

# SKILLS AND MIGRATION COUNTRY FICHE LEBANON

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# PREFACE

The ETF Skills and Migration Country Fiche is meant as a first-entry, evidence-based analysis of the main issues relating to the skills dimensions of migration. It is composed of three main conceptual blocks and a critical analysis approach is adopted.

- It presents data, trends and challenges relating to the skills dimension of migration to provide an updated and structured state of play.
- It focuses on policy developments and practical experiences to reinforce migrants' skills. Policies and projects are analysed with reference to addressing legal labour migration needs and migration and development issues. The logic behind the analysis is to identify success factors and challenges to be addressed.
- It provides recommendations for areas of intervention in the short to medium term.

The goal of the fiche is twofold. On the one hand, it aims to contribute to the broader policy dialogue on the skills dimensions of migration issues of specific countries with EU institutions, Member States and international players. On the other hand, it serves as a reflection of and communication tool in the policy dialogue of the ETF and the national authorities in charge of human capital development. As such, the fiche will contribute to the policy analysis and policy making support that the ETF provides to its partner countries in order to improve the employability of citizens via lifelong learning, including migration in this specific case.

The ETF fiches aim to cover the partner countries with whom circular mobility schemes can be established.<sup>1</sup>

More in-depth country-specific or cross-country studies may be produced as a follow-up to the fiches' findings and recommendations and to support the needs expressed by EU institutions. Further follow-up actions to the fiche could take the form of specific ETF support actions to the EU; in line with the ETF's mandate, this might include inputs to the programming of new initiatives, content monitoring or other specific actions to be agreed.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2021, the fiches cover Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Moldova, Morocco, Tunisia and Ukraine.

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# ANALYSIS

## 1. Skills and migration overview

Lebanon is one of the Middle Eastern countries most affected by various waves of migration as a result of several social, economic and political factors at national and regional level, all of which combine to form both push and pull factors directly affecting the ratios of immigration and emigration. The country's current diversity is linked to historical waves of immigration that date back to the 19th century. The number of foreigners in the country continues to rise, increasing from 0.5 million in 1990 (18.7% of the population) to almost 1 712 762 in 2020 (25.1% of the population), of which 62.9% are in the 20–64 age range, (data as per statistical annex). The country has witnessed two major patterns of migration that have changed over time: the pre-civil war era (from the 18th century to 1975) and the post-war era (after 2006)<sup>2</sup>. The pre-civil war era was mostly characterised by stability, and emigration was driven mostly by limited job opportunities and the increased cost of living: low-skilled and unskilled labourers left for better opportunities abroad. The post-war era was characterised by fluctuating levels of stability, while the 1990s saw the highest emigration rates with respect to the total population number (18.2%). This caused a severe brain drain, as young people left to seek better living conditions abroad. Rates declined slowly after that and reached 12.6% (856 814 emigrants) in 2020 (UN, 2020), about half the percentage of immigrants. Data provided by the United Nations (UN) estimated the total stock of Lebanese migrants to be 1.9 million of the 4.5 million population excluding refugees (6.5 million including them<sup>3</sup>) in 2015, with 51% being female (Dibeh et al, 2017). Saudi Arabia, the United States, Australia and Canada, respectively, are the main host countries of Lebanese emigrants. These countries are followed by Germany, which has the highest number of Lebanese emigrants compared to other European countries (Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1. PRIORITY COUNTRIES FOR LEBANESE EMIGRANTS**



Source: UN DESA, International Migrant Stocks, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Tabar P., *Lebanon A Country of Emigration and Immigration*, Institute for Migration Studies, Lebanese American University (LAU), 2010.

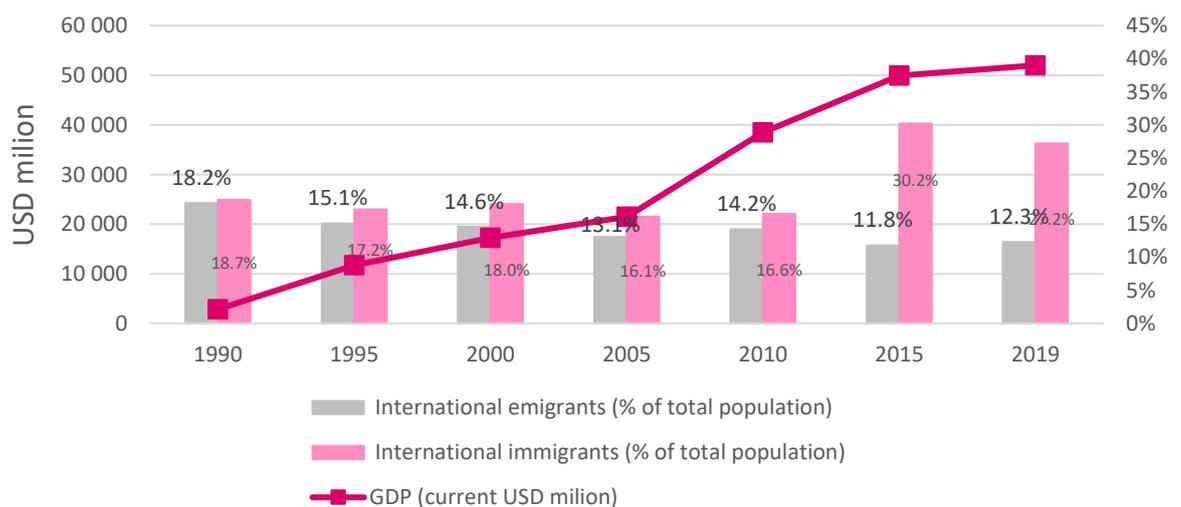
<sup>3</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=LB>

It is important to mention that such figures definitely increased in 2021 due to the multiple crises inflicted on the country, yet no official stock-taking figures have been obtained or sought by the Lebanese government. Insecurity and instability in neighbouring countries have also exacerbated the issue of displacement, as Lebanon has adopted an ‘open border’ policy and is carrying the burden of high refugee inflows. The influx of refugees account for 82% of the total immigrant population in Lebanon, where numbers grew steadily by over a million in the decade prior to 2019 to reach 1 558 615 people, a considerably high ratio given Lebanon’s population of 4 million excluding migrant workers, refugees, and asylum seekers. In terms of the origin of immigrants, Syria tops the list with 1.16 million settling in the country, followed by Palestine (0.5 million) and Iraq (0.1 million) according to the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) 2019 database; notably these numbers decreased slightly in 2020 with a total of 1 404 312 refugees.

