

KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT – PALESTINE* 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Policy Agenda 2017-2022 recognises quality education for all, with a specific focus on vocational education and training (VET), as a national priority, building on Palestine's longstanding commitment to quality and equality in education. With universal education almost achieved in Palestine, the focus now is on enhancing the quality of education and its relevance for the labour market. As in many countries, the COVID-19 outbreak has pushed the relevant ministries, schools, teachers and students to boost digital online learning, and projects by a number of donors are focussing on this issue. Especially in the context of Palestine, where there is limited mobility for individuals within and between the different geographical areas, distance learning needs to become a priority and more efforts are needed to further develop digital education.

In the last couple of years, VET has been moved up the political agenda and enrolment rates for VET students are increasing. Access to initial VET programmes in Palestine is relatively smooth, but adult participation in continuous learning is weaker. Although transitioning between parallel tracks in VET and general education is feasible, graduation and advancing to higher education remain challenging. The VET system in Palestine performs well in imparting basic skills and competences to youths and adults, aligning with the transition towards green and digital societies. However, a significant challenge lies in bridging the gap between the VET system and the labour market: the current setup lacks a systemic approach to integrating work-based learning, and the employability of VET graduates is below the international average. Measures have been put in place to improve the relevance of the system, including the creation of a working group to reach the approval of a national qualification framework, and new programmes have started with stronger involvement from the private sector to make the training offer more flexible and adapted to employers' needs.

The national TVET Commission, approved by the President in February 2021, operates with its own budget and management structure. This will hopefully bring an end to the weak governance structure that has been hindering the development of a comprehensive and effective VET system for many years. The new TVET Commission is working to generate evidence on skills in demand, track VET graduates, and contribute to building up a comprehensive labour market and skills information system, together with all the key partners working in the areas of employment and statistics. It also acts as a single contact point for donors in the TVET field.

Unemployment remains high, especially for young people and women, and over a third of households are living below the poverty line. The labour market is highly dependent on Israel, and factors such as limitations on the movement of goods and people, lack of control over borders, volatile customs agreements and unpredictable tariffs make it unattractive for foreign investors to invest in the Palestinian economy. In order for the majority of future jobs for Palestinians to come from the private sector, there is a need for further investment in business development services and promotion of entrepreneurship among young people. This includes access to finance and investments, in particular in priority sectors, with the aim of restructuring the Palestinian economy and revitalising the agriculture, industry and tourism sectors.

1. KEY POLITICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Political developments

Palestine continues to be characterised by a fragile political situation due to the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which was exacerbated by increased violence episodes following the latest Israeli elections. Notably, 2022 was the deadliest year for West Bank Palestinians since the United Nations started systematically counting fatalities in 2005 (OCHA, 2022). The growing escalations of violence and the restrictions imposed by Israel on trade, movement of people and goods, access to resources and tax revenues, are making it difficult for Palestine to build a sustainable state. The constraints imposed under the Israeli occupation on the different regions (the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip), including a decade-long blockade on the Gaza Strip, have resulted in varying jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority (PA) within disconnected regions. In addition, Palestine is suffering from the lack of a unified political system, which is dominated in the West Bank by the Fatah party and in Gaza by Hamas.

Demographics

According to the latest data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), as of mid-2023, there are an estimated 14.5 million Palestinians in the world, of whom 5.5 million live in Palestine (3.2 million in the West Bank and 2.3 million in the Gaza Strip). In 2022, the relative size of the youth population (estimate of the percentage of the population aged 15 to 24) in Palestine was 34.1%. As in the last few decades, the annual population growth rate in Palestine continues to be high, at 2.5% in 2021. The average woman in Palestine gives birth to four children, and life expectancy in 2020 was 74 years (World Bank, 2022). The high population growth rate in Palestine is putting pressure on natural resources such as land and water, as well as housing. It also poses challenges for the Palestinian government in terms of providing basic services such as education and healthcare. However, the large youth population also presents an opportunity for Palestine. With the suitable investments and policies, the youth population can be a driving force for economic growth and development.

