-term goal (2020): Increased productivity through human capital development and economic restructuring**

1. Invest in the future through early childhood education
2. Pursue sustainable fiscal and monetary policies for economic growth with job creation
3. Develop industrial and investment policies aimed at economic growth with job creation

**Source:** National Employment Strategy 2011–2020 and ETF, 2014

The Council of Ministers has also instigated a comprehensive implementation/action plan and an implementation team for the NES under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour, while the VET-related effort mostly focuses on governance-related reforms that include changes to the composition of the Employment, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ETVET) board<sup>12</sup> and the inclusion of TVET providers in the accreditation system under the responsibility of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education (AQACHEI). Broadly, the goal of the governance-related reforms is to raise the attractiveness of VET for Jordanians and boost work-based learning.

The National E-TVET Strategy 2014–2020, which links to the broader HCD commitments in the NSE, covers five pillars: governance; the labour market relevance of education and training; the inclusion of women, youth, and people with disabilities; better monitoring systems; and sustainable funding for TVET. The purpose is to establish TVET as a driver of employment, prosperity and social inclusion through better quality assurance and better coordination between the bodies in charge of VET, as well as through deeper involvement from social partners and the business community.

At the time of this assessment, the strategic goals have been translated into several long-term reform undertakings. One of them is the development of the National Qualifications Framework or NQF (TVET qualification levels extend from level 2 to level 6 of the new 10-level NQF), while another is the establishment of national sector skills councils (SSCs) with the support of international donors (GIZ, ILO, EU and EBRD)<sup>13</sup>. The authorities have also embarked on building a labour market information

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<sup>12</sup> At the time of preparation of this assessment, the ETVET board was already disbanded.

<sup>13</sup> NRF A.2.4

system (LMIS) to inform strategic decision-making in TVET. However, the most important governance-related change is the establishment of the Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission (TVSD Commission), which will replace the ETVET Council. The new TVSD Commission will have its own council headed by the Minister of Labour and most of the council's members (8 of 14) will come from the private sector.

In addition to these TVET sector-specific goals and actions, the VET sector is embedded as a key area in a broader set of strategic obligations and commitments, most of which are set out in the National Human Resources Development Strategy 2016–2025 (NHRD). The NHRD aims at a 'substantial increase in the number of youth and adults who have relevant technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship by 2025'<sup>14</sup>. To achieve this aim, the reform actions include the establishment of flexible horizontal and vertical pathways for students that also allow for the recognition of alternative forms of learning; the retraining of VET teachers and the setting of new quality standards for VET providers in coordination with the private sector; the improvement of governance arrangements for the sake of better accountability of the TVET sector vis-à-vis its stakeholders; the raising of TVET's attractiveness as a choice of study; and the improvement of funding arrangements.

The implementation of the strategic objectives described above depends on the involvement of the donor community. Overall, the TVET reform agenda in Jordan is heavily dependent on external funding. According to the national report, the main donors involved in the support of TVET reforms are the European Union, USAID, GAC (Canada), BMZ (Germany), the Department for International Development, the UK, JICA (Japan), KOICA (South Korea), the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (The Netherlands), UNHCR, the World Food Programme, Finland, Iceland, Australia and the World Bank<sup>15</sup>.

In the past period, 36 TVET-related projects were underway with a combined budget of over JOD 223 million. Most of the projects focused on Amman and the governorates of Irbid, Zarqa and Mafraq. In addition to the geographical bias of donor interventions, which tend to focus on Amman and three of the 12 governorates, there is also a thematic bias. Some 47% of all projects had a focus on job placement services, 42% on boosting workforce participation, and 33% were devoted to career guidance. At the time of this assessment, other important areas of commitment to reform, such as accreditation and quality assurance, or the inclusion of disabled people, were left without external support, possibly because the reform plans in these areas are still too recent. Quality assurance has been part of the EU's TVET budget support programme, which provided specific technical assistance to address this priority area, while the new EU budget support treats quality assurance in education as a matter of high priority.

At the time of this assessment, most of the strategies described here were due for renewal amid mounting pressure caused by migration and refugee flows from neighbouring countries that are affected by political instability and armed conflict. For the new generation of strategic plans, the difficult task ahead is to strike a balance between ensuring the continuation of a long-term reform agenda established to deliver opportunities, prosperity and better standards of living for all Jordanians<sup>16</sup> and designing policies that address the imminent challenge of accommodating an increasing number of migrants and refugees and reaping their workforce potential.

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<sup>14</sup> NRF B.2.2

<sup>15</sup> NRF A.3.5

<sup>16</sup> 'Improved quality of life' (National Agenda), 'better standards of living' (National Employment Strategy), 'prosperity and social inclusion' (E-TVET Strategy), 'skills and decent jobs' (National Human Resources Development Strategy).



## 2. HUMAN CAPITAL: OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

### 2.1 Overview and key data

This report has previously noted that human capital is an aggregate of the knowledge, skills, talents and abilities of individuals, which they can use for economic, social and personal benefit. The value of human capital depends on how well it is developed and the extent to which it is then available and used. Table 2 presents a selection of human capital development indicators that give a basic overview of how Jordan is doing in this respect.

**TABLE 2. SELECTED HCD INDICATORS, JORDAN**

	Year	Value	Rank
(1) Population structure (% of total)			
0-14	2018	34.1%	
15-64	2018	62.3%	
65+	2018	3.5%	
(2) Average years of schooling		na	
(3) Expected years of schooling	2017	11.62	
(4) Learning-adjusted years of schooling	2017	7.61	
(5) Adult literacy	2018	98.2%	
(6) Global Innovation Index Rank (x/126)	2019	29.61	86
(7) Global Competitiveness Index Rank (x/137)	2019	60.9	70
(8) Digital Readiness Index Rank (x/118)	2019	12.14 accelerate	68

Sources: (1) UN Population Division, World Population Prospects, 2017 revision; (2) UNESCO, UIS database; (3) and (4) World Bank (2018), Human Capital Index; (5) UNESCO, UIS database; (6) WEF, The Global Innovation Index, 2018; (7) WEF, Global Competitiveness Index 4.0, 2018; (8) Cisco, Country Digital Readiness, 2018; and (9) ETF, skills mismatch measurement in the ETF Partner Countries.

The population of Jordan is predominantly young: in 2018, over one-third (34.1%) was under the age of 15, which is relatively high in international comparison. For instance, the average share of youth in the same age group was only 15.6% in the EU in 2018. There is also a sizeable share of people of working age (62.3%), while those of retirement age and beyond accounted for only 3.5% of the population, which is over 5.6 times lower than the EU average (19.7%).

Considering the size of the school-age population and the associated pressures on the enrolment capacity and budget of the education and training sector, Jordan is doing remarkably well in safeguarding access to education and graduation chances for young people. On average, students can expect to receive 11.62 years of schooling, albeit of limited quality and effectiveness (11.62 years of schooling translate to only 7.61 years of learning).

Nevertheless, the rate of adult literacy is high (98.2%), the country ranks in the upper half on the list of global competitiveness (ranking 10th out of 137 countries), and it is gaining ground in terms of digital readiness as measured by the Digital Readiness Index.

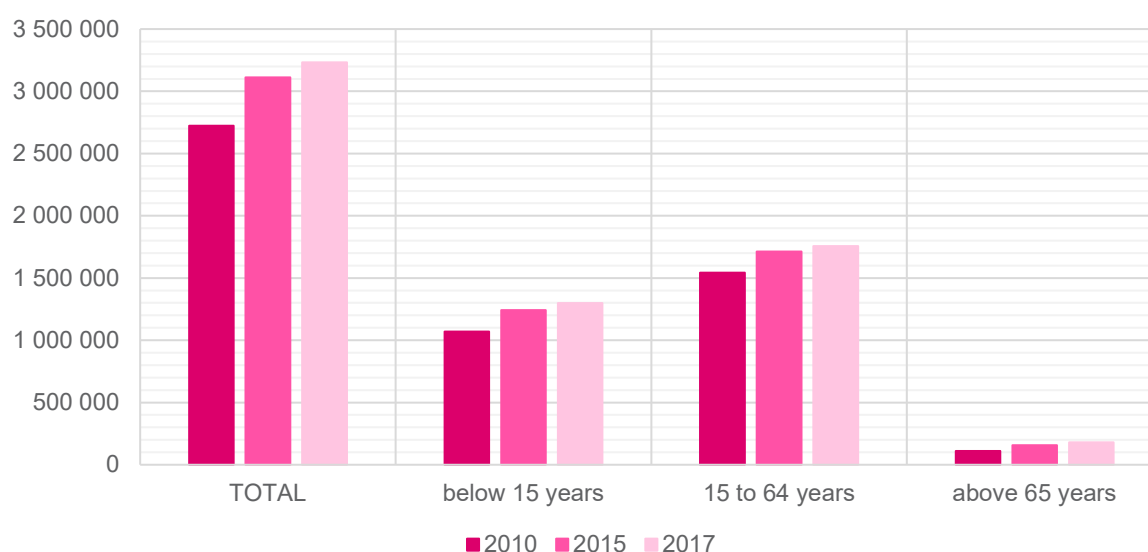
## 2.2 Migrants, refugees and the human capital of Jordan

### Data on migration, refugee flows and policy responses

Countries are commonly expected to make a distinction between refugees and migrants when setting policies for these two groups of people within their borders. Refugees are protected in international conventions and governments are obliged to treat them in accordance with international norms and commitments to refugee protection and asylum (UNHCR, 2016). Migrants on the other hand can be dealt with under national immigration laws and processes (UNHCR, 2019) on the assumption that unlike refugees, they have left their country of their own accord, mainly in pursuit of economic opportunities or for education, family or other reasons.

For years now, Jordan has been experiencing a tremendous influx of people in both groups. In 2017, the total number of immigrants and refugees in Jordan was over 3.2 million, which was about one-third of the population (10.05 million in 2017) and 19% greater than in 2010 (Figure 1). The number of illegal immigrants (workers without a permit) is estimated to be about twice as high as the officially registered number (680 000 and 352 350, respectively)<sup>17</sup>, the majority being immigrants of working age from Egypt (54%), Syria (12%) and other countries (34%)<sup>18</sup>.

**FIGURE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES BY AGE GROUP (2010, 2015, 2017)**



Source: ETF database and United Nation Population Division. Trends in International Migrant Stock, 2017 revision (UN database)

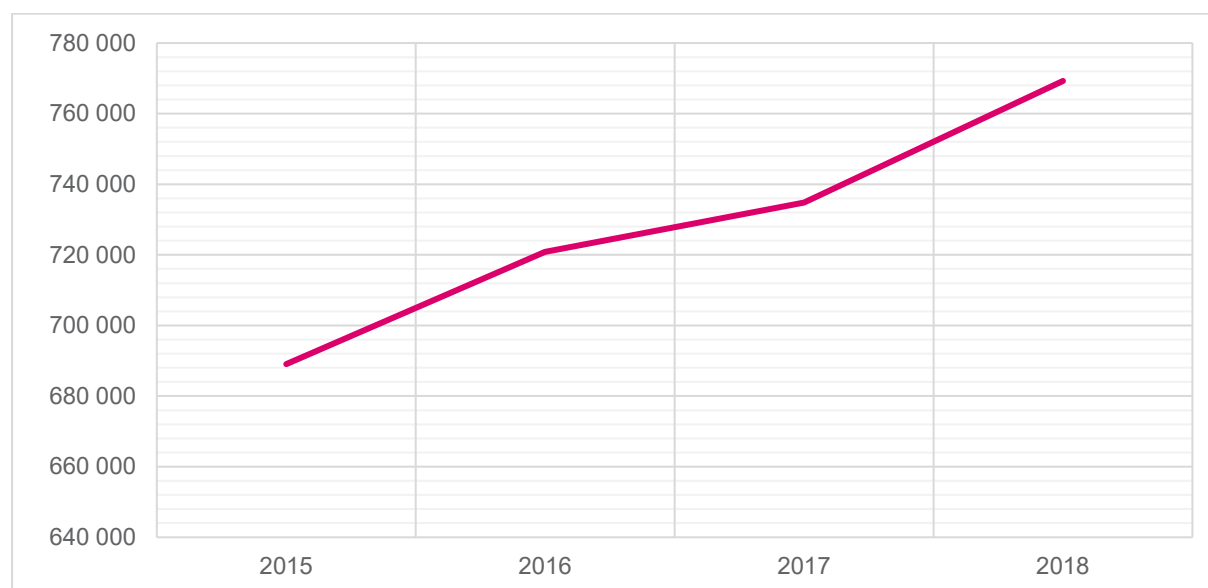
Owing to its proximity to areas in turmoil, Jordan has been a traditional destination for refugees, mostly from Palestine, Iraq and Syria. According to data from the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), Jordan hosted over 2.1 million Palestinians as of 2016. In addition, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan had registered 655 732 refugees from Syria and 61 405 from Iraq as of 2017<sup>19</sup> (Figure 2). There are also refugees from Yemen and Libya.

<sup>17</sup> NRF A.3.2

<sup>18</sup> NRF B.1.3

<sup>19</sup> NRF A.3.2

**FIGURE 2. TOTAL NUMBER OF UNHCR-REGISTERED REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS BY YEAR (2015–2018)**



Source: ETF database and UNHCR–Jordan

Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, but it has traditionally remained open to forced migrants and it has put in place policies to ease their stay in the country and even to integrate some of them (e.g. Palestinian refugees). In 2016 in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, the country also launched the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2016–2018, which commits to allowing Syrian refugees to work and carry out trade inside and outside the refugee camps (Athamneh, 2016).