Lebanon is also a host country for migrant foreign workers, estimated to total 400 000 in 2020 (IOM, 2020). Most of these come from low-income countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, primarily Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Sudan. Most of them fall under the *kafala* (sponsorship) system, which is described as a system of exploitation, as workers are not protected by the Lebanese labour laws and are totally controlled by their *kafeel* or sponsor. In 2021, a combination of stressed conditions in the sponsorship system and economic conditions in the country led to a drop of over 90% in the number of immigrants seeking domestic jobs in Lebanon compared to the year before (Al Markazia, 2021).

Migration has had both a positive and negative impact on Lebanon, especially when it comes to the economy. The waves of emigration and immigration, as recorded by official statistics, have marked Lebanon as a country with positive net migration and a country whose growing rates of immigration and emigration have contributed positively to the growth in gross domestic product (GDP). Economic conditions have also improved and investment in the country has also increased over the years through remittances from the diaspora. Figure 2 demonstrates the positive correlation between GDP and migration flows.

**FIGURE 2. LINK BETWEEN GDP AND MIGRATION FLOWS**



Source: UN DESA International Migrant Stock 2019, World Bank (World Development Indicators)

In fact, Lebanese emigrants' remittances constitute an important part of the economic gains of migration, reaching USD 7.3 billion in 2016 and securing an income for many families (GIZ, 2019, p. 70). Foreign domestic workers and refugees, especially Syrians, contributed to the slight economic growth noted after 2010 by engaging in the labour market, namely in low-skilled jobs that offer low wages in areas where Lebanese people generally do not work. This generated work and reduced waste, as the money that was earned was pumped back into the economy as workers were able to buy what they needed, thus increasing imports (Harb and Rouhana, 2020). Moreover, the flow of international humanitarian aid for refugees allocated to investment in the country accounted for a share of this growth (David et al, 2019). On the negative side, the opportunity cost for the increased immigration and emigration in Lebanon was the brain drain of highly skilled Lebanese people: a literacy rate of 95.1% among adults and 99.8%<sup>4</sup> among young people in 2018 compared with the 40% of Syrian youth in Lebanon who were uneducated. Prior to the global economic crisis of 2019, an estimated 10 000 to 15 000 Lebanese people emigrated every year; according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), approximately 50% of emigrants have secondary education or higher and 25% have tertiary education (Abdo, 2015). With the financial and economic crises becoming more intense, the emigration figures increased significantly and continued to rise. However, there are no official estimates of the number of emigrants who left the country or their profile (in terms of occupation, age or education). In September 2021, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that the brain drain in the Lebanese health sector was increasing at an alarming rate. Around 40% of skilled medical doctors and 30% of registered nurses have already left the country, on a temporary or permanent basis<sup>5</sup>. Western embassies reported that they received more than 380 000 immigration requests from Lebanon following the Beirut port explosion. While these embassies did not provide more details, some indicated that a significant percentage of the requests were for work visas, most of them from engineers<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, an article published by the magazine *Foreign Policy* indicated that around 40% of the staff at the American University of Beirut alone had resigned, mostly professors and associate professors. This was from just one university and the figure is projected to rise when combined with other universities as well. The same article also projected that at least 50% of bank employees had left or were planning to leave the country due to financial pressures<sup>7</sup>.

Another impact of migration and the associated brain drain has been the mismatch between skills and job. This has been accompanied by a rise in the number of low-skilled workers coming from abroad; among Syrian refugees, the share of low-skilled workers is 54%, while 68% of foreign workers have a low level of skills (David et al, 2019). This has led to a skills gap and imbalance among emigrants and immigrants. The World Bank has estimated that the economy needs at least six times as many jobs to take in all the entrants to the Lebanese market: unemployment rates among young Lebanese men increased by 26 percentage points between 2010 and 2015, mainly in rural areas (GIZ, 2019, p. 71). However, no information or data relating to the migration of Syrian or Palestinian refugees (in terms of numbers or occupations), are available.

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://knoema.com/atlas/Lebanon/topics/Education/Literacy/Adult-literacy-rate>

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.emro.who.int/media/news/joint-statement-by-dr-tedros-adhanom-ghebreyesus-who-director-general-and-dr-ahmed-al-mandhari-regional-director-for-the-eastern-mediterranean-on-lebanon.html>

<sup>6</sup> See <https://middleeast.in-24.com/News/148206.html>

<sup>7</sup> See <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/09/lebanon-terminal-brain-drain-migration/>

## 2. National policy framework

Lebanon lacks a clear legal, social and policy implementation framework to organise and regulate the arrival of incoming refugees and migrants and the emigration of Lebanese citizens, all of which increases the vulnerability of migrants and refugees and restricts them in relation to their human rights and right to work<sup>8</sup>.

Governance is mostly fragmented: all security-related issues governing the entry and movement of migrants and refugees are governed by the General Security Directorate, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for supporting and managing the Lebanese diaspora. Governance is more complicated when it comes to education, training and human capital development. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education regulates all education, including vocational education and training (VET) and the education of both host and refugee communities. The Ministry of Social Affairs is the main counterpart for implementing the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan but it also liaises with other ministries, such as the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, to support refugees. The Ministry of Labour is mandated with regulating the labour market and issuing work permits for refugees and migrant workers.