Key economic developments

In 2022, GDP growth slowed to 3.9%, following the post-Covid rebound growth of 7% in 2021. This slower growth was due to a number of factors, including the growing restrictions on movement and access imposed by Israel, the long-term effects of fiscal distress, and the inflation increase. Because of this, the National Development Plan 2021-2023 (State of Palestine, 2020) is centred around a new development paradigm based on disengagement from the occupation. The Palestinian Authority (PA) also continues to face a fiscal crisis, due to a combination of declining international aid and the withholding of tax clearance revenues by Israel (World Bank, 2023). The decline in foreign aid was particularly detrimental, as it fell to USD 317 million (or 1.8% of GDP) in 2021, having previously been at USD 2 billion (or 27% of GDP) in 2008. Fiscal management remains the greatest challenge faced by the Palestinian government because of its impact on the ability to carry out basic state functions and meet obligations to pay civil servants, provide essential public goods and services, and develop physical and institutional infrastructure (UNCTAD, 2022). Services is the most important sector, employing the largest number of people. Its gross value added increased over the last decade from 57.7% in 2010 to 60.1% in 2021. Services was the first sector to be hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, in particular the tourism sector. The industry sector had a gross value added of 17.7%, but has declined by 0.9 p.p. since 2019. In the last decade, the gross value added of the agricultural sector has declined from 9% in 2010 to 6.3% in 2021 (World Bank, 2023). Informal employment plays a significant role in the Palestinian labour market. Various sources (including the ILO and the World Bank) indicate that more than half of workers in Palestine are hired informally.

Informal employment is exceptionally high for young workers and workers with a low-skilled profile. Remittance inflows to Palestine are an important source of foreign currency. According to the latest figures from the World Bank, in 2022 Palestine received USD 2.65 billion in remittances, which was slightly less than the USD 2.86 billion remitted in 2021 (World Bank, 2023).

Key social issues

There are many social issues in Palestine, closely connected with the ongoing occupation by Israel. The problematic socioeconomic situation affects children, young people and women.

Many Palestinians live in poverty, especially in Gaza due to its high population density, degrading infrastructure and poor living conditions. In 2022, GDP per capita in Gaza was estimated at USD 1 975, around a third of the West Bank's, where it exceeded USD 5 750. Poverty is also significantly more prevalent in Gaza, with about 37% of the population living below the poverty line in 2021, compared to about 5% in the West Bank (World Bank, 2023).

According to the Humanitarian Response Plan 2023, 2.45 million Palestinians needed some form of humanitarian assistance in 2023, the majority in Gaza. The types of humanitarian needs can be grouped into three categories. First, needs related to lack of protection and displacement due to the eviction of Palestinian families from their homes and many becoming refugees. Second, needs of people with limited access to essential services (health, food, education, electricity, sanitation, water, etc.). Third, needs of people affected by reduced resilience to cope with various shocks, especially among vulnerable groups, particularly women, children and youth (OCHA, 2022)¹.

When it comes to education, the problem of children and teachers having safe access to their schools remains a major concern, in addition to the fact that schools are often under threat of demolition. Following the UN's Education Cluster strategy, children with disabilities are the most affected by the deteriorating situation, as many lack the basic assistive devices to facilitate their learning in the classroom, as well as adequate means of transport, adapted school facilities, and staff able to accommodate their needs. Some 35% of children with disabilities (aged 6 to 17 years) were not enrolled in education in 2022, while those enrolled in education remain at a high risk of dropping out for the above-mentioned reasons (OCHA, 2022). This is a major social issue for the country.

¹ This report is based on information covering the developments in Palestine until September 2023.

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Trends and challenges

Education strategy and legal framework for education

The **National Policy Agenda 2017-2022** (State of Palestine, 2016) recognises the importance of education for economic growth and sustainable development, and identifies quality education for all as a national priority. The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2017-2022 comprises three strategic goals: 1) ensuring safe, inclusive and equitable access to quality education at all levels of the system; 2) developing a student-centred teaching and learning pedagogy and environment; and 3) enhancing accountability and results-based leadership, governance and management. Both the national government and the numerous international donors and organisations present in the country are making a lot of effort to achieve the strategic goals and improve the whole education system².

The current **European Joint Strategy 2021-2024** is titled 'Towards a democratic, accountable and sustainable Palestinian State' (European Commission, 2020). The third pillar of the strategy is about providing sustainable service delivery, which includes three sectors: education, health and social protection. European development partners are working together with the Palestinian Ministry of Education and UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) to offer safe, gender-responsive, inclusive and equitable access to high-quality education for all boys and girls in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip. It would include support from early childhood education until higher education, including vocational education and training. Still, international financial support for the VET sector is declining; the main donors remain the EU, Germany (through GIZ) and Belgium (through Enabel). The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) has also allocated a budget to GIZ for the implementation of the DO TVET Programme).

Education expenditure

In 2019, the overall education budget represented 17.7% of the total budget of the Palestinian Authority. The target for 2022 was to increase the education budget to 27% of the total budget, but this goal seemed unlikely to be met given the current economic challenges facing the Palestinian Authority. There is no increase in the budget allocation for the education sector, which amounted to 5.3% of GDP in 2019 (World Bank 2022) and is heavily reliant on foreign aid. UNWRA is an important donor supporting the education sector for Palestinian refugees. In 2019, the US cut funding to UNWRA by USD 300 million, which had a devastating impact on the education sector in the West Bank and Gaza, as it forced UNWRA to close schools and reduce its staff. In 2022, the US restored funding to UNWRA.