In addition to measures aimed at regulating the legal status of refugees and their access to the labour market, Jordanian authorities have also prioritised access to education and training as a support measure. With the help of the international donor community, Syrian refugees have (paid) access to VET programmes and free-of-charge access to general education. According to the national report, some 115 681 young people (of which 55% were female) benefited in 2017 from life skills programmes provided by UNICEF Jordan and its partners in camps and host communities, and close to 500 youth (half were female) began certified vocational training<sup>20</sup>. In addition, the response plan in support of Syrian refugees includes projects that focus on employment creation, including job matching and employability services, vocational training and apprenticeships, and career counselling services designed to increase access to decent work opportunities<sup>21</sup>.

The readiness of Jordanian authorities to accept and continue accepting foreign nationals in need of refuge and/or economic opportunity is commendable. Nonetheless, there are also challenges that prevent migrants and refugees from contributing to the Jordanian economy and labour market to the fullest extent.

One problem is the capacity of Jordan's public budget and its education and training system to absorb the vast number of refugees and effectively address the diversity of their needs. Another problem is that immigration appears to deplete the stock of human capital available to the economy instead of replenishing it, as immigrants to Jordan are considerably less skilled than the Jordanians who leave

<sup>20</sup> NRF C.1.2

<sup>21</sup> NRF C.1.4

the country in the search of economic opportunities abroad. Finally, most refugees and migrants in Jordan tend to find employment in the informal sector. This promotes informality as a widespread form of employment, helps to establish a norm of precarious working conditions (e.g. lower pay), and diminishes the attractiveness of employment in the private sector for jobseekers from Jordan. The next sections look at each of these problems in more detail.

## Refugees: integration-related pressures

Refugees continue to be a major socio-economic challenge for Jordan. For one thing, most of those fleeing the Syrian conflict (51%) are youth below the age of 18, they come from households headed by women, and most of the households are classified as extremely poor<sup>22</sup>. These demographic and socio-economic characteristics complicate their participation in the Jordanian economy and society, because for years now, Jordan has been struggling to boost the economic participation of the very same segments of its own population: youth, women, and people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The large proportion of young people among the refugees also creates pressure for additional investment in the provision of key services such as education and training, which can be a difficult task when resources are limited. The decision of authorities to authorise refugees to live outside the refugee camps is straining the capacity of numerous communities in Jordan to provide education, healthcare and water supply services and address local unemployment. In 2016, the latest year for which there are relevant data, only 17.4% of Palestinian refugees and 18.2% of Syrian refugees were still living in official refugee camps (Athamneh, 2016). In the course of only a few years up to 2016, the number of Syrian students enrolled in public schools grew almost ninefold to over 143 000<sup>23</sup>.

## Migrants: developments leading to brain drain

Migration can be a source of enrichment and diversification of a country's human capital. In Jordan, however, it appears to be gradually reducing the stock of skills available to employers. Immigrants to Jordan outnumber those who leave the country by a factor of four (in 2019 there were 3 346 703 immigrants and 784 377 emigrants), but most of those who leave the country are highly qualified (about 85% have completed tertiary education), while those who replace them are mostly unskilled or semi-skilled<sup>24</sup>.

Despite the positive aspects of migration such as remittances, these developments and data describe a textbook case of brain drain. The problem is amplified by the absence of policies and measures in support of circular migration, the limited opportunities for the upskilling of guest workers, and the lack of proper recognition of their prior, non-formal and informal learning. At the time of this assessment, the skills of immigrants could be tested only upon an official request from the Ministry of Labour for each immigrant separately<sup>25</sup> or in accordance with project-related agreements with international organisations and agencies that provide training to Syrian refugees<sup>26</sup>.

## Migrants and refugees: informality and worsening employment conditions

Refugees are not allowed to work in Jordan and it is very difficult for them to obtain a work permit (Athamneh, 2016). Combined with the lack of options to earn legitimate income and the risk of

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<sup>22</sup> NRF A.3.2

<sup>23</sup> NRF C.1.2

<sup>24</sup> NRF B.1.3

<sup>25</sup> NRF B.1.8

<sup>26</sup> NRF A.1.6



poverty, this situation forces many refugees into the informal economy. As already noted, the Jordanian labour market employed around 680 000 illegal workers in 2018. Most were refugees from Syria, but there were also illegal workers from Egypt. At the same time, workers from Egypt also represent the biggest group of legally employed foreign nationals in Jordan<sup>27</sup>.

The national report suggests that the large number of immigrant and refugee workers creates a competition for jobs that limits the employment opportunities of Jordanians<sup>28</sup>. However, the impact of foreign workers on the domestic labour market is likely to be more complex. Jordanian nationals are traditionally more interested in public-sector employment or in private-sector employment that offers conditions that are close to those on offer in the public sector in terms of stability, working time, and prestige (ETF, 2016a). For the most part, these jobs are off-limits to refugees and immigrants.

The contribution of immigrants and refugees to the proliferation of informality in the labour market is a bigger cause for concern. Even before the Syrian refugee crisis, the informal sector in Jordan accounted for over one-quarter of GDP,<sup>29</sup> and the share is likely to be even higher today. This leads to foregone income for the public budget in the form of taxes and makes it difficult to pursue evidence-based employment policies, such as skills forecasts, since employers and employees have an incentive to hide information about the actual state of affairs in their professional setting, which in turn undermines the reliability of labour market data and projections.

Informality and otherwise illegal employment also contribute to the establishment of substandard working conditions as the norm. The informal sector pushes down wages and diminishes the attractiveness of work in the private sector, which in turn fuels the preference of Jordanian nationals for jobs in the public sector, which are scarce and getting scarcer. In this sense it is true that illegal workers contribute to official unemployment in Jordan, albeit not by taking away jobs but rather by encouraging employers to offer substandard working conditions in the private sector even in times of economic growth.

## 2.3 Continuity and progress on reforms in education and training

Reforms in education and training have now been a priority for the Jordanian authorities for several decades, leading to considerable financial investments and tangible improvement in key areas of commitment under the Millennium Development Goals and now the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Although Jordan continues to commit to the implementation of numerous reform initiatives in the area of human capital development as described earlier in Chapter 1, persistent challenges affect the design and implementation of reforms and may diminish their effectiveness, their sustainability, and the traction they gain on the ground.

### An overwhelming diversity of commitments to reform

The first challenge is the sheer number of reform commitments, which may be overstressing the capacity of the education and training sector to coordinate and absorb the envisaged changes. The key strategic documents that address the TVET sector in Jordan<sup>30</sup> – the National Agenda 2006–2015, the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020, the National E-TVET Strategy 2014–2020, and the National Human Resources Development Strategy 2016–2025 (NHRD) – describe a wide range of

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<sup>27</sup> NRF A.3.2 and A.1.1

<sup>28</sup> NRF B.1.3

<sup>29</sup> NRF B.1.1

<sup>30</sup> NRF A.2.4

actions and initiatives, many of which imply profound changes in the ways that the TVET sector is set up and is supposed to operate and cooperate with external stakeholders.

For instance, the National Agenda envisages a restructuring of the institutional framework through which VET contributes to the employability of people of working age, the development of targeted programmes to reduce unemployment among people with special needs, an increase in female workforce participation, an increase in private-sector involvement in VET, the establishment of several high-level coordination councils, and curriculum reform. In addition, the National Employment Strategy commits to revisions of the boards of key players in the governance of VET, such as the (now defunct) Employment, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ETVET) Council and the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions (AQACHEI), and it commits to expanding VET programmes for direct on-the-job training in the private sector.

The E-TVET strategy in turn describes plans to improve the governance of TVET, the relevance of its outputs, the degree of inclusiveness of TVET programmes, their systems of quality measurement, and the sustainability of TVET funding. More recently, the NHRD has committed to the creation of new pathways towards tertiary VET; an increase in the quality of TVET by aligning the standards for teacher training and quality assurance for all providers; an increase in accountability through better governance; and the creation of more innovative forms of funding and TVET delivery.

The national report suggests that the implementation of many of these commitments thus far has been only partial. Some priorities have been delayed and others completely abandoned<sup>31</sup>, while action plans are regularly drafted, but not always implemented (ETF, 2017). Also, owing to a lack of capacity and awareness, many of the more innovative solutions or resources, such as e-learning and data on career guidance, have not actually been adopted or used by TVET providers<sup>32</sup>.

## Lack of regional focus in the planning and implementation of reforms

The second long-standing challenge is the centralised focus of reform plans, which for the most part are designed, adopted and operationalised in a centralised, top-down manner with a primary focus on the capital Amman and do not involve much consultation with regional stakeholders and providers or with middle to low-level managers and decision-makers in TVET.

One aspect of the problem is insufficient engagement and communication about reforms with the parents and communities that TVET providers serve. This may also be the reason why some reports suggest that most reform interventions are procedural and not substantive in nature, which may further complicate improvement. There are also shortcomings in the communication among central-level institutions that bear responsibility for the implementation of reform plans (ETF, 2016a; OCHA, 2017).

## External factors

The third and final challenge to the effectiveness and continuity of reforms is the Syrian refugee crisis. Although the influx of refugees is a development that lies beyond the control of authorities and TVET stakeholders, their presence has a profound impact on the education and training system. It forces a shift in attention to the immediate daily needs of the TVET system and away from longer-term aspirations for change. According to some reports, the number of Syrian children enrolled in schools

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<sup>31</sup> See National Employment Strategy and NRF A.2.4.

<sup>32</sup> NRF B.1.2

is the main cause of additional barriers that affect the quality of the learning environment and the achievements that Jordan has thus far attained during the reform process (OCHA, 2017).

## 2.4 Human capital development amid the Covid-19 crisis: challenges to continuity

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to the closure of an unprecedented number of schools and universities as governments around the world struggle to contain the spread of the disease. According to UNESCO, some 192 countries introduced localised or nationwide closures of educational institutions at the peak of school closures in April and May, affecting an estimated 91% of the world's student population<sup>33</sup>.

Jordan closed all education and training providers at the beginning of the pandemic in mid-March<sup>34</sup>. Since then, general education has been delivered through TV and through a virtual learning platform (Darsak) that covers only general education. Online courses have been launched by schools, universities and community colleges. According to a recent survey, some 78% of students use the available distance learning opportunities and the Ministry of Education has also prepared to carry out school graduation exams (Tawjihi) online (ETF, 2020a). In addition, a dedicated e-learning platform for technical and vocational education and training was launched in May as part of a long-term project in the TVET sector, which also enjoys support from the EU Skills for Employment and Social Inclusion Programme.

Now several months into the new situation, there is an awareness that the combined effect of school closures and infrastructure-intensive channels of teaching can have numerous consequences, some positive and others adverse, especially for certain segments of the student population. Despite all efforts, the risk of disruptions to the proper operation and continuity of education and training remains, especially in areas where providers were already struggling with equity, quality and resource challenges before the pandemic.

Two of the major challenges are how to reach all students and how to provide them with quality education. The TV broadcasts and online courses are not readily available to all teachers and their students, because there are issues of coverage and accessibility. Also, where availability is not a problem, teachers and students may not be sufficiently prepared for the new modes of instruction (ETF, 2020a).

Finally, the crisis and the transition to distance learning solutions have deepened the capacity challenges created by the inflow of refugee students into the education and training system.

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<sup>33</sup> See <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

<sup>34</sup> Decree by the Prime Minister of 17 March 2020



### 3. ASSESSMENT OF KEY ISSUES AND POLICY RESPONSES

This chapter discusses two additional problems that have been selected in relation to human capital in Jordan: skills mismatch owing to the rigidity of VET provision and content, and underutilisation of human capital and of opportunities for human capital development. These challenges are assessed in greater detail because the ETF believes that they require immediate attention as major human capital-related constraints to growth and at the same time concern policy areas that Jordan has declared to be of strategic importance.

#### 3.1 Rigidity in VET content and provision as a source of skills mismatch

##### 3.1.1 Description of the problem

Data and analysis of the employment prospects of youth in Jordan suggest that education and training, particularly VET, hold out the promise of a quicker transition to employment, a lower likelihood of becoming unemployed or inactive, a higher return on investment in education, and better employment conditions in the case of employment in the private sector (OECD, 2018).

At the same time, the potential of VET to deliver on this positive outlook for graduates is contingent on additional factors, some of which seem to pose a long-standing challenge for Jordanian practitioners and policy-makers alike: the extent to which students are provided with practical experience during their VET studies, the proper and regular involvement of employers, the attraction of a more diverse selection of students in terms of socio-economic background and aptitude, etc.

These challenges are aspects of the same underlying problem with which Jordan (and other countries for that matter) has struggled now for some years. According to the national report, most graduates in Jordan leave education and training without having acquired skills that are in demand in the labour market. This in turn harms their prospects of social and economic participation, limits the growth potential of the Jordanian economy, and hampers the development of the private sector and its capacity to create jobs.

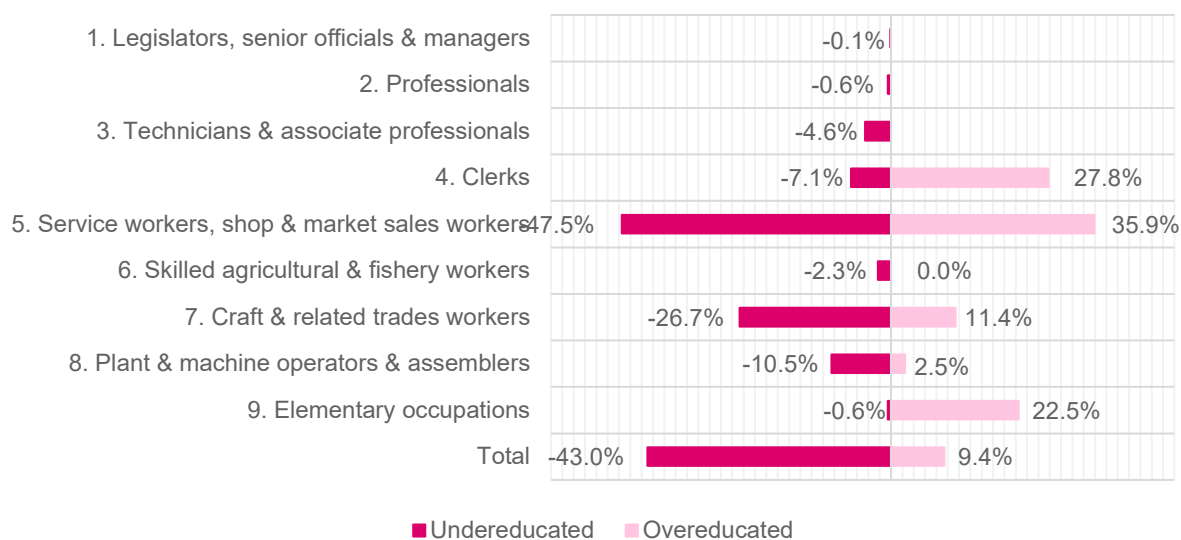
Given the inherent proximity of VET to the world of work, the problem of skills mismatch is particularly obvious in this segment of the education and training system. In Jordan and elsewhere, vocational degrees are expected to supply the largest, most diverse array of occupations in the labour market, including occupations in the sectors of sales and service, administration (clerks), agriculture and fishery, crafts, industry, and more (Table 3, Rows 2 and 3).