There are no mechanisms or one single governing body to oversee labour migration management. In fact, there is not even a particular policy in place to deal with migration and refugees. Instead, there are a number of fragmented, donor-dependent and donor-driven initiatives that focus on livelihoods or social protection frameworks as part of the overall response to address the impact of the Syrian crisis. Lebanon has not yet signed the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, despite having over one million Syrian refugees in the country. Instead, the Lebanese government has adopted a policy of referring to refugees as 'displaced' people, making it difficult for Syrians to acquire legal status in Lebanon. Consequently, as of 2020, more than 73% of Syrian refugees over 15 years of age did not have legal resident permits<sup>9</sup>. Ten years into the Syrian crisis, the 'displaced' people in Lebanon are viewed as temporary 'residents' who put more pressure on the basic infrastructure of the country and its basic service provision whilst not being able to integrate into the country's formal economic cycle.

Historically, Lebanon relied on Syrian labour for the agriculture and construction sectors, mostly informally, without providing access to social security or formal contracts. With the onset and continuation of the crisis, the government of Lebanon, following advocacy by international organisations, worked on organising the labour market to avoid competition with Lebanese workers and allowed Syrians to work in only three sectors: agriculture, construction and environment (basically cleaning and other chores). Work in other sectors was considered illegal and those who were caught risked being deported. Non-formal training was provided by international organisations and donors within the three permitted sectors to help Syrian workers to find jobs and enable them sustain their livelihoods.

Self-employment is another dimension of the restrictive policy adopted by the Lebanese government: Syrian-led businesses are not allowed to be formally registered in the country, nor can they receive legal support. The 'entrepreneurs' who receive technical and incubation support from projects such as

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<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Lebanon-Migrant-rights-Publications-Reports-Thematic-reports-2020-ENG.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> See <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-2017-2020-2020-update>

those run by SPARK relocate to Irbil in Iraq or Turkey to set up businesses there. This is a lost opportunity for Lebanon, as the country could benefit from the skills and competences of the refugees. There has been advocacy to change this regulation but it requires a cabinet decision, which in the current context is not possible due to the lack of government in place.

The situation is not any different for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. They face major restrictions in relation to the professions that they can practise: there are now 39 professions, including medicine, law and engineering, in which they cannot work. In addition, they need to have a work permit but they do not benefit from the National Social Security Fund. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Palestinians are seen as 'gap fillers' in the labour market and are integrated more in the informal sector. This makes it difficult to assess opportunities for them, especially young people, most of whom attempt to get an education in an effort to improve their employability outside Lebanon.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the entity mandated to deal with Lebanese migrants. Up until 2018, a number of initiatives sought to attract the Lebanese diaspora to invest in Lebanon, but there is no policy for preparing and guiding Lebanese citizens who wish to move to other countries that present more economic opportunities; likewise no measures are in place to support Lebanese returnees.

One positive contribution made by the government towards skills acquisition and the skills dimension of migration has been the adoption of the National Strategic Framework for Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) 2018–2022. This was a major milestone for the government, given its overall vision to promote the employability of the active population in Lebanon by improving their skills and qualifications, ensuring the availability of a competent workforce for the development of business in Lebanon and contributing to inclusive and sustainable economic development without leaving anyone behind. It included eight building blocks whereby international organisations, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), would support the Ministry of Education and Higher Education as well as three other ministries (Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Labour) to develop action plans for these blocks. Such action plans included developing a national qualifications system based on a competency approach, integrating life skills and entrepreneurship in curricula, and increasing private sector involvement by employers' and workers' representatives to improve the market relevance of training programmes. The strategy also takes into consideration the accessibility of education for non-Lebanese people including Syrians and Palestinians, and people with special needs. Progress has been made since its launch in 2018. However, with the current economic crisis, this progress has been slowed if not halted. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic and the strike by public sector employees negatively impacted cooperation with and the efficiency of the Directorate General for Vocational Education and Training (DGVTE), an already centralised entity, impacting work across the regions as well.

The growing intensity of the economic and financial crises crippled further efforts to develop migration policies or even prioritise migration and skills acquisition in any economic recovery policies. The priorities shifted from a 'development' focus to a 'survival/relief' focus, and thus shifted priorities and put policy mechanisms on hold. The political deadlock in terms of government formation further hindered policy implementation or formulation. The crises further revealed the gap in governance of education, labour and migration management issues, enlarging the overlap between the ministries and hindering the system's ability to address changes and respond to such changes with appropriate measures.

The main policy adopted by the government with regard to the management of migrant workers is the *kafala* system, governed by the Ministry of Labour in coordination with the General Directorate of General Security. The *kafala* system exposes migrant domestic workers to strict and often exploitative conditions and they often have no guarantees of their human rights. Domestic workers are excluded from national labour laws; as such they are exposed to serious abuses<sup>10</sup>. Considering that 96% of the 250 000 migrant domestic workers are women (Mansour-Ille and Hendow, 2018) this also means that Lebanon is violating the conditions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which oppose all forms of sexual and racial discrimination, even though it is a signatory country. As a step towards reform, a standard unified contract making migrant domestic workers equal to other workers was submitted to the Ministry of Labour in October 2020. This was intended to make a start on abolishing the *kafala* system. However, the contract was refused by the Shura Council, one of the highest judicial authorities in the country, which ruled in favour of the opposing recruitment agency. As a result, no implementation took place (Ullah, 2020).

### 3. Cooperation projects on skills and migration

Skills development has been driven mostly by the international community and donors. Despite the efforts that have been made, there has been very little local ownership of such projects. Skills acquisition for migrants and refugees thus remain donor dependent, reliant on additional funding for sustainability. Support for incoming Syrian refugees and migrants is channelled mostly through the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, which was developed jointly with the Lebanese government. Interventions targeted skills acquisition and upgrading for both refugee and host communities, namely young men and women, to fill the skills gap, increase their employability and integrate them into the labour market. However, most of the jobs created are short-term and labour-intensive positions that form part of cash-for-work programmes launched by international organisations. They are also low-skilled jobs that Syrians can do, even informally, and thus do not always offer good working conditions, have 'lower' wages and may be subject to more discrimination. Among the main programmes currently ongoing in relation to skills development and labour market integration are those implemented by UNDP, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNESCO, SPARK and GIZ.