Access, participation and early school leaving

For years, Palestine has been known as a literate country, with a literacy rate of 97.5% in 2020 for people aged 15 years and above. In 2022, 54.4% of the total population (aged 15 and over) had only a low level of education (ISCED 0-2), 22.1% had a medium level (ISCED 3-4), and 23.5% had a tertiary level. There has been a positive trend in the attainment rate of tertiary-level education, as the share of the total population holding a tertiary-level degree increased from 15.1% in 2010 to 23.5% in 2022 (PCBS data). Despite the higher unemployment rates associated with higher levels of education, young Palestinians continue to prioritise tertiary education. This is particularly evident among females, with an enrolment rate of 53.5% compared to 32.5% for males in 2022 (UNESCO, 2023a). Although enrolment rates in vocational education and training are still low, there is a positive trend in students

² The European Union is the biggest donor of external assistance to the Palestinians. A list of the main EU interventions can be found at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/palestine/eu-projects-palestine_en?s=206.

enrolling in vocational programmes. In 2015, only 2% of upper secondary students (ISCED level 3) enrolled in vocational programmes. By 2021, the enrolment rate had increased to 3.8% (ISCED level 3) (UNESCO, 2023a). In recent years, the Ministry of Education has made efforts to increase enrolment in VET and to close the gap between VET and general education by introducing vocational units and a technology track in general education (ETF, 2021a).

The percentage of early school leavers among young people aged 18 to 24 continues to drop (from 35.4% in 2010 to 31.2% in 2022). The drop is attributable to female students, who have substantially reduced their early school leaving rate, resulting in around one out of five young women (20.4%) leaving school early in 2022 (PCBS data). The early school leaving rate for men is almost double that for women.

PISA results

In their first participation in the PISA assessment in 2022, Palestinian students achieved a commendable score despite the challenging conditions they face. Palestinian students – 50 secondary schools participated, 30 from the West Bank and 20 from Gaza – obtained 366 points in mathematics, 349 in reading comprehension and 369 in science: even if the result is far from the OECD average (472, 476 and 485 respectively), the Palestinian territories are 5 points above Jordan in mathematics, 3 ahead in reading, and 6 behind in science. And they lead Morocco by 1 point in mathematics, 10 in reading comprehension and 4 in science. UNRWA schools in particular have consistently delivered good results, significantly outperforming the public and private school systems. Female students have also played a pivotal role in the Palestinian education system, consistently outperforming their male counterparts in mathematics (OECD, 2023).

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

The number of youths (15-24 age group) not in employment, education, or training (NEET) is comparatively high, standing at 31.5% in 2021, and is characterised by an uneven distribution across genders and territories. As with unemployment, a higher percentage of women found themselves in the NEET category – 37%, compared to 27% of men. In geographic terms, the Gaza Strip has around 30% more NEETs than the West Bank. The secondary school dropout rate in 2022 was 1.47%, with more males dropping out than females (2.57% vs. 1.37%). The highest dropout rate among males was in the vocational branch (10th grade) at 5.2%, while the highest dropout rate among females was in the technology branch (12th grade) at 18% (PCBS data). International initiatives targeting NEETs are increasing. The EU-funded programme ‘Youth Economic Empowerment in Palestine’³ targets young people not in employment or education to help them access decent employment opportunities to enhance their contribution to economic, social and public life. This new programme has been operational since 2022. In addition, the World Bank is implementing a project with a set of activities targeting the improvement of life skills for employability under ‘Finance for Jobs’⁴.

2.2 Initial VET and adult learning

Strategic and legal framework for initial VET and adult learning

The Palestinian technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system has been shaped by the country's political history. After the Nakba in 1948, UNRWA was established and began providing education and vocational services. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Israeli occupation authority took over the state-administered education system, including vocational education, and continued to oversee its operations. In the late 1970s, the Israeli occupation authority established a number of technical training centres to train Palestinian youth to join the workforce, especially in the Israeli labour market. Palestinians also developed technical education as part of the tertiary education sector by

³ <https://open.enabel.be/en/PSE/2502/p/palestinian-youth-empowerment-programme.html>

⁴ <https://www.f4j.ps/>

establishing a number of colleges. In 1994, when the PA began governing civil institutions in parts of the occupied Palestinian territory, the Israeli occupation authority transferred the administration of the education system, including the TVET parts, to the newly established Authority.