**TABLE 3. ISCO AND OCCUPATION GROUPS, AND LEVELS OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

Row No.	ISCO major group	Broad occupation group	Education level	Skill level
1	Managers			3+4
	Professionals	High-skilled non-manual	Tertiary	
	Technicians & associate professionals			
2	Clerical support workers	Low-skilled non-manual	Lower, upper, post-secondary	2
	Service & sales workers			
3	Skilled agricultural & fishery workers			
	Craft & related trades workers	Skilled manual		
	Plant & machine operators & assemblers			
4	Elementary occupations	Unskilled	Primary	1

Source: ILO, 2012

The transition of VET graduates into jobs in these occupational groups is faster and perhaps easier than the transition to employment for higher education graduates and youth without qualifications, as the national report and other sources suggest<sup>35</sup>. However, employment in these occupational groups also exhibits the greatest degree of disconnect between job requirements and the qualifications of job-takers (Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3. SHARE OF OVEREDUCATED AND UNDEREDUCATED YOUTH IN JORDAN BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY (ISCO-08)**


Source: Barcucci & Mryyan, 2014; ILO, 2015; OECD, 2018

While jobs requiring a higher level of skills are least affected by such discrepancies, jobs requiring vocational qualifications (especially jobs in the service sector) have the highest proportion of underqualified candidates, followed by crafts and related trades, and administrative workers (clerks).

<sup>35</sup> NRF B.1.5, NRD D.3.1.2. See also OECD, 2018

Figure 3 also suggests that a sizeable share of employers in need of workers with such qualifications may be compensating for the gap by hiring overqualified candidates.

Jordan's National Human Resource Development Strategy refers to this phenomenon as a 'fundamental mismatch between the skills required for 21st century employment and the outputs from ... TVET...'. The national report even suggests that TVET is among the main reasons for the mismatch because of the content and provision of its programmes, which are outdated, impractical and unresponsive to the needs of Jordanian employers<sup>36</sup>.

These and other problems related to the relevance of VET may not be the only explanation for the inadequate supply of skills for the labour market, but they seem to play an important role in perpetuating the problem by lowering the quality of human capital available to financially important sectors of the Jordanian economy.

The national report provides a lengthy list of possible reasons for the unsatisfactory performance of VET in addressing labour market demand. They include the absence of reliable data on labour market developments; weak involvement of employers at key planning stages of education and training, such as the design of education and training content, the provision of education and training, the assessment of learning outcomes, etc.; inadequate teacher training; and insufficient work-based learning, among other reasons<sup>37</sup>.

Apparently, a major reason for the limited labour market relevance of VET outcomes is the rigidity of VET in terms of content and provision. The service sector, for instance, accounts for over 80% of all jobs in the country (81.9% in 2019) (ETF, 2020b) and has contributed over 60% to the GDP of Jordan for years now (Figure 4). Despite the significance of the sector for the economy and the labour market, however, education and training, together with the pathways for transition to employment, still fail to adjust to the sector's needs for human capital. As Figure 3 suggests, the share of undereducated job-holders is highest in the service sector.

**FIGURE 4. ECONOMIC SECTORS IN JORDAN BY VALUE ADDED TO GDP (2014–2018)**



Source: World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI) database

<sup>36</sup> NRF B.1.2

<sup>37</sup> NRF B.1.2, NRF B.1.7

The challenge of outdated and unchanging content can be traced back to several policy shortcomings, which include the lack of proper information and communication to the VET system about labour market needs, the limited capacity of VET providers and other VET entities to use information about such needs, and the fragmentation of responsibility for shaping and updating the content of VET curricula. In the latter case, there are at least three parallel systems in charge of VET content and provision: one is managed by the MoE, one is managed by the VET Council, and one lies in the domain of on-the-job training. The newly created TVSD Commission is expected to act as an umbrella institution and a remedy to fragmentation, but it is too early to judge its effectiveness in this regard.

As part of the EU programme Skills for Employment and Social Inclusion, all VET providers (the MoE, VTC and private providers) had to register their qualifications, while the Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) was entrusted with checking the curricula and content. CAQA had an opportunity to compare the courses provided by different providers and recommend some adjustments to the curricula. The EU programme also provided support so that trainers from the MoE, VTC and Balqa Applied University (BAU) were given an opportunity to be seconded for a month to jobs in industry. Nevertheless, implementation of the updated curricula remains a challenge, mainly because of the continuing need for new equipment and for sufficient capacity to retrain all teachers and trainers.

The difficulty of modernising VET content also limits the effectiveness of in-service teacher training, because the rigid curricula fail to accommodate the innovations taught in the training, which in turn reinforces their irrelevance to labour market needs.

### 3.1.2 Policy responses and gaps

The authorities are well aware of these challenges and have designed several series of measures to address them: boosting the availability of evidence on labour market needs for the purpose of VET planning and programme update, introducing an education sector-wide framework of qualifications, promoting partnerships with the private sector, and making efforts to introduce entrepreneurial learning in TVET to improve its labour market relevance. These measures and their impact are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

#### **VET relevance through information-sharing and the use of labour market evidence**

The development of education and training databases and labour market information systems (LMISs) is among the most prominent policy responses to the challenge of VET's limited labour market relevance in Jordan<sup>38</sup>. The intention is to use evidence obtained from the systems for VET planning purposes, which will include changes to the choice of VET programmes on offer, career guidance within the programmes, and the programmes' enrolment targets and content.

One such activity is the information system developed in the framework of the Al-Manar project of the National Centre for Human Resources Development (NCHRD)<sup>39</sup>, which seeks to facilitate informed decisions by education and labour market decision-makers and stakeholders. The Al-Manar database has both an education section that contains information about students and graduates of education institutions in Jordan, including TVET providers, and a labour force section that contains data about the employed, the unemployed and foreign workers who hold a work permit<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> NRF B.1.5

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.almanar.jo/en/home-page>

<sup>40</sup> NRF B.1.3



The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has its own public platform with information about labour market needs and jobseekers, which can be used for analysis and planning purposes. The platform, which is called the National Electronic Employment System (NEES), gives enterprises an opportunity to register their vacancies online; indicate their requirements of prospective candidates, such as minimum qualifications and work experience; and describe what they offer in terms of wages and other benefits. The labour market information provided by the system is also accessible to jobseekers, who can register online as unemployed and provide information about themselves<sup>41</sup>.

There is also ad-hoc collection and dissemination of evidence about labour market needs, such as NCHRD surveys of sectors and VET providers on behalf of the MoL. From 2013 until the time of the national report's preparation, there were 18 such surveys. In addition, some of the major VET providers, and occasionally the Ministry of Education too, collect evidence through tracer studies, which include feedback from employers and graduates about the skills needed and supplied<sup>42</sup>.

The challenge posed by these evidence collection efforts is that their results do not coincide. As a result, the messages they send to policy-makers and VET providers may diverge as well. While the NEES and NCHRD studies have some degree of alignment, the Al-Manar database delivers findings that diverge from the other two sources.

Jordan has also introduced governance solutions to promote the use of labour market evidence for VET planning. With donor support, the authorities have started establishing sector skills councils (SSCs) as national consultative bodies that represent employers, employees and the government and are charged with the identification of priority skills and training needs in different sectors. The stated purpose of the SSC initiative is to improve the relevance of TVET programmes and the effectiveness of their provision.

According to the national report, however, the results of such evidence collection efforts are not yet particularly effective in informing improvement in VET policy and programme content. For example, the available mechanisms for identifying and anticipating labour market needs are still largely disconnected from the education and training sector, because there are no clear procedures or mechanisms to initiate change on the basis of such labour market insights. At the time of this assessment, there was no evidence that training providers, community colleges or VET schools had managed to adapt their curricula or provision on the basis of such evidence<sup>43</sup>.

In addition, labour market evidence is of limited use in raising the relevance of VET in Jordan, because the process of updating VET training programmes and making their provision more flexible appears to be slow, loosely coordinated, and too burdensome to allow for a quick enough response to external demand. In part, this is due to the fragmentation of TVET providers and the TVET system more broadly. The sector is characterised by the presence of subsectors (vocational education, vocational training and technical education), each with its own bureaucratic system that seldom works together with the systems of the other subsectors (ETF, 2018). Policy-setting (including on VET content) was divided between the now defunct E-TVET Council, the Education Council and the Higher Education Council. This division hindered effective, swift decision-making and coordination at both central and middle levels of VET sector governance (ETF, 2017). As the current National Employment Strategy notes, 'the challenge is not so much the diversity of the providers, but rather the poor state of governance of the sector'<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> NRF B.1.7

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> National Employment Strategy 2016–2025 and NRF E.1.1

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Raise the responsiveness of TVET to labour market needs through evidence



Update TVET programmes regularly based on labour market information

Make the revision process faster and more agile

Modularise TVET programmes to facilitate this



### 2. Promote partnerships between TVET and the private sector, prioritising small and micro-enterprises



Increase involvement of employers, especially small and micro-enterprises, in setting TVET standards, designing courses and testing competencies

Bring TVET closer to the needs of small and micro-enterprises

### 3. Harmonise the provision of entrepreneurial learning across the TVET system



Prioritise entrepreneurial learning in all segments of TVET

Ensure a unified approach across the TVET system



## S FOR POLICY MAKERS

**4. Improve and diversify support for at-risk students in TVET**

Improve support for students, particularly women, struggling with their VET instruction

Develop solutions addressing a wider selection of risks to participation

**5. Improve conditions for female participation in mainstream TVET courses**

Raise awareness and gender sensitivity among TVET teachers and trainers

Establish more gender-friendly training environment

Create a national career guidance system encouraging women to expand their horizons

**6. Prioritise HCD measures that support labour market reintegration of inactive women**

Expand active labour market measures to include inactive women and young people

Expand CVET provision in line with labour market demand across the country

Make workplaces more welcoming to women and responsive to their needs



In EU countries there is a decades-long consensus that the main features of responsive and flexible VET programmes are their close links to employment, curriculum design that is the result of a continuous process informed by these links, and modular provision of programme content (ILO, 1999).

In Jordan, however, this flexibility and responsiveness are affected by the number of bodies and institutions that are involved in VET steering and content design. They include the recently established Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission (TVSD Commission) and the council of the TVSD Commission headed by the Minister for Labour, which are responsible for the approval of occupational standards and the coordination of decisions on VET content with other education, economic, social and human resources councils in Jordan. At the time of collecting evidence for this assessment, Jordan also had multiple VET provider and programme accreditation systems: the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions (AQACHEI), the CAQA<sup>45</sup> for vocational training, and the MoE for vocational education. These systems fall under the responsibility of different bodies and institutions.

The curricula, learning materials and occupational level tests for training programmes are developed by the Curricula and Testing Directorate (CTD) of the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC)<sup>46</sup>. Overall, the curricula in most TVET institutions are designed and updated centrally with limited autonomy at regional and provider levels<sup>47</sup>. The responsibility for programme updates is distributed among various bodies and departments, which may lead to a slowdown in the process. The national report notes that the development of curricula and learning materials for programmes that do not fall under the responsibility of the VTC has recently been moved to the National Centre for Curricula Development. The developed curricula and learning materials still need to be approved by the education council in the MoE before they can be applied in vocational schools<sup>48</sup>.

The allocation of staff (technical and administrative), equipment and funding for the implementation of updated VET programmes then requires an additional round of decisions and approvals by the central authorities. Also, the national report provides no evidence that any of the VET programmes, either updated or old, has been modularised to make it more responsive to the needs and requirements of learners and external stakeholders<sup>49</sup>.

### **Relevance through a sector-wide framework of national qualifications**

Jordan has recently taken steps to create a National Qualifications Framework for the entire education system. The new ten-level NQF, which replaces the Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework, was designed by the AQACHEI at the request of the Government and received approval in 2019<sup>50</sup>.

An important purpose of the new NQF is to support flexible pathways through the education and training system in order to create more educational opportunities and enhance the labour market relevance of learning outcomes<sup>51</sup>. According to the national report, the ambition is to provide access to different levels of qualifications in order to promote the vertical and horizontal mobility of students

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<sup>45</sup> The functions of CAQA have subsequently been integrated into the TVSD Commission and CAQA itself has been disbanded.

<sup>46</sup> NRF A.2.2

<sup>47</sup> NRF C.1.5.2

<sup>48</sup> NRF A.2.2

<sup>49</sup> The only exception is the GIZ project 'Training for water and energy efficiency development [TWEED]', which included an activity to develop didactic modules for the training of vocational trainers (NRF D.1.3.1).