UNDP launched the Youth Leadership Programme (YLP) for the first time in 2015. The programme targeted Lebanese young people as well as Syrian and Palestinian young people by linking them to initiatives conducted in these specific countries through their representative offices. These initiatives focused on the acquisition of soft skills: the young people received support in writing business plans, becoming leaders in the community, writing CVs, learning about civic engagement and gaining other skills that would help them to pursue employment or continue education. In addition to skills development, the programme indirectly linked young people to job opportunities, mostly by providing the young people with certificates or recommendation letters that they could submit when applying for jobs. One reason for the success of this programme is the cooperation that exists among the different organisations supporting young people. A second reason is the increased local ownership, due to the presence of the YLP Advisory Board. This board is composed of 15 young people from different regions who come together to discuss and raise awareness of the programme, advocate for more enrolments and monitor activities in the regions. UNICEF has supported the education sector in

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<sup>10</sup> Abuses include withholding their wages from them for prolonged periods, taking their passports, preventing them from changing their job, jailing them if they leave the country without their patron's permission, and abusing them verbally, sexually and physically without holding the employers to account.

adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions through its Learning Passport platform. The platform delivers online, mobile and offline services to ensure high-quality learning outcomes, including not only basic and specialised subjects but also emotional and psychological assistance, addressing displaced people in particular<sup>11</sup>. UNICEF has also continued its support for TVET by covering the educational expenses of young Syrian refugees and by supporting the DGVTE and Lebanese government in implementing the National Strategic Framework for Technical Vocational Education and Training launched in 2018, albeit at a slower pace due to the economic crisis and the overall instability that has basically paralysed the reform process and its implementation. Among the various UN organisations supporting skills development and youth employability is UNESCO, which has trained more than 200 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 to increase their participation opportunities in the economy, thus reducing poverty and enhancing livelihoods; 33% of these young people were Syrian refugees. Around 30 participants of the TVET programme played an important role following the explosion in Beirut's port, particularly in the rebuilding process (UNHCR, 2021); the programme was linked to cash-for-work interventions intended to rebuild destroyed buildings.

Entrepreneurship tends to be a parallel strategy in Lebanon, whereby people are encouraged to set up their own businesses. While such encouragement is not yet extended to refugees due to government restrictions, SPARK took the initiative to help Syrian young people to build their skills, equipping them with tools that help them to either become entrepreneurs or continue their education so that they can find better opportunities in Lebanon or other countries. Around 2 000 students received skills development support from SPARK; the focus was mainly on soft skills and digital skills such as coding. This helped to link them to the labour market, as freelancers or full-time employees. Students were also offered language courses to equip them with linguistic skills that could help them in their current work or in relocating to another country. SPARK also works on integrating entrepreneurial skills into TVET curricula and recently launched the IBDAA project, which provides business and financial support for women-led businesses and people working from home.

The EU has been keen on supporting initiatives and projects that focus on skills provision and on building capacities in different host and refugee communities in the country. It has funded various projects that provide institutional support for the improved delivery of education services and funded training programmes that can be tailored to the needs of the target groups. In supporting young Palestinian refugees, UNRWA has been consistent in allocating resources and launching programmes that cater to their skills needs whilst improving their integration into the labour market. Its Career Guidance programme was launched in 2010 and is on-going. It covers different types of education, including TVET, to ensure that all Palestinian young people have access to adequate career guidance and information on the skills required in the labour market so that they can make well-informed decisions about their careers. A labour market survey was also conducted in 2020 to get more hands-on information about changes in the labour market and whether there was a demand for new skills. The areas most in demand were e-commerce, information technology (IT) and electronics. In response, new courses such as e-commerce, digital systems, green technology and artificial intelligence were developed to transfer these skills to students and improve their employability, be it at companies or as freelancers working with different companies. This was also intended to enable women to access more working opportunities from home. In the area of vocational education, the EU-funded project Technical Assistance for More Practice Oriented VTE in Lebanon (ProVTE) was implemented in Lebanon by GIZ (2017–2021). Its main objectives were to prepare young people so

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<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.learningpassport.org/>

that their skills matched those required by the labour market and to strengthen the implementation and planning of vocational and technical education projects in Lebanon. This was done by updating curricula and providing high-quality practical skills to trainees, thus enabling them to obtain certification of their qualifications. This resulted in over 50 companies in the country offering job opportunities to over 300 ProVTE trainees<sup>12</sup>. Another project funded by the EU and implemented by GIZ is the VTE4all project. Its main objective is to improve the employability prospects of vulnerable Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian refugees. It involves capacity building for trainers, third-party certification for trainers and trainees and support for DGVTE teachers to develop distance learning lessons. The EU also funded support measures for migrant workers. These were implemented by Concern Worldwide, which set up a transitional shelter that houses homeless people and workers prior to their repatriation, which can take up to three months. During that period, the organisation offers counselling and supports skills development by providing training courses to the migrant workers on a topic of their choice, e.g. crocheting of baby clothes or food processing. In addition to the courses, the organisation also introduces business management concepts that help the workers to build up their business skills, which they can then use when they return to their homeland.

When it comes to innovative practices, some pilot initiatives can be highlighted. One example is the VTE4all project, which provides third-party certificates to students who have completed VET training courses. This project adopts a participatory approach in involving the private sector, developing competency-based training programmes, training the teachers and having both the teachers and trainees assessed by third-party certification bodies, thus ensuring that the quality of teaching is in line with national and international requirements. This is considered innovative and practical amidst the absence of a national qualifications framework. This could be scaled up or expanded to cover other topics, such as electronics or green energy. Another practice relates to the support provided by UNRWA to Palestinians, be it in terms of career guidance for young people or vocational training. Continuous monitoring of the labour market and rapid assessments facilitated the introduction of new courses at training centres. Such courses can expand working opportunities for students, enabling them to learn about new subjects such as green energy or acquire new expertise such as digital skills. Having such skills means that people can freelance or work from home, thus possibly making it more convenient for women. They allow for self-employment and are transferable skills, as they can be utilised regardless of time or place.