The Palestinian TVET system under the PA jurisdiction has three components:

1. Vocational Training (VT), consisting of government VT centres, non-governmental VT institutions, UNRWA-VT centres and private VT establishments. The government runs its own VT centres and issues licences to other VT centres and institutions.
2. Vocational Education (VE): This component consists of secondary schools, mostly government-funded, as well as non-government schools and UNRWA schools.
3. Technical Education (TE): This component consists of vocational colleges, technical colleges and technical university colleges. Some of these colleges are government colleges, while others are run as public associations and non-governmental organisations.

In its National Development Policies (NDP) document for 2021-2023 (Government of Palestine, 2021), the government attaches special importance to TVET and the handicraft industry, which needs to be aligned with labour-market needs. The following policy interventions are mentioned:

- Develop the educational evaluation system and principles, streamline secondary education to better integrate both sexes and to be more flexible, more enabling of the TVET enrolment, and more aligned to current and future labour-market needs.
- Align TVET and higher education outputs with development and labour-market needs and ensure access to equal opportunities for all.
- Upgrade and expand the TVET system.
- Develop and expand the foundations of TVET in accordance with the government's cluster development approach.

The first TVET⁵ strategy dates from 1999 and was revised in 2008 and 2010. Even though the current strategy has sound objectives and a detailed action plan that addresses legislation, financing, the relevance of skills to labour-market needs, stakeholder engagement and qualifications frameworks, it has never been fully implemented. One of the reasons given is the lack of a single governing entity for VET. Other factors identified as main challenges in achieving a more efficient and better-quality VET system are the following (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2017): low participation by the private sector and civil society in the management of the sector; low quality of TVET programmes, lack of harmony with market needs and the high unemployment rate among graduates; fragmentation of funders' policies; low turnout for vocational and technical education and training; low societal value for vocational and technical education; limited professional and technical specialisations related to the needs of the labour market; and weakness of the existing infrastructure (curricula, staff, equipment, systems, buildings, etc.).

According to the ETF Torino Process results, the Palestinian VET system is faced with several major challenges. Firstly, a rigid structure makes it difficult to understand the market needs and adapt the training offer accordingly. Secondly, due to extremely high informality rates, it is almost impossible to track youth transitions from education to employment. Furthermore, the overall legislation (Labour Law, Law of General Education, Higher Education Law) does not provide sufficient tools for the development of VET. All these factors lead to a low quality of VET, especially continuing vocational education and training (CVET). However, it is worth noting that VET graduates have more chance of finding a job than university graduates (ETF, upcoming).

⁵ In Palestine, the term 'technical and vocational education and training' (TVET) is used, while the ETF prefers to use 'vocational education and training' (VET). Throughout this paper, the term 'VET' will be used unless referring to a specific unit, document or quote from Palestine that makes reference to TVET.

A recent report by UNESCO's 'VET for Future' project⁶ notes: 'it is essential to formulate a new national TVET strategy that replaces the one put in place in 2010. This strategy should have the characteristics of a grand strategy, which means being developed on the basis of a multi-sectoral approach. (...) Thus the TVET grand strategy should be able to bring together the needs of different government entities that are reflected in their strategic plans on the one hand and the national economic agenda and the national employment strategy on the other' (Jabber, 2023).

VET governance and financing arrangements

For decades, VET policymaking was in the hands of three main players: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the Ministry of Labour. Following some attempts to address this fragmented governance, such as the establishment of the Higher Council for TVET and the Development Centre in 2017, in February 2021 the establishment of the **National TVET Commission (NTC)** was approved by the President (Presidential Law No 4). The NTC Board of Directors is headed by the Prime Minister and the ministers of the various line ministries involved in the TVET sector: the Ministries of Labour, Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, Social Development, and Transport. The Board also includes private-sector representatives, including the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (FPCCIA), the trade unions, and Nablus University for Vocational and Technical Education, a government-run university in Nablus. The NTC's primary role is to spearhead the development and policymaking of the TVET sector in Palestine by overseeing and monitoring all institutions operating within this domain, in close cooperation with the various ministries responsible for different VET school categories. Additionally, the NTC coordinates donors' activities to ensure consistency and synergy across the sector. The Commission is currently working on the basis of its 2022 workplan and has an operational budget. Regulations and guidelines for transferring the Directors-General from the various ministries and the TVET institutions have been produced but are still waiting for an implementation decision from the Board of the National TVET Commission. One of the priority tasks of the new National TVET Commission is to finalise the TVET law and prepare a final draft for the adoption of the law. In addition, the National TVET Commission's 2022 workplan includes revising the national TVET strategy.