<sup>50</sup> Law No. 19 of 2019

<sup>51</sup> NRF B.1.7

and their employability<sup>52</sup>. The introduction of the NQF is also expected to motivate and enable training providers to revise and upgrade their training programmes for better quality and relevance, and to meet the qualifications descriptors.<sup>53</sup>

The introduction of a system-wide NQF seems long overdue and is relevant to the problem at hand. However, it may be too early to comment on its effectiveness as a policy intervention. The new NQF project is only at the stage of finalising concepts and setting up the infrastructure needed for proper implementation. The horizontal and vertical mobility between educational pathways is still highly restricted, with only a fraction of secondary VET students able to complement their educational and training career by transitioning to another, higher level of education (ETF, 2018).

Here too, fragmentation remains a major challenge. Jordan is still struggling to make the transition to a sector-wide quality assurance and accreditation system that will replace the current three subsystems<sup>54</sup> and ensure the flexibility and adequate responsiveness of education and training to external demand. In addition, the sector skills councils that are set to play a key role in the design of qualifications are still in the initial stages of establishment. Their effectiveness will depend largely on the ability of Jordanian authorities and stakeholders to resolve the long-standing challenge of proper, timely involvement of private-sector representatives in VET planning and steering, as the next section on the promotion of private-sector partnerships discusses.

### **Promotion of partnerships with the private sector**

The involvement of private-sector employers in TVET governance and planning is a major priority in all national strategies that prioritise human capital development, such as the National Employment Strategy (2011–2020), the E-TVET Strategy (2014–2020), and the National Human Resources Development Strategy (2016–2025). One of the purposes of committing so prominently to the intensification of private-sector participation is to transform VET into a system that brings about relevant deliverables to address the demand for skills among employers<sup>55</sup>.

According to the 2019 Law on Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD Law), there are two main channels to promote employer involvement in VET. One is the participation of employers in the new TVSD Commission, where they will hold the majority of seats (8 of 14). The other is their involvement in sector skills councils, through which they are expected to help shape the content of VET programmes and the qualifications that these programmes provide. The national report underlines that these new opportunities have been designed specifically to address the problem of skills mismatch and limited VET relevance<sup>56</sup>.

Employers in many of the economy's key sectors are well organised and have the capacity to participate in such ways, so the renewed effort of authorities to engage employers in VET is a step in the right direction. Jordan has several, well-organised chambers of industry in all major cities, such as Amman, Zarqa and Irbid, and it also has one at the national level. In addition, there are more than 50 employers' associations and unions in different sectors (albeit none of them is represented in the council of the TVSD Commission), such as industry, ICT, tourism, banking, agriculture, trades, hospitals and health care, crafts professions and shops, and transportation and distribution<sup>57</sup>. It remains to be seen whether these new initiatives will manage to bring about change in a context in

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<sup>52</sup> NRF B.1.5

<sup>53</sup> NRF A.2.1

<sup>54</sup> See <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/torino-process-2014-jordan>

<sup>55</sup> NRF B.1.5

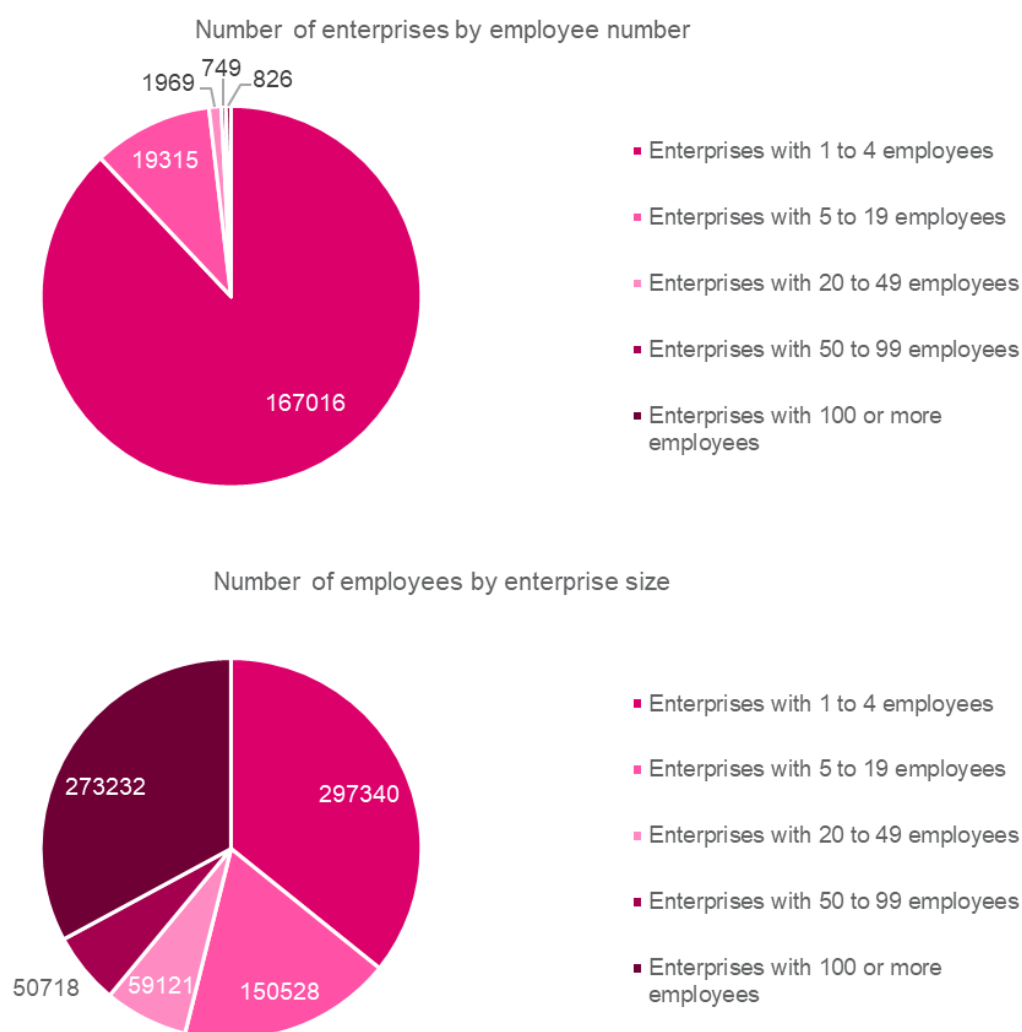
<sup>56</sup> NRF B.1.3 and B.1.7

<sup>57</sup> NRF B.2.II

which private-sector participation in education and training has traditionally lagged behind expectations, even in areas of cooperation in which financial incentives are usually strong for both sides, such as university–industry collaborations (Rybníček & Königsgruber, 2018)<sup>58</sup>.

As noted in the national report, employers are mainly involved in the governance of the TVET sector through their representation on boards of directors or governing councils, as well as in the implementation of some joint donor-supported projects. However, they are still far behind in playing the leadership role that the various strategies aspire for them to take in VET governance, policy-setting, and programme planning<sup>59</sup>. Employers are not yet involved in VET in terms of participation in the setting of standards, the design of content, and the testing of competencies, and they still tend to be seen by the authorities and VET providers as ‘guests rather than stakeholders’ (ETF, 2017).

**FIGURE 5. PRIVATE-SECTOR EMPLOYMENT IN JORDAN BY ENTERPRISE SIZE AND NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED (2017)**



Source of data: Department of Statistics Jordan

<sup>58</sup> In 2019, Jordan ranked 57th globally on the index of university–industry collaboration in R&D, according to the 2019 Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum. See <http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-report-2019/competitiveness-rankings/#series=EOSQ072>

<sup>59</sup> NRF B.2.II

One aspect of the problem is that the bodies representing the private sector do not necessarily capture the full range of employer needs, given that they are mostly geared towards the needs of larger enterprises, whereas the economy of Jordan is dominated by small and micro-enterprises of less than 20 employees. Micro-enterprises with four employees or fewer account for most of the job creation in Jordan (Figure 5), but their needs are the most difficult to capture and record, partly because they are the most likely to employ people informally<sup>60</sup>.

### **Boosting the labour market relevance of VET through entrepreneurial learning**

Jordan is mobilising entrepreneurial learning (EL) to improve the labour market relevance of its education and training system. The National Human Resources Development Strategy, for example, states that the introduction of EL in technical and vocational programmes is a strategic objective, which by 2025 should help to 'substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship'<sup>61</sup>.

By identifying EL as a policy response to the limited relevance of education and training, Jordan follows a major international trend. In the EU, education for entrepreneurship is seen as a potentially effective solution to boost labour market relevance in initial vocational training, because students are close to entering working life and self-employment may be a valuable option for many of them (European Commission, 2009). Beyond the EU, entrepreneurial learning is also one of the dominant themes in the global discourse on how to address the persistent mismatch between the skills delivered through education and training and the economic and labour market needs of countries (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2019a).

Data from a 2019 tracer study carried out by the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) and cited in the national report suggest that the introduction of entrepreneurial learning in Jordanian VET is a worthwhile investment in order to raise the labour market relevance of VET outcomes. Of the self-employed VET graduates who started a business, close to 69% worked in sectors that matched their training specialisations, and their wages were also higher than the average income of peers working in the same field and professional position<sup>62</sup>. This is an encouraging finding that merits further exploration and promotion among future graduates in order to encourage more self-employment and business creation, especially considering that the overall readiness of working-age people to start their own business in Jordan has been on the decline in recent years (Figure 6).

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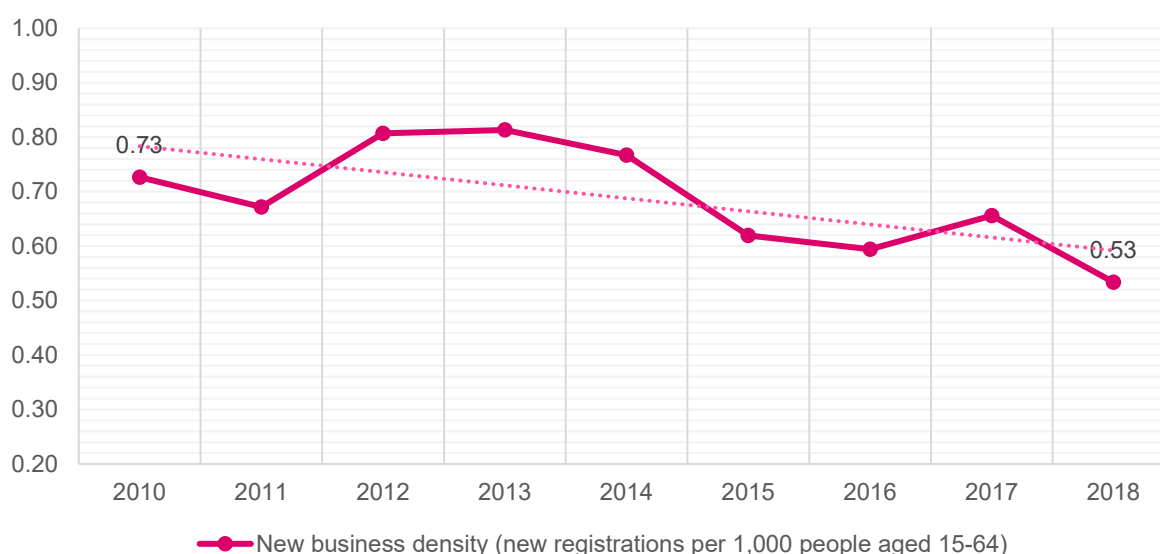
<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> NRF B.2.2.1

<sup>62</sup> NRF B.2.2.1



**FIGURE 6. BUSINESS CREATION IN JORDAN BY DENSITY OF NEW BUSINESSES (2010–2018)**



Source: World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI) database

However, there are also risk factors that may impede the effectiveness of these and other EL-related policies. In addition to structural problems such as red tape and fiscal and investment instability (World Bank, 2020), another major risk is the persistently weak entrepreneurial culture among young people in Jordan, which is partly due to the lack of focus on EL in most TVET and higher education programmes<sup>63</sup>.

While governance issues may explain part of the problem mentioned above, they also pose a serious threat to the effectiveness of EL as a policy measure in VET. Specifically, the implementation of entrepreneurial learning follows the division lines of governance responsibilities for the VET sector and is therefore uneven across the system.

The training programmes of the VTC, for instance, envisage the provision of 75 hours of EL-related training, which includes communication, vocational tracks, self-marketing, problem-solving, life skills, entrepreneurship and self-employment, and e-government. At the same time, the vocational providers under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education do not provide any entrepreneurship training, while Balqa Applied University (BAU) and its affiliated community colleges offer only a single entrepreneurship skills course as part of the intermediate college diploma. Finally, the Development and Employment Fund (DEF) implements financing programmes to support TVET graduates who wish to start their own business, but the DEF programmes have no bearing on the labour market relevance of any TVET content provided before graduation<sup>64</sup>.

### 3.1.3 Recommendations

#### R.1 Raise the responsiveness of TVET to labour market needs by focusing on evidence

Jordan is investing in the development of education and training databases and labour market information systems (LMISs) with the ambition of using the evidence to improve the labour market relevance of TVET outcomes. However, the TVET sector is largely unprepared to use the evidence for policy and planning purposes. There are no mechanisms for proper follow-up on the basis of the

<sup>63</sup> National Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Medium and Small Enterprise Development 2016–2020 and NRF B.2.2

<sup>64</sup> NRF B.2.2



evidence in terms of adapting the course offering or content, and the process of updating the training programmes is complex, burdensome and slow.

Addressing these shortcomings is entirely within the remit of the TVET sector. The ETF recommends establishing a process of regular (annual) reviews and – where needed – updates of TVET programmes in all TVET subsectors based on regular screening and consideration of labour market evidence provided by the LMIS. This could be done by reinforcing the mandate of existing bodies, such as the newly established sector skills councils, to coordinate with the private sector. In this respect, it would be important to put the annual review of programme relevance based on labour market evidence high on the agenda of the councils responsible for governing the various segments of TVET in Jordan, most notably the TVSD Commission in keeping with its mandate to support youth and address unemployment through better TVET.