SPARK's work in providing support for Syrian refugees to acquire digital, foreign language and entrepreneurial skills is a good example of how Syrian young people can be provided with opportunities beyond geographic borders and acquire skills that can be used anywhere they go. The focus on providing skills for women to work from home is a good case to highlight, as it also takes into consideration the various barriers that women face in accessing labour markets. Monitoring of the various initiatives and tracing of graduates needs to be strengthened in order to have a more accurate insight into job placement and matching in the labour market. Such activities and courses should also be provided on a continuous basis, with different levels and certificates that can be recognised globally. In the absence of a national qualifications framework, third-party certification can be a good alternative. Financial sustainability is a key issue, ensuring that organisations have the financial capacity to run these courses independent of donor funding. One important thing to highlight is the need to have a national migration policy, an umbrella for these various initiatives and activities.

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<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/83483.html>

Otherwise, the activities will remain fragmented, short term and without real sustainability for the long-term support of migrants.

## ETF support

The differentiating factor of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in Lebanon is its consistency in its support for the various national institutions that are strengthening human capital development, namely at policy level, targeting both policy development and reform where possible. When it comes to monitoring policy implementation, the ETF lends support through the Torino Process, which provides a holistic, evidence-based review of VET and lifelong learning policies in the country, including migration. It also provides recommendations for better policy implementation and reform. Keen to promote public-private participation in relation to the labour market and skills mismatch, the ETF supports ministries in a joint public-private task force. The aim of the task force is to support employers in monitoring labour market developments and skills needs; ideally, this work should be complemented by labour force survey results, when available. The ETF has also provided training guidelines for public and private stakeholders on conducting labour market surveys to systematically integrate the monitoring and analysis of the labour market and respond with proper measures to tackle challenges and skills mismatch in the market. To address the skills dimension of migration, the ETF has provided a global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks. It has also produced a country-specific document entitled *Migrant support measures from an employment and skills perspective (MISMES): Lebanon*. This is an important informative document that supports policy makers in developing the necessary measures based on evidence. It also provides information on practices that can be adopted to improve the labour market integration of immigrants, emigrants and refugees through better job matching, access to labour market information and decent working conditions. The last report was published in 2017, prior to the crises that started in 2019 and thus is essential for shedding light on the current context.

# THE WAY FORWARD

Lebanon has implemented a wealth of good practices and innovative projects within the context of supporting skills acquisition for migrants. However, their impact remains limited, firstly due to the rather limited number of beneficiaries, and secondly due to the issue of donor finance, which makes sustainability a key issue once funding ceases. Since the onset of the Syrian crisis, initiatives to tackle migration from a skills perspective have been donor driven within the framework of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan. Interventions to regulate the labour market for immigrants have been more restrictive than facilitative, leading to more skills gaps and mismatches and a prevalence of low-skilled jobs with high rates of informality. At a national level, there is no clear policy on migration or on the management of skills or the labour market. Even with different waves of migration, the Lebanese government adopted a 'laissez-faire' policy, with only minimal intervention and short-term resolutions that emerge on the spur of the moment. With regard to outgoing migration, the government has not put in place any policy or initiative to minimise the brain drain and optimise the development and skills impact of migration flows. The national qualifications framework remains on paper; career guidance and counselling are limited to universities and other higher education institutions; labour market information systems are undeveloped; and entrepreneurship is only available to those who have the necessary financial resources and plan to move abroad. In fact, this has been the main objective of the government's strategy: increasing remittances from the Lebanese diaspora to invest in the economy, but doing nothing to prevent the brain drain. However, remittances have disappeared with the financial crisis and the Lebanese diaspora is not at all motivated to transfer money to the country until reforms are made.

There is a clear underutilisation of human capital development, in the case of both refugees and Lebanese citizens; it is important that this changes in the current crisis. While there is a traditional reliance on donor interventions to develop policies and implement projects, donor fatigue, coupled with governance paralysis, is a current problem. At the time of writing, the country still awaits the formation of a government and any international support is conditional upon implementation of major reforms. This adds further to the urgency of developing a migration policy that will focus on tackling the underutilisation of human capital and prepare a solid foundation for embarking on economic recovery.

The main recommendations stemming from the above-mentioned snapshot relate mostly to policy measures for more effective human capital development:

Conduct a comprehensive, nationwide labour market assessment as a prerequisite for any policy development: The ministries currently do not have a labour market information system, and all the labour market assessments have been conducted by international organisations using data as recent as 2019. However, the whole country context has changed due to the multiple crises and there is a need to have a better understanding of the changes in outward and inward migration and how they impact the labour market. A significant proportion of the active population, namely young people and more experienced professionals, have left the country and continue to do so. However, there are no real figures on the number of people who have left, the skills that they have and the jobs that they occupied prior to their departure. There is also a need to assess the current immigrant population to identify their skills and also to record the emigrants who left, along with their skills and competences. This is crucial as it establishes a foundation for developing any kind of migration policy measures.

Promote dialogue with public and private representatives to integrate migration and integration policies and interventions in social and economic recovery plans as cross-cutting issues: The ETF can play a

role in this dialogue, given its experience in the country and its extensive knowledge and sharing of best practices in other countries. The dialogue should also be extended to include the Lebanese diaspora to develop networks for supporting Lebanese migrants. These networks could communicate challenges and brainstorm for solutions, whilst also engaging the diaspora in the economic recovery by sharing their expertise and perceptions of the skills required for the future, including with those who are leaving or returning to the country.

Develop pilot projects within the Talent Partnerships programme: Within the framework of the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, the ETF can act as a catalyst in supporting Lebanon as it partners with the EU on specific actions to promote cooperation among authorities and to build capacity specifically in the areas of: labour market and skills intelligence, diaspora mobilisation and the integration of returning migrants.