To further enhance collaboration, the Palestinian government has established a **Sector Working Group (SWG)** for the TVET sector. This SWG serves as a platform for the NTC to engage with donors, development agencies, private-sector representatives and private training institutions. In addition, some sectoral councils are being established under the coordination of the NTC, which will provide bridges between the labour market and the education and training systems to foster demand orientation and facilitate better use and development of people's skills.

To date, there has been no overall costing analysis of the VET system as a whole. It has always been a challenge to gain a complete picture of the system with administrative data such as enrolment figures. Calculations and data gathering carried out in 2019 as part of the national Torino Process assessment show a positive trend in enrolment, with a roughly 15% rise in students in the upper-secondary age cohort (aged 16-18) enrolling in all forms of formal and non-formal VET training programmes provided by different ministries. Overall, it can be concluded that enrolment figures are positive for all the VET tracks (ETF, upcoming).

In 2021, under the umbrella of Enabel's project 'Skilled Young Palestine', a blueprint was drafted to establish a new **Skills Development Fund**, and a pilot of the new funding mechanism took place in 2021/2022 using Enabel funds. In the future, the Skills Development Fund will become the primary financial pillar, aiming to create an environment where training providers supply the skills that industry needs. This will have an impact on the quality of TVET; will improve opportunities from donor funding, to avoid duplication and create a cumulative benefit; and will stimulate a demand-led approach to TVET provision by supporting private-sector leadership in the delivery of projects.

⁶ <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/theory-practice-training-tvet-trainers-palestine-0>

Qualifications, validation and recognition

A **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)** working group developed a draft NQF in 2010, but it has not been approved by the government. Experts and officials have been guided in NQF development by drawing on the Arab Standard Classification of Occupations system, which classifies occupations into the categories of Specialist, Technician, Craftsman, Skilled worker and Semi-skilled worker (ETF, 2021c). Establishing a system for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning is one element in the NQF plan, and further work in this field will be undertaken in the near future.

In September 2022, the Palestinian Council of Ministers decided to form an **NQF Technical Committee** to review the current NQF and come up with a final version to be issued for approval. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is leading the Technical Committee. Other members are the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and the National TVET Commission. GIZ and the ETF are actively supporting this Committee's work by providing expertise and connections with international NQF developments.

Quality and quality assurance

In line with the TVET strategy of 2010, the quality assurance system includes various measures, such as the competency centre standards that are benchmarked against ISO standards and quality standards for teachers. However, there is still no national quality assurance authority to develop the quality system of the VET sector as a whole. The current quality assurance approach mainly refers to the inspection of inputs with little autonomy for VET providers (ETF, 2020). The implementation of VET is monitored and evaluated by each ministry that is accountable for its part of the system. In the future, the National TVET Commission will be in charge of monitoring and evaluating the entire VET system. An integrated TVET management information system is needed, including the development of a full set of indicators for monitoring the efficiency and reform of the entire TVET sector.

Regarding accreditation, it is the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission that licenses higher education institutions and colleges and accredits their programmes. For VET institutions, the Ministries of Education and Labour are in charge of accrediting and licensing VET institutions and the adoption of their programmes.

Work-based learning arrangements

The Ministries of Education and Labour are convinced of the importance and impact that work-based learning (WBL) has on the employability of young people. In recent years, GIZ, Enabel and the World Bank have been supporting the country in integrating WBL at different levels of education. A **national WBL strategy** was developed in 2018, which outlines the different definitions and models that are in place for the education system. With regard to secondary-level VET, practical learning at the workplace is taking place, mainly through informal arrangements between schools, teachers, students, parents and local businesses. Until recently, it has been rather straightforward to collaborate with the private sector and find workplaces for students because of the low number of VET students.

Different models of WBL are being implemented, depending on the different tracks provided by the secondary vocational schools: 1) the ordinary track; 2) the certificate of professional competence track or project-based learning track; and 3) the apprenticeship track. More efforts are needed to further streamline and implement WBL across the whole VET system in order to differentiate VET graduates from academic ones. VET students should learn the technical skills and competences that are required in the labour market to give them a better chance of finding a job (Samara, 2021).

Digital education and skills

Developing the digital economy is among the national priorities for the Palestinian government. The **2021 National Development Plan** identifies the digital transformation among national development priorities, and connects it with the aim to improve the quality of education and to align vocational education with the requirements of the labour market. The **Palestinian ICT Strategy 2021-2023** (Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology, 2021) identifies the lack of qualified workers in the ICT sector as a challenge, but does not provide a clear roadmap for developing digital skills and the needs of the labour market, in a situation where the unemployment rate among computer science graduates is higher than that for graduates of business, law, natural sciences and health (World Bank, 2021). Digital skills are also very important, as student mobility is difficult due to the Israeli occupation, with face-to-face teaching liable to being interrupted because of military escalations.