Additionally, the ETF recommends a revision of the process for updating TVET programmes to bring the process closer to VET providers and make it faster and more agile. The modularisation of programmes could be an important element in this effort.

## **R.2 Prioritise small and micro-enterprises in the promotion of partnerships between TVET and the private sector**

The involvement of private-sector employers in TVET governance and planning is a major priority in all national strategies that prioritise human capital development. The employers are mainly involved in the governance of TVET through their participation on boards of directors or governing councils. However, their de facto role in VET governance, policy-setting and programme planning is still limited, and the choice of partners from the private sector is not representative.

The ETF recommends expanding the involvement of employers to include their participation in the setting of TVET standards, the design of training content, and the testing of competencies provided by TVET. An extra effort should be invested in capturing the needs of small and micro-enterprises, which at the time of this assessment were the dominant drivers of job creation in the country. This could be done by diversifying the current profile of private-sector representatives on the TVSD Commission to reflect the composition of the labour market more accurately. In addition to participation, financial incentives and support, the key to involving small and micro-businesses would be to provide them with the prospect of training that links to their business needs.

## **R.3 Harmonise the provision of entrepreneurial learning across the TVET system**

In line with international trends and good practice, Jordan is at work on raising the relevance of TVET programmes and curricula by enriching them with entrepreneurial learning (EL) content. However, there are structural problems with implementation. At the time of this assessment, most TVET and higher education programmes did not include any focus on EL, and there was an uneven level of commitment to the implementation of EL across the TVET system.

The ETF recommends prioritising EL in all segments of TVET irrespective of the division of governance responsibilities for the sector, and ensuring that there is a unified approach to the integration of EL in curricula across the TVET system. This could be done, for instance, by committing to minimum standards for EL provision, such as a comparable number of hours and a comparable choice of EL elements, which may include the current VTC focus on communication, vocational tracks, self-marketing, problem-solving, life skills, entrepreneurship and self-employment.

## 3.2 Underutilisation of human capital and of opportunities for human capital development for youth and women

### 3.2.1 Description of the problem

Equitable access to education, training and employment opportunities is a strategic priority in all policy plans for human capital development in Jordan. The current institutional strategies of both the VTC and the MoE commit to ensuring participation in education and employment for all groups and segments of the Jordanian population<sup>65</sup>. This has been a long-term policy goal at least since 2006 and the establishment of the National Agenda 2006–2015<sup>66</sup>.

Despite the long-term commitment, certain groups of Jordanian citizens continue to be disadvantaged in terms of access to education and employment, which in turn prevents them from contributing to the social and economic development of the country and hampers their prospects for individual prosperity and well-being.

The two most affected groups are women and youth of secondary-school age. The rate of female workforce participation is persistently low, while the propensity of youth to avoid technical and vocational education as a choice of study hampers the effectiveness of policies that promote HCD through TVET. The latter also limits the employment prospects of young people, especially young women.

The next sections provide further details on these HCD challenges.

#### **Low rate of participation in technical and vocational education and training**

According to data from school-to-work transition surveys, TVET graduates have a better chance of finding work and are less likely to become economically inactive. They also stand a better chance of higher returns on their investment in education by finding employment in the private sector (OECD, 2018), which in times of declining opportunities for public-sector employment puts them at a clear advantage over graduates from general secondary and even higher education.

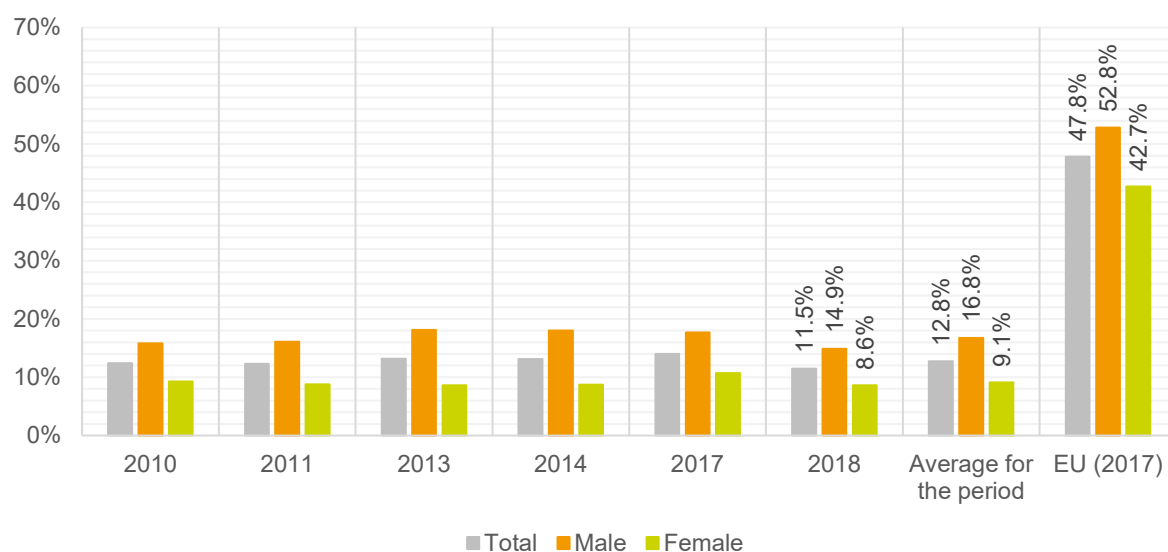
Messages based on such evidence, however, do not seem to be sufficient to convince youth and their families in Jordan of the merits of making TVET their choice of study. Only a fraction of young people of school age opt for secondary VET (12.8% on average since 2010, as shown in Figure 7), which is considerably lower than in OECD and EU countries, where the share is closer to 50%. The low rate of participation also stands in stark contrast with the importance that Jordan places on TVET as a policy measure to promote economic development and youth employment.

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<sup>65</sup> As quoted in NRF C.2.3

<sup>66</sup> <http://inform.gov.jo/en-us/By-Date/Report-Details/ArticleId/5/2006-2015-National-Agenda>

**FIGURE 7. STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL UPPER SECONDARY STUDENTS (ISCED LEVEL 3) IN JORDAN (2010–2018) AND THE EU-28 (2017)**



Sources: Eurostat and UNESCO UIS

The national report suggests that most of those who enrol in VET would prefer instead to join a general education track that leads to higher education. The vast majority of those joining VTC or MoE VET programmes do so because their academic success is too low to qualify them for non-vocational alternatives<sup>67</sup>. In addition, many are concerned about TVET as a dead end because of the limited horizontal and vertical mobility between vocational and general education/academic pathways<sup>68</sup>.

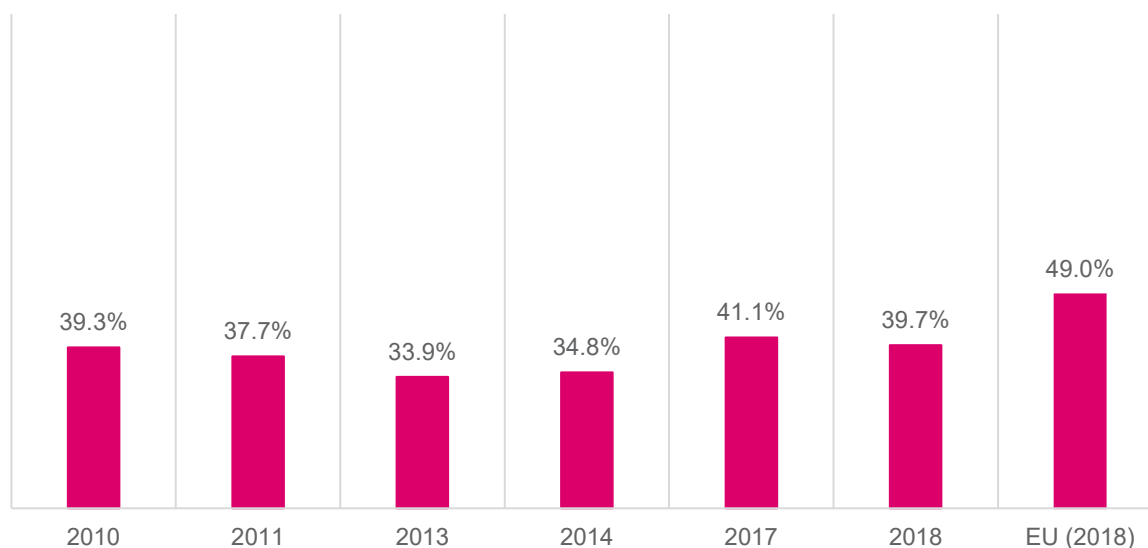
The averages on participation in VET hide large variations in enrolment between regions, types of providers, and groups of students. Young women benefit far less from education and training opportunities in VET than young men (Figure 8), and remote and rural providers in the network of the Vocational and Training Corporation (VTC) are more likely to struggle to fill their enrolment capacity than providers in urban areas, particularly Amman<sup>69</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> NRF C.2.1

<sup>68</sup> National Human Resource Development Strategy 2016–2025 and NRF C.1.1

<sup>69</sup> NRF C.1.1

**FIGURE 8. FEMALE STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AT UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL (ISCED 3) AS A SHARE OF TOTAL ENROLMENT IN SUCH PROGRAMMES**



Sources: Eurostat and UNESCO UIS

VET programmes under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education are more attractive to prospective students than those offered by the VTC, and count twice as many students even though they offer a comparable number of places to those in the VTC system<sup>70</sup>. The national report suggests that the reason behind the preference for MoE programmes is not their quality or labour market relevance, but the better prospect for progression to higher education that their certificates provide. As Figure 7 shows, even with the higher level of participation in these programmes, VET accounted for only 11.5% of total secondary education enrolment in 2018 (the latest year for which data exist).

### Limited participation in the labour market

Stakeholders, experts and external observers in Jordan agree that one of the country's major labour market challenges is its persistently high rate of unemployment<sup>71</sup>, particularly among youth of working age (40.6% in 2019) and women (59% in 2019) (Figure 9). Young women are more likely to become NEETs<sup>72</sup> than young men. In 2017, close to half (48.2%) of all women aged 15–24 in Jordan were not in employment, education or training. In the same year young women accounted for over 60% of all NEETs in the country<sup>73</sup>.

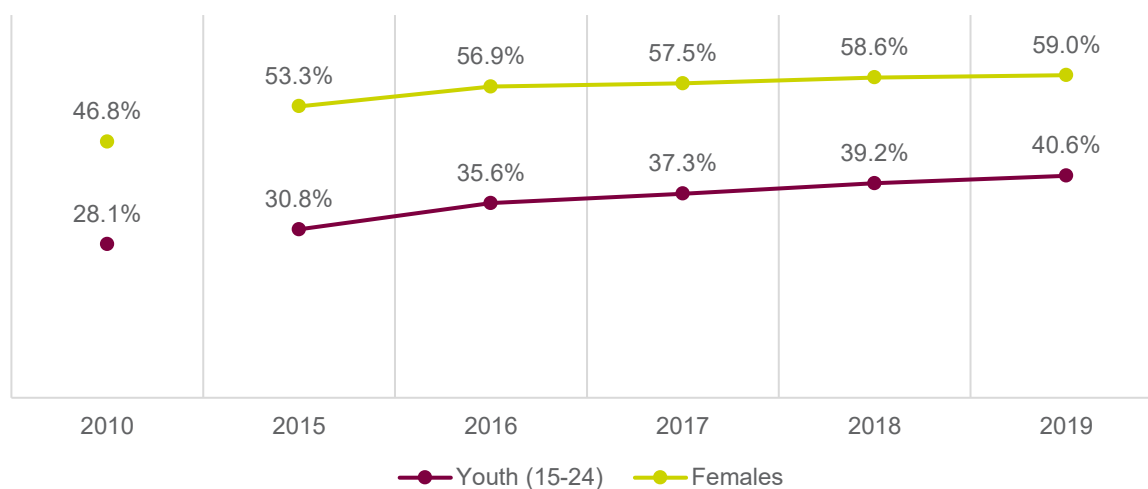
<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> NRF B.1.1

<sup>72</sup> Youth aged 15–24 who are not in employment, education or training

<sup>73</sup> Source: ETF database

**FIGURE 9. SHARE OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH AND WOMEN OF WORKING AGE IN JORDAN (2010–2019)**



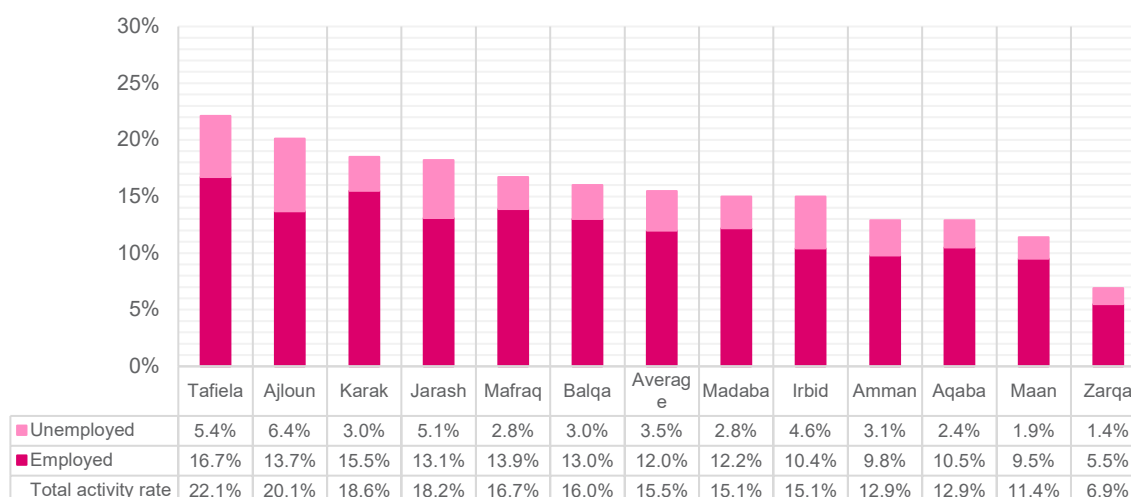
Source: ETF database

Note: 'youth' refers to young people aged 15–24, while 'working age' refers to people aged 15–64

Jordan also has one of the lowest rates of female economic activity (15.5%) worldwide<sup>74</sup>, although there are considerable differences between governorates (Figure 10). In Tafiela and Ajloun, for example, more than one-fifth of the female population of working age is either employed or looking for employment. This figure is considerably above the average for the country, as is the figure for Karak and Jarash, where around 18% of women of working age are economically active.