Advocate for the abolition of *kafala* systems for migrant workers: This is fundamental for the human rights of all foreign workers. Foreign workers are temporary residents in the country but can also benefit the country with their skills and can improve their competences if they have access to capacity building or training. A related recommendation is to have a support system in place to prepare foreign workers for repatriation and enable them to reintegrate properly in their countries of origin once they are back. This also requires dialogue and cooperation with these countries, possibly through bilateral agreements, to ensure a smooth repatriation and integration.

Develop programmes that focus on the recognition of skills crucial to the economic recovery and the reduction of the skills gap and mismatch among migrant and refugee workers in Lebanon: Training programmes should be developed for migrants and refugees using online or hybrid platforms (with the latter involving an online component coupled with physical presence for practical training). This would entail:

- working on unified standards and recognised certificates for market-based training for migrants and refugees in different fields;
- conducting labour market assessments to identify current gaps and shortages in the labour market, recognise opportunities for upskilling to match demand and map organisations and institutions that can support migrants and refugees;
- developing training programmes that can enable migrants and refugees to work as freelancers, change to a different job or seek opportunities abroad. These programmes could focus on the skills that will be in demand in the years to come: digital, linguistic and other soft skills that will help to close the gap in the labour market. Examples here include UNRWA's and SPARK's experience with Palestinian and Syrian young people. This should be done with input from the private sector with regard to the skills that would be required in the future, and access to such training should be improved for migrants.

# ANNEX I: STATISTICAL ANNEX

## General economic and demographic indicators:

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019	2020	
1	<b>GDP (current USD million)</b>	2 838.49	11 718.80	17 260.36	21 497.34	38 443.91	49 939.37	51 991.63	m
2	GDP per person employed (constant 2017 purchasing power parity USD)	m	47 837.16	49 191.43	46 936.39	60 328.33	51 166.72	43 807.49	m
3	<b>Total population at mid-year and by age group</b>	2 803 044	3 528 380	3 842 778	4 698 763	4 953 061	6 532 678	6 855 713	6 825 442
	0–19 (%)	48.7	43.2	40.2	40.1	36.2	36.6	34.2	33.5
	20–64 (%)	46.0	51.7	54.1	54.0	57.5	57.1	58.5	58.9
	65+ (%)	5.3	5.2	5.7	5.9	6.4	6.3	7.3	7.5

## Key migration indicators:

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019	2020	
4a	<b>Total emigrants</b>	509 323	533 444	561 102	613 614	704 562	769 251	844 158	856 814
4b	International migrants: emigrants (% of total population)	18.2	15.1	14.6	13.1	14.2	11.8	12.3	12.6
<b>Emigrants by sex:</b>									
5a	Females (emigrants)	216 646	229 791	244 249	258 777	288 072	314 535	344 700	349 915
5b	Females (as a % of total emigrants)	42.5	43.1	43.5	42.2	40.9	40.9	40.8	40.8
5c	Males (emigrants)	292 677	303 653	316 853	354 837	416 490	454 716	499 458	506 899
5d	Males (as a % of total emigrants)	57.5	56.9	56.5	57.8	59.1	59.1	59.2	59.2
6a	<b>Total immigrants</b>	523 693	608 303	692 913	756 784	820 655	1 973 204	1 863 873	1 712 762
6b	International migrants: immigrants (% of total population)	18.7	17.2	18.0	16.1	16.6	30.2	27.2	25.1
<b>Immigrants by sex:</b>									
7a	Females (immigrants)	255 771	297 690	339 608	366 453	393 297	1 024 779	967 998	873 056
7b	Females (as a % of total immigrants)	48.8	48.9	49.0	48.4	47.9	51.9	51.9	51.0
7c	Males (immigrants)	267 922	310 613	353 305	390 331	427 358	948 425	895 875	839 706
7d	Males (as a % of total immigrants)	51.2	51.1	51.0	51.6	52.1	48.1	48.1	49.0
8	<b>Immigrants by age group</b>								
	0–19 (%)	45.0	42.8	35.2	27.4	19.5	38.6	35.2	32.7
	20–64 (%)	51.9	54.0	60.8	67.7	74.9	58.0	60.8	62.9
	65+ (%)	3.1	3.1	3.9	4.9	5.6	3.4	4.0	4.3
9a	<b>Refugees (including asylum seekers) at mid-year</b>	305 499	342 697	379 894	421 239	462 584	1 592 607	1 558 615	1 404 312
9b	Refugees (including asylum seekers) as a % of the international migrant stock (immigrants)	58.3	56.3	54.8	55.7	56.4	80.7	83.6	82.0
10a	<b>Personal remittances, received (current USD million)</b>	m	m	m	4 924.31	6 914.06	7 480.82	7 409.91	m
10b	Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)	m	m	m	22.9	18.0	15.0	14.3	m
11a	<b>Personal remittances, paid (current USD million)</b>	m	m	m	4 011.68	4 390.48	3 674.95	4 333.07	m
11b	Personal remittances, paid (% of GDP)	m	m	m	18.7	11.4	7.4	8.3	m

	2020		2020
15a	<b>Total emigrants</b>	856 814	
<b>Main destination regions</b>			
	Europe	248 537	
	Asia	238 938	
	North America	214 713	
<b>Main destination countries</b>			
	Saudi Arabia	153 988	
	United States of America	119 145	
	Australia	101 508	
	Canada	95 568	
	Germany	88 243	
	France	53 953	
	United Arab Emirates	41 913	
	Sweden	28 836	
	United Kingdom	17 333	
	Brazil	15 664	
15b	<b>Total immigrants</b>	1 712 762	
<b>Main countries of origin</b>			
	Syrian Arab Republic	1 042 785	
	Palestine*	476 033	
	Iraq	102 319	
	Egypt†	70 643	
	Sri Lanka	2 771	
	Bangladesh	2 582	
	Indonesia	2 312	
	Sudan	2 201	
	China	2 058	
	India	1 311	