A lot of effort is being made to digitise the education sector, especially after the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, when a 'Distance Learning Taskforce' was created, led by UNESCO and the Ministry of Education. This Taskforce works on the development of innovative distance learning solutions to ensure inclusive and equitable high-quality education. The MoE supports a free online platform with resources and lessons, called the **Palestinian eSchool Portal**⁷, which is considered a unified electronic portal for all schools to communicate between the Ministry, schools, teachers and students.

There are several donor initiatives that support the creation of digital learning platforms to make learning content available online. For example, the **UNRWA Digital Learning Platform**⁸, launched in 2021, provides remote learning resources to more than 550 000 Palestinian refugee students. '**Equip Palestine with E-Learning (E-Pal)**' is a new initiative by the Palestine Polytechnic University and funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, to strengthen digital teaching approaches in the Palestinian higher education sector. Donors also provide support for the educational infrastructure in order to increase the number of devices in schools, such as computer labs, laptop and desktop computers, tablets, LED screens, projectors, printers and video conferencing equipment, as well as management software and system platforms. According to the 2019 Palestinian Digital Economy Assessment, development partners have established more than 40 computer labs with a total of 2 220 computers and laptops both to schools' vocational training centres, and to communities (UNESCO, 2023b).

Local projects also exist, such as **Empowering Palestinian girls through digital learning innovations in STEM fields**⁹ by Birzeit University, which aims to support students – especially girls – to code, collaborate and innovate.

Statistics on education and training

The PCBS is collecting **data on education and training**. In cooperation with the ETF, the PCBS has been successfully involved in calculating skills mismatch indicators using the Labour Force Survey, demonstrating the continuous improvement in evidence and dataset availability. It has always been challenging to collect data on the TVET system as a whole because of its fragmented governance (PBCS, 2022). Tracer studies are mainly carried out by the donor community, but this is not yet integrated as a systematic monitoring and evaluation tool. In 2018, the ETF, GIZ and Enabel carried out a joint tracer study to better understand the transition of TVET graduates from school to work (ETF, 2019).

The share of students in initial VET in Palestine has long been considered marginal. For many years, **VET enrolment figures**, which include only the number of students enrolled in the 11th grade of formal secondary vocational education (industrial, agricultural, hotel management, household economy), have hovered between 2% and 3%. According to the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation

⁷ eschool.edu.ps

⁸ <https://keeplearning.unrwa.org/en/>

⁹ <https://idrc-crdi.ca/en/project/empowering-palestinian-girls-through-digital-learning-innovations-stem-fields>

Report from the Ministry of Education, the latest available figures for 2019 point to a share of 3.9% of students in formal initial VET (secondary cycle, grade 11) and find a sharp gender divide (6.9% for boys and merely 1.5% for girls). This is an increase in secondary vocational education (grade 11) of 1% compared to 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2019). It is expected that this positive trend will continue thanks to the efforts in making VET more attractive.

3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

3.1 Trends and challenges

Labour market characteristics

The Palestinian labour market is characterised by its high segmentation, not only by age and gender, but also geographically and administratively. The geographic and administrative separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip is very pronounced and creates a major obstacle to growth. Each area operates with its own labour-market characteristics, labour demand and wage levels.

The **unemployment** rate in Palestine in 2022 was 23.8%. However, there are significant disparities between the West Bank and Gaza, with an unemployment rate of 47% in Gaza and 13% in the West Bank. The unemployment rate is also higher among females (38.5%) than males (20%). The unemployment rate among youth (18-29 years) is particularly high, at 35.3% in 2021, and is also higher in Gaza (65%) than in the West Bank (24%). The highest rates of unemployment among youth are recorded among graduates, with an unemployment rate of 53%. Of those graduates, 39% of men and 66% of women are unemployed (World Bank, 2023). The Israeli occupation, which restricts movement and access to resources, is a major driver of unemployment in Palestine. The Palestinian government and the international community are working to address the unemployment problem, but the full potential of the Palestinian economy cannot be realised until the Israeli occupation ends.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) recently released data on labour-force participation, which indicates that **inactivity remains a significant issue**, with only 44.0% of the population aged 15 years or above actively participating in the labour force (PCBS, 2022). This is slightly higher than the pre-pandemic level of 43.4%, but remains below the average of 49.6% for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

A striking **gender gap** persists in labour force participation. The labour force participation rate (LFPR) for men stands at 71.1%, while it is only 18.9% for women. This disparity is one of the widest in the MENA region, reflecting the pervasive cultural and social barriers that women face in entering the formal labour market. Several structural impediments hinder women's economic empowerment. These include a lack of policies promoting female employment; a weak manufacturing sector that offers limited opportunities for women in the formal economy; high unemployment rates for men, which can discourage families from sending women to work; negative social norms that discourage women from seeking employment outside the home; and a lack of affordable childcare options.