At the same time, in a number of other regions such as Aqaba, Maan, Zarqa and the capital Amman, over 85% of women are neither working nor looking for a job. In Zarqa, less than 7% of women of working age are economically active, while in Amman and Aqaba the figure is considerably higher (12.9%) but still below the national average, as is the rate of activity in Maan (11.4%).

**FIGURE 10. ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE WOMEN BY ECONOMIC ACTIVITY STATUS AND GOVERNORATE, AS A SHARE OF THE FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15+ (2019)**



Source of data: Department of Statistics of Jordan at [http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos\\_home\\_e/main/linked-html/Emp&Un.htm](http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/linked-html/Emp&Un.htm)

<sup>74</sup> NRF B.1.1

Of the comparatively modest number of women in Jordan who make the transition to employment and manage to stay economically active and employed, some 73% work in professions that require a high level of skills and high educational attainment, unlike the majority of men in employment (68.5%) who tend to work in jobs that require a secondary education degree (Table 4).

**TABLE 4. EMPLOYMENT BY BROAD ISCO-08 OCCUPATIONS AND GENDER IN JORDAN, IN % OF THE POPULATION AGED 15+ (2019)**

	Males	Females
Jobs requiring a low level of skills	6.9%	6.4%
Jobs requiring a medium level of skills	68.5%	20.3%
Jobs requiring a high level of skills	24.5%	73.3%

Source: ETF database

Note: 'low' refers to ISCO-08 Group 9; 'medium' refers to ISCO-08 Groups 4–8; 'high' refers to ISCO-08 Groups 1–3

The concentration of women of working age at the two extreme ends of the employment statistic, together with the varying, yet consistently low rate of their economic activity across the country, suggests that there is a considerable divide in the employment prospects of women in Jordan. Not only the national report, but also prior reports by external observers suggest that the divide runs along the lines of disadvantage associated with the place of residence of girls and women, their socio-economic background, their age and their educational attainment.

Young mothers, for example, are limited to employment opportunities that can provide appropriate working conditions in terms of flexibility and workload<sup>75</sup> and such opportunities are notoriously scarce in Jordan (ETF, 2016b). Table 4 also suggests that women with a low-to-medium level of skills and lower than tertiary education are less likely to find and/or retain a job, while the data in Figure 10 illustrate that the likelihood of participation by women in the labour market is also determined by their place of residence. In 2019, for example, a woman in Tafiela was three times more likely to be in employment or looking for a job than a woman in Zarqa, the governorate with the lowest rate of economic activity among women that year (Figure 10).

One aspect of the problem described here is the dramatically unequal distribution of opportunities for labour market participation across the country. In Amman, women account for over 40% of total unemployment, followed by Irbid with 24.7% and Balqa with 7%. As a result, their unemployment rate does not seem to depend on the rate of their participation in the economy: in regions where the female population is the most active, like Tafiela and Ajloun, the unemployment rate for women is also the lowest, at 2% and 4.3%, respectively (Table 5).

<sup>75</sup> NRF A.3.2

**TABLE 5. FEMALE ACTIVITY RATE AND UNEMPLOYMENT AS A SHARE OF TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT IN JORDAN, BY GOVERNORATE (2019)**

Governorate	Rate of female unemployment	Female activity rate	Share of households in the top two annual income quintiles*
Amman	40.7%	12.9%	12.4%
Irbid	24.7%	15.1%	5.6%
Balqa	7.0%	16.0%	7.9%
Zarqa	5.7%	6.9%	4.7%
Mafrq	4.3%	16.7%	3.0%
Ajloun	4.3%	20.1%	4.1%
Karak	3.6%	18.6%	10.1%
Jarash	3.2%	18.2%	3.9%
Tafiela	2.0%	22.1%	4.0%
Aqaba	1.9%	12.9%	5.0%
Madaba	1.8%	15.1%	5.1%
Maan	1.0%	11.4%	3.4%

Source: Department of Statistics of Jordan

\* Annual income above JOD 22 500

In fact, with exception of the governorate of Karak, women are most likely to struggle finding a job in the more prosperous parts of the country, such as Amman, Balqa or Irbid. Considering that economic growth tends to be positively associated with the creation of jobs (Kapsos, 2005), this fact implies that economic advancement in Jordan does not necessarily translate into the creation of job opportunities for women despite commitments to the contrary in numerous projects and development strategies, as the next section describes. The same also appears to be true for youth. According to a transition survey cited in the national report, 58% of young people waiting to make the transition to employment would reject jobs offers because of inadequate pay or inappropriate workplace conditions<sup>76</sup>.

### 3.2.2 Policy responses and gaps

The Jordanian authorities have introduced measures to address a variety of challenges concerning education, training and labour market participation. Some of the measures focus specifically on the low rate of participation in education and training, while others target the difficulties of youth and women to enter the labour market. For the sake of clarity, these two policy aims are discussed separately below in some detail.

#### Description and effectiveness of policies addressing low participation in HCD through VET

In Jordan, the goal of attracting youth to HCD opportunities through TVET is shared among various national development strategies and the institutional strategies of bodies responsible for segments of the TVET provider network, such as the Vocational and Training Corporation and the Ministry of Education. There is also a third group of commitments to meet the same goal, which are formulated in the terms of reference and memoranda that underpin projects by the donor community in Jordan.

<sup>76</sup> NRF B.1.1.1

In terms of national development strategies, the already completed National Agenda 2006–2015 has in many ways set the strategic course and choice of priorities for all subsequent strategies, such as the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020 and the National E-TVET Strategy 2014–2020. Each places a priority on social inclusion and the provision of opportunities for every Jordanian citizen, whereas the E-TVET Strategy is naturally richer in sector-specific commitments and operational detail, such as setting a commitment to promote the participation specifically of women and youth. The overarching strategic goal is to promote economic growth and social development through policies to create an effective, unified E-TVET system that enables ‘all Jordanians to fulfil their career aspirations’<sup>77</sup>.

The national report notes that an action plan was created to implement the strategy. However, it has never been implemented, nor is there a system to monitor progress and follow up implementation<sup>78</sup>. Indeed, translating priorities for participation in HCD opportunities through TVET into operational commitments is left to the bodies in charge of various segments of the TVET system.

In its strategic plan until 2024, for example, the VTC has adopted various programmes to promote equal treatment and enrolment opportunities in its training programmes, including a commitment to boost female participation in vocational training by at least 3%<sup>79</sup>. The Ministry of Education has also set strategic objectives to include equal access to education and to VET in particular, with specific commitments to invest in infrastructure, develop inclusive education, and open up opportunities for lifelong learning. The MoE’s Strategic Plan 2018–2022 envisages the establishment of 15 specialised vocational schools, half of which will be for females, and the renovation of infrastructure for all VET schools under MoE responsibility as a means to promote better VET access. In addition, the MoE implements several programmes of non-formal learning that aim to give second-chance training opportunities to adults and youth who have dropped out of education<sup>80</sup>.

Finally, Jordan also provides opportunities for low-fee and no-fee participation in TVET in various governorates with the hope that it will stimulate the participation of people from marginalised settings, especially women. Some of the opportunities come in the form of VET-related programmes financed by the TVSD Commission (previously the ETVET Fund), for instance, opening satellite factories in rural areas, offering full payment of training fees for VTC trainees to cover their transport costs and work clothes, and providing financial support<sup>81</sup>.

The overall success of the measures remains mixed, with female enrolment rates in VET fluctuating from year to year, sometimes by as much as 12% (from 2015 to 2016, as Figure 11 shows). Jordan also has a high rate of early leavers, which is considerably higher than in EU countries (Table 6) and, as Figure 7 shows, the rate of participation in VET is persistently low in international comparison (11.5% in 2018), especially for young women (8.6% in the same year).

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<sup>77</sup> NRF A.2.4.1 and National E-TVET Strategy 2014–2020, Pillar No. 3

<sup>78</sup> NRF A.2.4

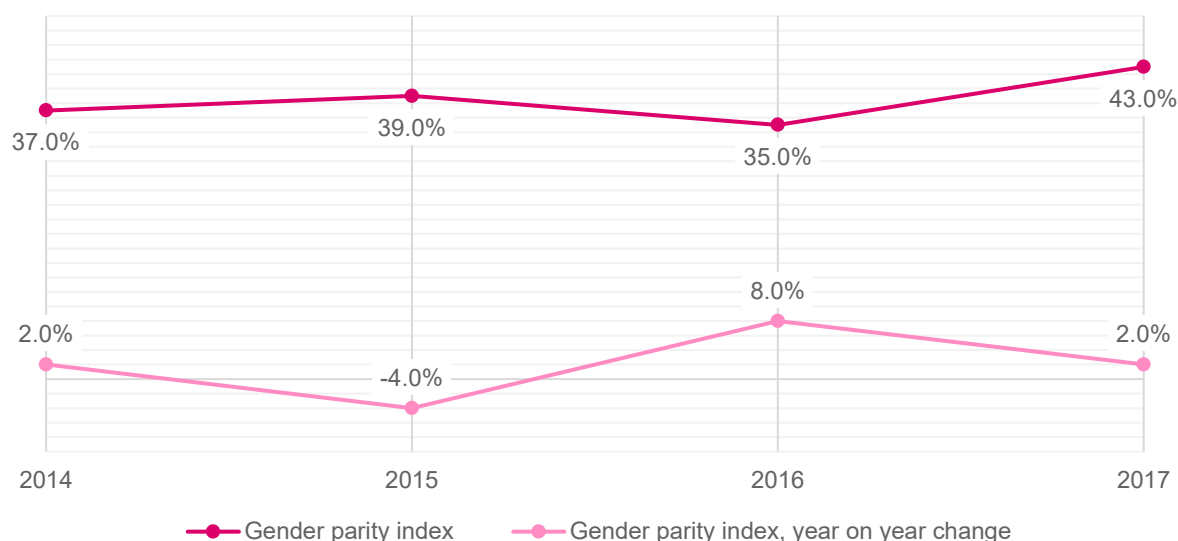
<sup>79</sup> NRF C.2.3

<sup>80</sup> Strategic Plan 2018–2022 of the Ministry of Education, and NRF C.2.4.

<sup>81</sup> NRF C.1.4



**FIGURE 11. GENDER PARITY INDEX OF FEMALE ENROLMENT IN VTC PROGRAMMES, YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE (2014–2017)**



Source: National Torino Process report (NRF C.2.3)

**TABLE 6. EARLY LEAVERS FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING (% AGED 18–24) BY SEX IN JORDAN AND THE EU (2017)**

	Jordan	EU-28
Total	51.3%	10.5%
Male	56.5%	12.1%
Female	45.7%	8.9%

Source: ETF database and Eurostat

Such data suggest that the intended effect of the policy measures may be susceptible to the adverse influence of factors that have not yet been fully taken into consideration. One of the factors is the lack of proper support for students, particularly female students, during the training. According to the national report, the only support measure in place is to extend the length of training for those who fail to meet the minimum requirements for advancement or graduation. Although extensions are granted with care and on a case-by-case basis, the national report suggests that the measure itself addresses only one of many possible reasons why VET students, particularly women and students from disadvantaged backgrounds, may struggle to learn and/or be at risk of dropping out: because they have insufficient time to follow the training.

Risks to participation in education and training, however, may stem from a wide variety of individual, educational and socio-economic factors (CEDEFOP, 2016)<sup>82</sup>. Examples include a vulnerable family background, the lack of individualised approaches to teaching, mismatch between training programmes and subjects within the programmes, etc., all of which may jeopardise the chances of students to access VET, make progress and ultimately graduate. The promotion of access and success in VET would normally require solutions that are diversified enough to take all of these possibilities into account.

<sup>82</sup> See also Communication by the European Commission COM (2011) 18 final of 31 January 2011.

Another factor that limits the effectiveness of policies to promote VET access and participation is fragmentation in the implementation of strategic priorities among the various bodies in charge of VET in Jordan. There is little evidence of coordination or integration in the implementation of these and other priorities among the various TVET systems<sup>83</sup>. The measures introduced by the MoE do not take into account the measures implemented by the VTC or BAU with its network of colleges, or vice versa. According to stakeholders in the discussion meetings held for the national report, there is ample overlap and even competition for students and donor support targeting VET access and equity.

The national report describes a third possible reason for the limited traction of policies, which is the relative marginalisation of VET in comparison with other segments of the education and training system, together with a lack of flexibility in the provision of VET to accommodate the different learning needs and circumstances of at-risk learners. Not only the report, but also the National Human Resource Development Strategy notes that for some years now, vocationally oriented subjects have been scaled back in the curricula of all schools in favour of allocating more time to promoting literacy and numeracy. In turn, this results in a lack of awareness about VET and reinforces the cultural stigma of choosing technical and vocational paths over academically oriented ones. It also results in streaming low performing students into VET, which further diminishes the attractiveness of the sector. In addition, the timing of classes in VET schools is limited to daytime hours, which constrains the enrolment prospects for those who, for family or work-related reasons, can attend only in the evenings<sup>84</sup>.