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2018	2019
16	<b>Migration of tertiary-level students</b>					
	Inbound mobility rate (%)	12.1	8.5	15.0	9.9	9.3
17	Outbound mobility rate (%)	7.8	7.8	6.4	6.8	7.9
18	Total inbound mobile tertiary students	14 008	14 073	30 436	21 332	21 518
19	Total outbound mobile tertiary students	9 018	12 950	13 003	14 814	18 193
20	Net flow of internationally mobile tertiary students	4 990	1 123	17 433	6 518	3 325

21a	<b>Inbound tertiary students per country of origin (2019, top five available countries)</b>	
(i)	m	m
	m	m
	m	m
	m	m
	m	m

21b	<b>Outbound tertiary students per destination country (2018, top five available countries)</b>	
(i)	France	4 468
	United States	1 493
	United Kingdom	1 194
	Germany	996
	Italy	943

Last update: end of May 2021

### Sources:

Indicators: 1, 2, 10a, 10b, 11a, 11b – World Bank (World Development Indicators)

Indicators: 3, 12 – UN DESA, World Population Prospects 2019<sup>13</sup>

Indicators: 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 8, 9a, 9b, 13, 14, 15a, 15b – UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2019<sup>14</sup>, 2020<sup>15</sup>

Indicators: 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21a, 21b – UNESCO

### Notes:

<sup>(1)</sup> Not all the countries of origin and destination are available

### Legend:

m = missing data

<sup>13</sup> See <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp>

<sup>15</sup> See <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>

This data collection is intended to give a short but comprehensive description of the dynamics of immigration and emigration inserted in the economic and sociodemographic context of the country. Most of the indicators cover the period 1990–2020, a period long enough to observe significant demographic and migratory changes. A five-year gap between one detection and another has been left in order to make the data description as concise as possible. The 2019 values for all the indicators are also collected (where available) in order to facilitate the comparability with the economic and 'international mobile students' indicators for which 2019 (or in some cases 2018) is the last available year.

The major limitation of this data collection relates to the lack of available and comparable indicators for migrants' skills and qualifications. Indicators for migrants' skills exist, but most of the times they come from specific national surveys and/or studies regarding a specific target group, year and country.

The UNESCO indicators on tertiary-level students who migrate with the aim of studying abroad, also referred to as 'international mobile students', have been collected as an attempt to address this lack of information on migrants' skills. Although these indicators represent only part of the skills dimension, they are nevertheless regularly updated and they describe a specific aspect of migration.

The UN DESA database has been used as source for the demographic, migration stock and refugee indicators. The economic indicators come from the World Bank database. The UNESCO database is the source for the international mobile students indicators.

### General economic and demographic indicators

	Description	Definition
1	GDP (current USD million)	GDP at purchasers' prices is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources. Data are in current USD. Dollar figures for GDP are converted from domestic currencies using single year official exchange rates.
2	GDP per person employed (constant 2017 purchasing power parity USD)	GDP per person employed is GDP divided by total employment in the economy. Purchasing power parity GDP is GDP converted to 2017 constant international dollars using purchasing power parity rates. An international dollar has the same purchasing power over GDP that a US dollar has in the United States.
3	Total population at mid-year and by age group	Estimates of the total population, as of 1 July, expressed as number and as percentage of the total for the age groups 0-19, 20-64 and 65+.

### Key migration indicators

	Description	Definition
4a, 5a, 5c	Total emigrants, females (emigrants), males (emigrants)	International migrant stock (emigrants) at mid-year, both sexes, females and males.
4b	International migrants: emigrants (% of total population)	The number of international migrants (emigrants) divided by the total population. Data are expressed as percentages.
5b/d	Females/males (as a % of total emigrants)	The number of female/male emigrants divided by the total number of international migrants (emigrants).
6a, 7a, 7c	Total immigrants, Females (immigrants), Males (immigrants)	International migrant stock (immigrants) at mid-year, both sexes, females and males.
6b	International migrants: immigrants (% of total population)	The number of international migrants (immigrants) divided by the total population. Data are expressed as percentages.
7b/d	Females/males (as a % of total immigrants)	The number of female/male immigrants divided by the total number of international migrants (immigrants).
8	Immigrants by age group	The number of immigrants in a particular age group expressed as percentage of the total number of international migrants (immigrants). Age groups: 0–19, 20–64 and 65+.
9a	Refugees (including asylum seekers) at mid-year	Estimated refugee stock. This stock is a subset of the stock of international migrants (immigrants).
9b	Refugees (including asylum seekers) as a percentage of the	Estimated number of refugees as a percentage of the immigrant stock. These two indicators are based on the end of year 2017