According to the latest PCBS Labour Force Survey, in 2022 the overall **unemployment** rate for Palestine (for the population aged 15+) stood at 24%, an improvement compared to the 25.9% in 2020. The 2022 unemployment figures vary significantly when broken down further: by gender (18.6% for men and 70% for women), by region (13% in the West Bank and 45% in Gaza) and by age (41.7% in the 15-24 age group compared to 24.6% in the 25-49 age group). A major challenge for Palestine is the fight against the high youth unemployment, especially for young women, who have an unemployment rate of 63.5% (PCBS, 2022).

Palestine is suffering from a **skills mismatch** in the labour market. A recent ETF study, based on 2019 data, shows that one in three employees with a higher education worked in jobs not corresponding to their field of study (horizontal mismatch), while almost 20% of employees with an upper secondary education worked in jobs below their level of education. Similarly, around 22% of employees with a tertiary education were employed in jobs below their level of education (vertical mismatch), while young employees are more exposed to a mismatch in employment (ETF, 2022).

When addressing the labour-market situation in Palestine, one should not forget the growing number of **Palestinians working in Israel** and the settlements, mainly in the construction sector. Some work illegally, informally or using illegally purchased work permits. The lack of jobs in Palestine and the higher salaries in Israel are the main reasons for such a high outflow. In addition, the high level of

informal employment remains significant in Palestine, accounting for three quarters of the employment increase. 65% of salaried employees in the Palestinian private sector were hired without a written contract in 2022, while 26% of employees contributed to a pension fund, and only half of female salaried employees benefited from paid maternity leave (ILO, 2022).

Statistics on the labour market and employment

The capacity of PCBS staff can be considered high, the website is well structured and the PCBS issues relevant and up-to-date publications on the labour-force situation in Palestine. The employment offices in the different governorates collect and disseminate administrative data on the registration of jobseekers and their participation in counselling, activation and employment programmes. A Labour Market Information System¹⁰ is available and managed by the Ministry of Labour. However, the system is not sufficiently or systematically used for analysis, for matchmaking data or for feeding into employment policies, due to a lack of institutional follow-up and limited technical capacity. It is mainly the PCBS that disseminates labour-market and labour-force information through the Labour Force Surveys carried out every quarter.

The EFT carried out a skills mismatch study in 2019, in close cooperation with the PCBS. In addition, UNESCO, under the Youth Employment in the Mediterranean (YEM) project¹¹, developed a Skills Forecasting Model in 2018 with the aim of informing employment policies. The ILO issues a report every year on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, describing the situation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as in Gaza, Israel and the occupied Syrian Golan.

3.2 Employment policy and institutional settings

Strategy and legal framework in the employment field

Palestine has the following strategies in place in the area of labour market and employment:

Labour Sector Strategy 2021-2023: ‘The road to decent work and employment opportunities improvement’ (Ministry of Labour 2020). The strategy specifies four goals that are highly relevant for the skills and employment development of Palestinians: promoting self-employment; skilling and upskilling people in line with the needs of the labour market; improving the tripartite relationships regarding decent work and social protection of workers; and supporting networking amongst organisations.

National Employment Strategy 2021-2025 (Ministry of Labour, 2021) to achieve full, productive and freely chosen employment for jobseekers, particularly women and young people. The strategy places employment at the heart of socioeconomic development, viewing employment and decent work as a key focus to achieve stability, address the adverse consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Palestinian labour market, and respond to threats posed by the ongoing Israeli occupation.

The second Palestinian Decent Work Programme 2018-2022 (ILO, 2018) provides a framework for collaboration between the Palestinian government and social partners on various aspects related to the three pillars of the Decent Work Agenda and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, with technical and financial assistance from the ILO.

Initiatives to boost employment

A wide range of initiatives available to boost employment and active labour market policies has been put in place by the Ministry of Labour. The **Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection**¹² (PFESP) is the national umbrella institution for all employment, job creation and entrepreneurship

¹⁰ <http://www.lmis.pna.ps/>

¹¹ <https://unevoc.unesco.org/yem/YEM+Country+Profile+-+Palestine>

¹² <https://pef.ps/en>

development programmes implemented in Palestine. However, most employment-support programmes are dependent on donor support.