### **Description and effectiveness of policies addressing limited youth and female participation in employment**

In Jordan, the empowerment of youth and women to participate in the economy is a priority in every major strategy for economic, social and HCD-related development. As with other priorities, the course in this respect was set by the National Agenda 2006–2015, which stated that female participation in the labour force was a main objective. Subsequent strategies have consistently carried on the commitment. Examples include the E-TVET Strategy, which has a pillar devoted to labour market relevance and inclusiveness of opportunities; the National Employment Strategy, which was specifically developed to address the low employability and unemployment of Jordanians (especially youth and women); and the Jordan Poverty Reduction Strategy, which aims to provide gainful employment for all Jordanians, especially youth, women, and people with disabilities.

The national authorities actively translate these commitments into actions. Some of the actions rely on the participation of women and youth in formal education and training. Others involve training provided in the form of active labour market policy (ALMP) measures. Finally, a third group of actions is organised and implemented in the context of projects supported by bilateral donors. All of these actions are rich in detail and ambition, but there is also scope for improvement to raise their effectiveness and impact, as discussed below.

### **Measures in the domain of formal education and training**

The measures in formal education and training include initial VET programmes provided by the VTC with a focus on labour market relevance through work-based learning (WBL) in cooperation with the private sector, and also through programmes by the National Employment and Training Company (NET) with a similar focus and priority, where trainees are required to spend up to one-third of their

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<sup>83</sup> NRF B.II

<sup>84</sup> NRF C.1.3

training time gaining experience on the job<sup>85</sup>. The same is true for the VET programmes of Balqa Applied University, where on-the-job experience is one of the conditions for successful graduation.

At the same time the VET programmes offered by providers under the responsibility of the MoE, which are also more popular in terms of student interest and enrolment, are considerably more limited in WBL opportunities. The national report notes that the practical training in these programmes takes place for the most part in the workshops of VET schools, not in enterprises.

A shared weakness of the current solutions in the domain of formal education and training is that they fail to reach some of their target populations, notably women who are inactive or looking for employment. According to the national report, the rate of enrolment in apprenticeships and other forms of WBL remains unsatisfactory, mostly owing to cultural limitations and the failure of providers and partner enterprises to provide appropriate working conditions for women. Most young women in Jordan continue opting for general education instead of VET, and those who do enrol in VET usually limit their choice of programme to one of the few vocational streams provided in women-friendly surroundings in traditional female professions like hairdressing and nursing, which are not necessarily in demand in the labour market (ETF, 2016b). As long as the measures that support young women through formal education and training fail to take into consideration and address these entrenched patterns of enrolment, they may not be as effective in promoting female participation in employment.

### Measures in the domain of ALMP

The national reporting framework of the Torino Process notes that ALMPs commonly aim to motivate and incentivise people to look for employment, make them more employable through retraining, expand the opportunities for those who are inactive, etc. At the time of this assessment, several initiatives in Jordan were directed at reducing the high unemployment rate of youth and women through training and retraining, but they were achieving mixed success.

A prominent example of these initiatives is the satellite factories project<sup>86</sup>. Launched in 2008 by the Ministry of Labour (MoL), the project seeks to reduce unemployment among young women in rural areas by encouraging investors to establish factories or affiliate production sites in disadvantaged areas and create employment opportunities for women. According to the MoL, by 2018 the initiative had helped to open 24 garment factories across Jordan that employed close to 5 900 employees, 38% of which were women<sup>87</sup>.

Another, more recent initiative of the MoL is the National Service Programme. The programme provides vocational and technical training to youth in the age group 18–30 for a length of five months, with male participants spending an additional month with the military. The vocational training is offered in the fields of industry, agriculture, water technology, renewable energy, logistics, transportation, tourism, construction, food processing and garments. The technical training covers pre-school education, ICT and engineering. The declared target of the programme is to train and employ a total of 20 000 participants<sup>88</sup>.

Both of these initiatives are promising. While the latter one is too recent yet to have gained traction, the former one is yielding tangible results. Both, however, share a common weakness: their narrow focus on the economically active population. None of the actions addresses economic inactivity, especially among women of working age, which is a far more widespread challenge than

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<sup>85</sup> NRF D.1.1.2

<sup>86</sup> NRF B.1.6

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. and <http://www.mol.gov.jo>

<sup>88</sup> <http://khedmetwatan.jo>

unemployment. According to data from the Department of Statistics, the share of working-age women who may potentially be left out because they are inactive was over 96% in 2019<sup>89</sup>. Another challenge with the two initiatives is that they are designed and implemented by international organisations with little involvement of the national authorities.

### Projects and donor-supported initiatives

According to combined data from the database of gender programmes of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) and the national report,<sup>90</sup> close to 100 projects have been tagged as women's economic empowerment projects since 2015. Of these, more than one-fifth are listed as supporting vocational training, 35 have a skills development component, and 13 are listed as supporting women entrepreneurs (ETF, 2016b). Some 60% of the projects focus on promoting employment in the service sector, while the remaining projects target the manufacturing sector.

It is beyond the scope of this assessment to evaluate the impact of bilateral support for female and youth participation in employment. However, it is important to note that the priority of the Jordanian authorities to improve the use of human capital in the economy by supporting youth and women through education and training coincides fully with the relative importance attached to this strategic task by bilateral donors in their projects. Women are the intended beneficiaries of some 70% of these projects, and as many as 80% have a combined focus on youth and women<sup>91</sup>. Overall, the biggest number of donor projects in education and training are projects that promote workforce participation and offer job placement services.

One of the major challenges is to mainstream project insights and achievements into the routine operation of the education and training system and adopt solutions and ideas that have proven their effectiveness and value as standard practice in the operation of labour market services. Although most projects in education and training have a plan to do so as part of their sustainability considerations, there is no evidence that the plans have led to the adoption of system-wide changes on the basis of project results (see also Section 2.3).

Another challenge, which commonly remains unaddressed because it is often beyond the remit of projects that support the (re)integration of youth and women through education and training, relates to the unfavourable working conditions that come with most job opportunities, especially those in the private sector, which also happen to be the most numerous. Prior reports have established that working conditions and the attitudes of employers towards female employees are among the key factors that prevent young (female) graduates from finding their first employment, discourage women in employment from staying employed, and impede those who are not active from re-entering the labour market. The absorption capacity of the labour market for female jobseekers remains weak, as does its responsiveness to the more specific requirements of female workers, particularly mothers and women transitioning from inactivity to work (ETF, 2016b; ETF, 2016a).

### Shared policy weaknesses

According to some of the prior analysis of measures that promote the participation of youth and women in employment in Jordan, policies do not pay sufficient attention to the diversity of their intended beneficiaries (ETF, 2016a). The needs of young female graduates in search of their first job are likely to be different from those of women who are forced to leave their jobs and become inactive, while the needs of both groups also differ from the needs and possibilities of women who have been economically inactive for a prolonged period of time. At the time of this assessment, there was no

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<sup>89</sup> See Department of Statistics of Jordan, [http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos\\_home\\_e/main/linked-html/Emp&Un.htm](http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/linked-html/Emp&Un.htm)

<sup>90</sup> See <http://www.mop.gov.jo/> and NRF A.2.4.1

<sup>91</sup> NRF A.3.5.

evidence that such a differentiation by target group had gained any traction in the policy planning and implementation in this area.

In the same vein, the policy responses described in the national report address only a narrow selection of the factors that prevent youth and women from participating in the national economy. Most commonly, the focus is on remedies to address skills mismatch, notably the supply of skills through education and training and the educational choices of women. Little is done, however, to address other contributing factors, such as unfavourable employment conditions and the attitudes and beliefs within the socio-economic and family contexts of women, which may be preventing their transition from inactivity and their ability to retain a job.

Addressing these factors in a more balanced way would involve designing measures that provide support for youth and women at several transition points from and to the world of work, for example from education to work or from inactivity to employment. The measures would also seek to prevent the transition from work to inactivity. To be effective, support policies should be differentiated and comprehensive enough to equip youth and women to make a successful transition from education or inactivity to employment, encourage and guide them in making the transition, and empower and support them to stay in employment (ETF, 2016a).

### 3.2.3 Recommendations

#### **R.4 Improve and diversify support for at-risk students in TVET**

The Jordanian authorities have introduced a range of policy measures to attract youth and women to opportunities for HCD through VET, but there are also some limitations that prevent the measures from gaining traction and supporting their intended beneficiaries.

One of the limitations is the lack of proper support for students, particularly female students, who may be struggling with their VET instruction. At the time of this assessment, the only form of support that they received was to extend the length of their training. The ETF recommends developing solutions that address a wider selection of risks to participation, such as the poor quality of teaching, the fact that the family situation of students may call for greater flexibility in the timing of courses, the lack of an individualised approach to teaching, etc. A renewed discussion of these challenges should be put high on the work agenda of the TVSD Commission as well.

#### **R.5 Improve the conditions for female participation in mainstream TVET courses**

Jordan has introduced various measures to empower youth and women to participate in the labour market. Some of the measures lie in the domain of formal education and training and involve the promotion of work-based learning and participation in TVET in general as a means to facilitate a successful transition to employment. However, TVET providers and private-sector providers do not always create working conditions that are appropriate for women in apprenticeship schemes. Also, despite all opportunities, prospective female students still tend to select programmes in traditional female occupations that may not be in demand in the labour market.

The ETF recommends improving the conditions for female participation in mainstream TVET courses. This should include improving the course offer, making it more gender-sensitive, raising awareness and gender sensitivity among TVET teachers and trainers, and establishing more gender-friendly training environments.

The ETF also reiterates a recommendation from 2016 (ETF, 2016b) to set up a comprehensive, national career guidance system where the course counselling includes a focus on encouraging women to expand their options when choosing educational fields of study.

## **R.6 Prioritise HCD measures that support the reintegration of inactive women into the labour market**

At the time of this assessment, there were several ALMP initiatives to reduce the high unemployment rate of youth and women through training and retraining. This chapter has noted that their impact is positive and tangible, but also that they benefit only those women and youth who are economically active.

The ETF recommends expanding these measures to include inactive women and youth in order to support their reintegration in the economy, for instance by investing in the development of a CVET offer in accordance with labour market demand across the country; by mainstreaming CVET as a policy priority in the work of bodies that govern the TVET sector, starting with the TVSD Commission; and by revisiting the rules, regulations, and compliance control mechanisms concerning the conditions of work for female employees.

Examples of prioritisation measures could include preparing information and incentive packages for women, youth and their families in support of labour market participation and addressing the non-monetary obstacles to labour market participation. These obstacles are largely neglected and include working environments where there is a lack of responsiveness to the needs of women for flexible working arrangements and part-time employment, and where employment decisions tend to discriminate against female candidates for employment.

## 4. CONCLUSION

As noted before, the purpose of this assessment is to provide an external, forward-looking analysis of human capital development issues in Jordan and discuss VET policy responses to these issues in order to identify challenges related to education and training policy and practice that hinder the development and use of human capital.

Jordan has put in place a range of strategies for social and economic development in all sectors under the responsibility of its government, many of which concern policies for human capital development through VET. At the time of this assessment, the planning and implementation of these strategies were taking place amid challenging socio-economic conditions marked by economic pressures resulting from demographic and migration developments and political instability in the region. Human capital development policies were expected to address the present needs of a large, increasingly diverse group of vulnerable people and of youth, all while catering to expectations for long-term progress towards building a competitive, innovative and equitable economy.

Under the circumstances, the progress achieved so far is all the more remarkable, but problems appear to persist. They include the limited capacity of education and training providers to deliver opportunities for practical experience to students, difficulties in involving employers more effectively, the mobilisation of proper, regular involvement from employers, the attraction of a more diverse selection of students in terms of socio-economic background, and the mobilisation of the full labour market potential of large swaths of the population, most notably women.

Still, the evidence analysed in the preparation of this assessment suggest that there are strong reasons to conclude that TVET is set on a good course to become a highly responsive and relevant segment of the skills development system in Jordan, as envisaged in most of the country's national plans for prosperity and economic advancement. For this to happen, a key condition is to ensure consistency, continuity, and a steady commitment to improvement across the board among all the institutions and stakeholder groups that are involved in HCD and TVET-related reforms. The establishment of the new Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission is a cause for much hope in this respect.