	international migrant stock (immigrants)	estimates of refugee populations or persons in refugee-like situations prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and, where appropriate, by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).
10a/b	Personal remittances, received (current USD million/% of GDP)	Inflow of personal remittances into the country expressed in current USD million and as a percentage of GDP. Personal remittances comprise personal transfers and compensation of employees. Personal transfers consist of all current transfers in cash or in kind made or received by resident households to or from non-resident households. Personal transfers thus include all current transfers between resident and non-resident individuals. Compensation of employees refers to the income of border, seasonal and other short-term workers who are employed in an economy where they are not resident and of residents employed by non-resident entities. Data are the sum of two items defined in the sixth edition of the International Monetary Fund's Balance of Payments Manual: personal transfers and compensation of employees.
11a/b	Personal remittances, paid (current USD million/% of GDP)	Outflow of personal remittances in the country expressed in current USD million and as a percentage of GDP. Personal remittances comprise personal transfers and compensation of employees. Personal transfers consist of all current transfers in cash or in kind made or received by resident households to or from non-resident households. Personal transfers thus include all current transfers between resident and non-resident individuals. Compensation of employees refers to the income of border, seasonal and other short-term workers who are employed in an economy where they are not resident and of residents employed by non-resident entities. Data are the sum of two items defined in the sixth edition of the International Monetary Fund's Balance of Payments Manual: personal transfers and compensation of employees.
12	Net number of migrants	Estimated number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants.
13	Annual rate of change of the migrant stock (%)	Estimated exponential annual rate of change of the international migrant stock (immigrants), expressed as a percentage.
14	Annual rate of change of the refugee stock (including asylum seekers)	Estimated exponential rate of change of the refugee population (including asylum seekers) per year expressed as a percentage.
15a	Main destination regions and countries	Top 10 destination countries (and top 3 destination continents) for emigrants in the last available year with their respective number of international migrants.
15b	Main countries of origin	Top 10 countries of origin for immigrants in the last available year with their respective number of international migrants.
16	Inbound mobility rate (%)	Number of tertiary students from abroad studying in a given country, expressed as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment in that country.
17	Outbound mobility ratio (%)	Number of students from a given country studying abroad, expressed as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment in that country.
18	Total inbound mobile tertiary students	Total number of tertiary students from abroad studying in the country.
19	Total outbound mobile tertiary students	Total number of tertiary students from the country studying abroad.
20	Net flow of internationally mobile tertiary students	Number of tertiary students from abroad (inbound students) studying in a given country minus the number of students at the same level from a given country studying abroad (outbound students).
21a/b	Inbound/outbound tertiary students per country of origin	Top five origin/destination countries of mobile tertiary students with their respective number of mobile students (last available year).

## ANNEX II: LIST OF RELEVANT PROJECTS

This list is not exhaustive and includes selected projects specifically targeting the development of migrants' skills.

Project title	Implementing agency	Amount and/or source of funding	Duration	Main activities	Beneficiaries
<p>Young Mediterranean Voices (as part of YLP)</p> <p>Lebanon   Young Mediterranean Voices (youngmedvoices.org)</p>	UNDP	Multilateral	2015–2021	Empowers Lebanese young people to create innovative solutions for the challenging sustainable development problems in the country	<p>Reached 7 000 participants and supported over 5 000 projects in the Arab region by 2018</p> <p>Some 226 Lebanese young people participated in the programme in 2020</p>
<p>Siblin Training Centre (STC)</p> <p>Siblin Training Centre   UNRWA</p>	UNRWA	EU	Ongoing since 2010	Provides career guidance and counselling as well as formal and accelerated VET	All young people and women
<p>IBDAA, ongoing activities in job matching</p> <p>Entrepreneurship and Business Development Activities (EBDA)   SPARK</p>	SPARK	The Netherlands	Ongoing since 2017	<p>Provides education scholarships to Syrian and Lebanese students</p> <p>Delivers entrepreneurial and soft skills training</p> <p>Provides financial and technical support to women</p>	Syrian refugees and Lebanese young people and women
<p>Learning Passport (LP)</p> <p>See UNICEF and Microsoft launch global learning platform to help address COVID-19 education crisis</p>	Microsoft, UNICEF, University of Cambridge		2020–2021	<p>Delivers portable online and offline services to ensure a high-quality learning outcomes in 10 countries</p> <p>Targets migrants, displaced people and refugees in particular</p>	Lebanese and Syrian children and TVET students
<p>Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)</p> <p>(unesco.org)</p>	UNESCO		2016–2021	Develops skills in young people of different nationalities and prepares them to enter the Lebanese labour force	<p>Offered in 162 public and 398 private vocational and technical schools in Lebanon</p> <p>In 2016–2017, there were 83 168 registered TVET trainees</p>

Project title	Implementing agency	Amount and/or source of funding	Duration	Main activities	Beneficiaries
					Some 30 participants of the TVET programme played an important role following the Beirut port explosion, in particular using the skills they had learned in the rebuilding process
<p>Youth Employment in the Ports of the Mediterranean (YEP MED)</p> <p>YEP MED   ENI CBC Med</p>	European Neighbourhood Instrument	EUR 2.9 million in funding (including EUR 2.6 million) from the EU	2020–2023	<p>Develops TVET training on 'port logistics' which helps young people acquire the skills they need to find employment in the port and logistics sector</p> <p>Offers job opportunities in its centres to support trainees</p>	
<p>Technical Assistance for More Practice Oriented VTE in Lebanon (ProVTE)</p> <p>(ProVTE) Technical education and training for Lebanese youth</p>	GIZ	EU	2017–2021	<p>Prepares young people so that their skills match those required by the labour market and strengthens the implementation and planning of VTE projects in Lebanon</p>	<p>Developed more than 25 curricula, which provide high-quality practical skills</p> <p>Offered certification of qualifications to trainees</p> <p>Over 50 companies in the country offered job opportunities to more than 300 ProVTE trainees</p>
<p>Concern Worldwide programme</p> <p>Lebanon   Concern Worldwide</p>	Concern Worldwide	EU	2013–2021	Relieves poverty and other difficulties facing refugees, particularly Syrian refugees, provides them with shelter, offers psychological support, defends women's and children's rights, provides centres for refugees to quarantine during the pandemic	Supported around 55 000 beneficiaries in north Lebanon to reduce poverty
<p>Solidarity Project</p> <p>Standing together after a crisis in Beirut   Concern</p>	Concern Worldwide	EU	2020	Shares skills, experience and logistics with local organisations to support Lebanon after	

Project title	Implementing agency	Amount and/or source of funding	Duration	Main activities	Beneficiaries
Worldwide				<p>the blast in Beirut</p> <p>Offers training for psychological relief and infection prevention during the pandemic</p> <p>Engages with reconstruction activities to rebuild homes that have been destroyed</p> <p>Rehabilitates an apartment for foreign workers after the blast</p> <p>Supports migrant workers</p>	

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DGVTE	Directorate General for Vocational Education and Training
ETF	European Training Foundation
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ProVTE	Technical Assistance for More Practice Oriented VTE in Lebanon
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UNHCR	United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UN	United Nations
YEP MED	Youth Employment in the Ports of the Mediterranean
YLP	Youth Leadership Programme

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