## ANNEX 1. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

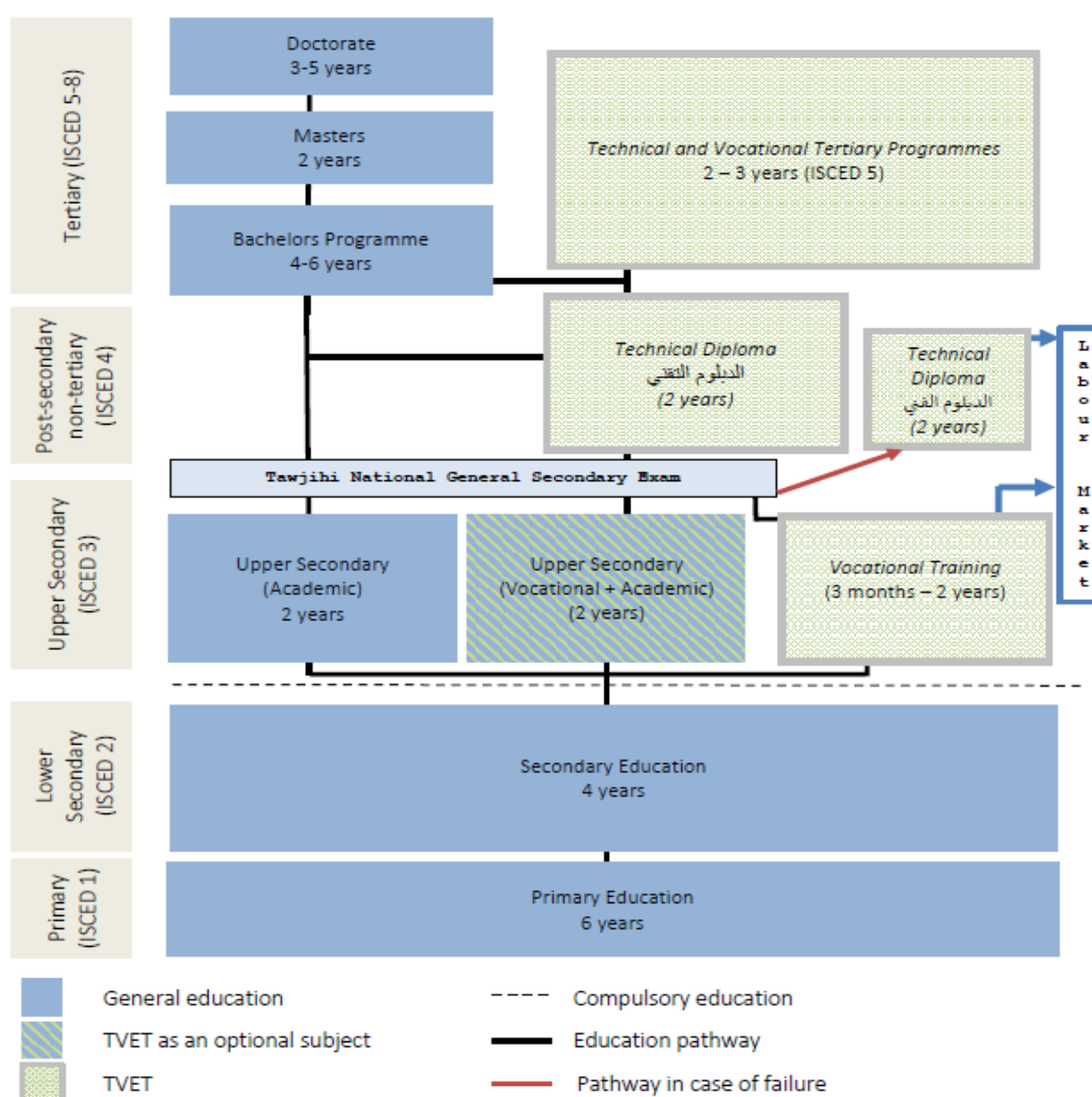
Key HCD issue No. 1	Recommendations		
	No.	Action	Description
Rigidity in VET content and provision as a source of skills mismatch	R.1	Raise the responsiveness of TVET to labour market needs by focusing on evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ETF recommends establishing a process of regular (annual) reviews and – where needed – updates of TVET programmes in all TVET subsectors on the basis of evidence from regular screening and the consideration of evidence on labour market needs provided by the LMIS.</li> <li>This could be done by reinforcing the mandate of existing bodies, such as the newly established sector skills councils, to coordinate with the private sector. In this respect, it would be important to put the annual review of programme relevance based on labour market evidence high on the agenda of the councils responsible for governing the various segments of TVET in Jordan, most notably the TVSD Commission in keeping with its mandate to support youth and address unemployment through better TVET.</li> <li>Additionally, the ETF recommends a revision of the process for updating TVET programmes to bring the process closer to VET providers and make it faster and more agile. The modularisation of programmes could be an important element in this effort.</li> </ul>
	R.2	Prioritise small and micro-enterprises in the promotion of partnerships between TVET and the private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ETF recommends expanding the involvement of employers to include their participation in the setting of TVET standards, the design of training content, and the testing of competencies provided by TVET.</li> <li>An extra effort should be invested in capturing the needs of small and micro-enterprises, which at the time of this assessment were the dominant drivers of job creation in the country. This could be done by diversifying the current profile of private-sector representatives on the TVSD Commission to reflect the composition of the labour market more accurately.</li> <li>In addition to financial incentives and support, the key to involving small and micro-businesses would be to provide them with the prospect of training that links to their business needs.</li> </ul>
	R.3	Harmonise the provision of entrepreneurial learning across the TVET system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ETF recommends prioritising EL in all segments of TVET irrespective of the division of governance responsibilities for the sector and ensuring that there is a unified approach to the integration of EL in curricula across the TVET system.</li> <li>This could be done, for instance, by committing to minimum standards of EL provision, such as a comparable number of hours and a comparable choice of EL elements, which may include the current focus of the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) on communication, vocational tracks, self-marketing,</li> </ul>

			problem-solving, life skills, entrepreneurship and self-employment.
Underutilisation of human capital and of opportunities for human capital development for youth and women	R.4	Improve and diversify support for at-risk students in TVET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The ETF recommends developing solutions that address a wider selection of risks to participation, such as the poor quality of teaching, the fact that the family situation of students may call for greater flexibility in the timing of courses, the lack of an individualised approach to teaching, etc. A renewed discussion of these challenges should be put high on the work agenda of the TVSD Commission as well.</li> </ul>
	R.5	Improve the conditions for female participation in mainstream TVET courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The ETF recommends improving the conditions for female participation in mainstream TVET courses. This should include improving the course offer, making it more gender-sensitive, raising awareness and gender sensitivity among TVET teachers and trainers, and establishing more gender-friendly training environments.</li> <li>■ The ETF also suggests setting up a comprehensive, national career guidance system where course counselling includes a focus on encouraging women to expand their options when choosing educational fields of study.</li> </ul>
	R.6	Prioritise HCD measures that support the reintegration of inactive women into the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The ETF recommends expanding ALMP measures to include inactive women and youth in support of their reintegration in the economy, for instance by investing in the development of a CVET offer in accordance with labour market demand across the country and by mainstreaming CVET as a policy priority in the work of bodies that govern the TVET sector, starting with the TVSD Commission.</li> <li>■ Examples of prioritisation measures could include preparing information and incentive packages for women, youth, and their families in support of labour market participation and addressing the non-monetary obstacles to labour market participation.</li> <li>■ These obstacles are largely neglected and include working environments where there is a lack of responsiveness to the needs of women for flexible working arrangements and part-time employment, and where employment decisions tend to discriminate against female candidates for employment.</li> </ul>

## ANNEX 2. THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM OF JORDAN<sup>92</sup>

TVET in Jordan is provided at upper secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels (ISCED 3 to ISCED 5) through a variety of channels under the responsibility of several major entities: the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), the Ministry of Education (MoE), Balqa Applied University (BAU) with its community colleges, the National Employment and Training Company (NET), and smaller provider networks, such as UNRWA and the Al Hussein Technical University, as well as private TVET providers. Unfortunately, continuing vocational education and training (CVET) is not considered part of the Jordanian education and training system<sup>93</sup>.

**FIGURE A.2.1 THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM OF JORDAN**



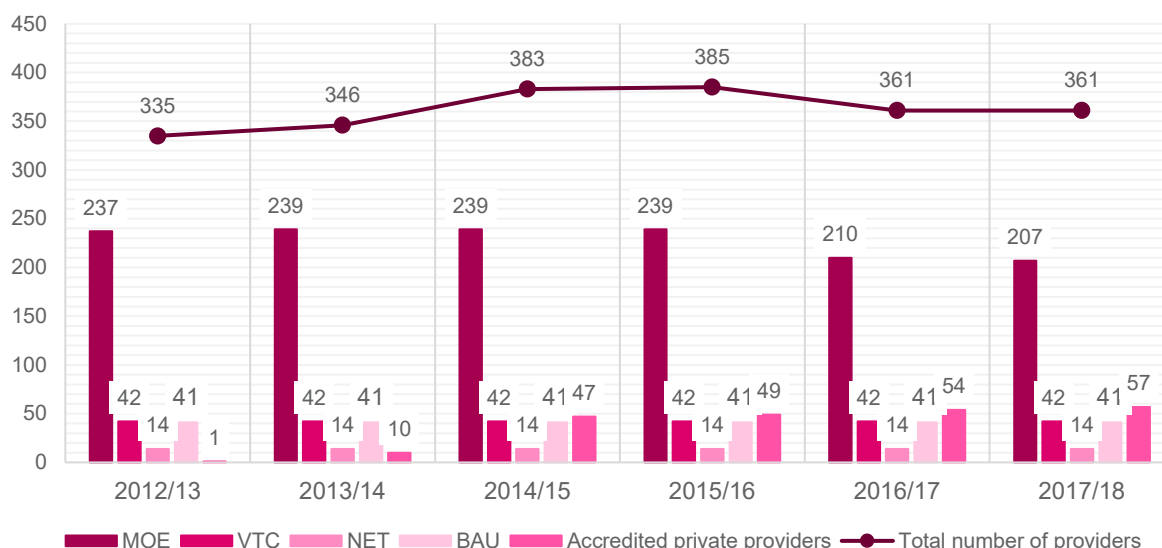
Source: UNESCO–UNEVOC, 2019b

<sup>92</sup> Sections of this annex reproduce parts of building blocks NRF A.2.1, NRF A.2.2 and C.1.5 of the Torino Process national report.

<sup>93</sup> NRF C.1.5.2

The largest part of the network of VET providers in Jordan falls under the responsibility of the MoE (Figure A.2.1) and is subject to a separate set of strategies, policies and plans at national level, which are determined by the MoE Council. These providers can be specialised vocational education schools or general comprehensive education schools that offer vocational education alongside general education.

**FIGURE A.2.2 VET PROVIDERS BY NUMBER AND OWNERSHIP/GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITY (2012–2018)**



Source: Council for Employment, Training and Vocational Education – Ministry of Labour of Jordan

The VET courses provided by the MoE are two years in length and lead to the national general secondary certificate exams (Tawjihi), which are exit exams that provide access to higher education. The group benefiting from the MoE's vocational education services is limited to youths who successfully complete the 10th grade (males and females aged 16–18). Here too, the MoE's VET providers are funded through the public budget, additional revenues from the sale of products and services, and donor aid.

If private providers are excluded, the VTC has the second biggest TVET network by number of providers (Figure A.2.1). The VTC is a semi-autonomous governmental institution, which is governed by a board of directors headed by the Minister for Labour and members who represent government, civil society organisations and the private sector. The VTC conducts initial vocational training programmes that are up to two years in length and have apprenticeship schemes, mainly at basic occupational levels (semi-skilled, skilled and craftsman levels). The VTC also offers continuing vocational courses for those who wish to upgrade their skills. The VTC is funded through the public budget and additional revenues in the form of course fees, the sale of products and services, and donor aid.

The VTC programmes mainly cover the semi-skilled level (for those with basic reading and writing capabilities who are over 16), the skilled level (for those who have successfully completed the 10th grade and are between 16 and 35 years old), and the craftsman skill level (for those who are under 35).

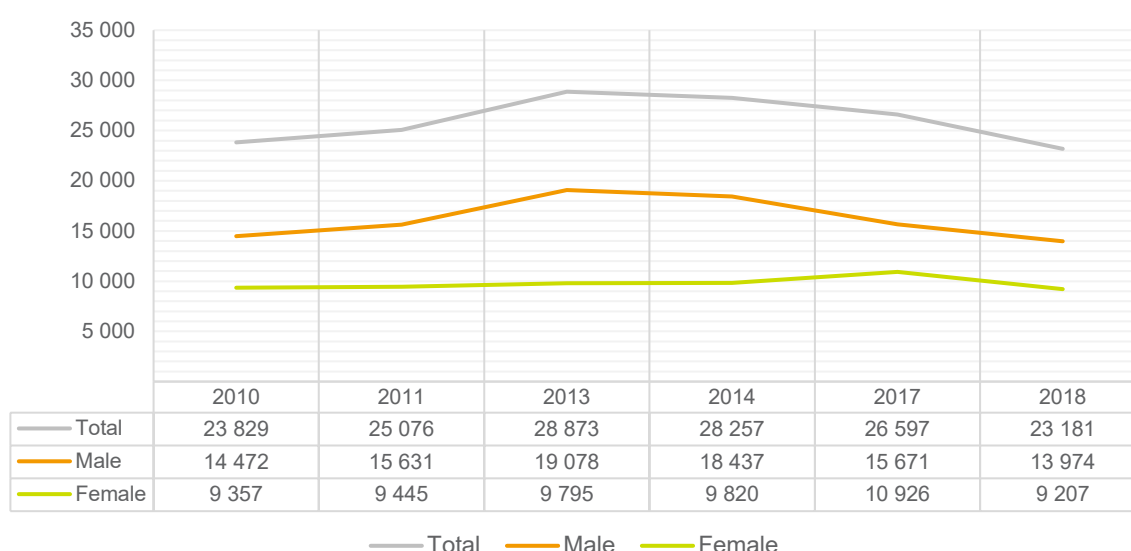
VET can also be provided by Balqa Applied University, which sustains a sizeable network of community colleges that operate under its academic, educational and technical supervision. The BAU colleges, which provide short- and longer-term programmes of up to three years, are funded from the

BAU's budget and through tuition fees and support from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR).

Finally, there are initial training programmes provided by the National Employment and Training Company (NET), which have a length of eight months, are open to literate youth between the ages of 17 and 29, and lead to lower level qualifications.

In 2018, the latest year for which there are data, the combined network of TVET providers catered to the needs of 23 181 students or 11.5% of total upper secondary enrolment, and the majority of the students were male (Figure A.2.3). After a peak in 2013–2014, TVET enrolment has been in decline, as has the overall number of publicly funded TVET providers. Private provision, on the other hand, has been on the rise, increasing from 41 institutions in 2012–2013 to 57 in 2018–2019 (Figure A.2.1).

**FIGURE A.2.3 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AT UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION (ISCED 3)**



Source: ETF database



## ACRONYMS

AE	Adult education
ALMP	Active labour market policy
BAU	Balqa Applied University
CAEP	Central Asia Education Platform
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
EC	European Commission
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
HC	Human capital
HCD	Human capital development
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LLL	Lifelong learning
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoL	Ministry of Labour
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRF	National Reporting Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIAAC	Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competences
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
TRP	Torino Process
TVSD	Technical and Vocational Skills Development
VET	Vocational education and training
VTC	Vocational Training Corporation
WBL	Work-based learning





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