At local level, employment offices, trade and industry chambers, Palestinian universities, non-governmental organisations (such as the Welfare Association, the Sharek Youth Forum, the Centre for Youth Economic Empowerment) and private institutions provide **employment support services** to Palestinian citizens. A positive development in the last few years has been the inclusion of the career guidance role within the active labour market measures. However, there is still a lack of an adequate and comprehensive employment service system in Palestine, and the employment services are facing many challenges, such as insufficient funding and limited human resources. In 2019, employment offices in the different governorates provided career counselling for 17 800 jobseekers, 57% of whom were women. Moreover, 928 university students benefited from the services provided by the university employment offices and vocational units. This resulted in 717 jobseekers joining the labour market (Ministry of Labour, 2020). These figures do not include the results of donor-driven initiatives in terms of employment and business support services and job creation.

Entrepreneurship is seen as a possible solution for the high youth unemployment, but it would need an enabling environment and investment to develop entrepreneurial capacities. Self-employment decreased to 27.8% of total employment in 2021, from 30.6% in 2016 (PCBS data). There is a need for further investment in business development services and the promotion of youth entrepreneurship. This includes access to finance and investments, in particular in priority sectors, with the aim of restructuring the Palestinian economy and revitalising the agriculture, industry and tourism sectors (ETF, 2020). The 2023 Enterprise Survey by the World Bank states that for 33.6% of firms the biggest obstacle is the political instability, followed by the difficult access to finance, high tax rates and corruption.

Initiatives to increase the capacity of the public employment services

As noted in the current Labour Sector Strategy, the employment services suffer from a lack of adequate planning and administrative capacities, which has an impact on the efficient execution of the active labour market programmes that are in place. It is difficult to gain an overview of the impact of all initiatives put in place by the government, the donor community and non-governmental organisations, since each initiative has its own objectives, outcomes and indicators to measure the results, and coordination between all initiatives at local and regional levels is challenging.

This and other challenges related to the labour market are addressed by different, mainly donor-driven programmes. The **European Joint Strategy in support of Palestine 2021-2024**, 'Towards a democratic, accountable and sustainable Palestinian state', aims to support policies to create decent jobs, especially for young people and women, and one of its objectives is improving the quality of the employment services. Increasing the capacity of the public employment services is indirectly an objective of the new '**Youth Economic Empowerment in Palestine (YEP)**' scheme: one of the expected results is the set-up and implementation of a 'First Employment Facility', which will require a partnership between the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection (PFESP) and key private-sector umbrella organisations.

For further information, please contact Fabio Nascimbeni at the European Training Foundation by email at Fabio.Nascimbeni@etf.europa.eu.

Statistical Annex

The Annex includes annual data from 2010, 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 or the last available year.

	Indicator	2010	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	
1	Total population (in thousands) ⁽¹⁾	3786.2	4270.1	4685.3	4803.3	4922.7	5043.6	
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15-24 and denominator age 15-64, %) ^{(1) C}	40.1	37.7	35.2	34.7	34.4	34.1	
3	GDP growth rate (%)	5.8	3.7	1.4	-11.3	7.0	3.9	
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	Agriculture	9.0	7.4	7.1	7.1	6.3	M.D.
		Industry	18.6	16.4	18.4	17.0	17.7	M.D.
		Services	57.7	61.7	61.1	60.6	60.1	M.D.
5	Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	6.2	4.7	5.3 ⁽⁵⁾	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	
6	Public expenditure on education (as % of total public expenditure)	17.8	15.5	17.7	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	
7	Adult literacy (%)	94.7	96.5	97.4	97.5	M.D.	M.D.	
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+) (%)	Low ⁽²⁾	64.0	60.5	56.5	55.3	55.1	54.4
		Medium ⁽³⁾	20.9	21.0	21.5	21.7	21.6	22.1
		High ⁽⁴⁾	15.1	18.5	22.0	23.0	23.3	23.5
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%)	Total	35.4	31.4	30.3	30.3	29.5	31.2
		Male	41.4	39.6	40.2	39.4	38.2	38.9
		Female	28.1	20.8	17.8	18.4	17.9	20.4
10	NET enrolment rates in secondary education (ISCED level 2-3) (%)	81.8 ⁽⁶⁾	83.7	88.3	88.7	89.9	M.D.	
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	6.1	2.0	3.0	3.9	3.8	M.D.	
12	Low achievement in reading, mathematics and science – PISA (%)	Reading	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
		Mathematics	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
		Science	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
13	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%) ⁽⁸⁾	Total	41.2	44.0 ⁽⁷⁾	44.3	40.9	43.4	45.0
		Male	67.1	69.6 ⁽⁷⁾	69.9	65.1	68.9	70.7
		Female	14.8	17.7 ⁽⁷⁾	18.1	16.1	17.2	18.6

	Indicator		2010	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022
14	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%) ⁽⁸⁾	Total	58.8	56.0 ⁽⁷⁾	55.7	59.1	56.6	55.0
		Male	32.9	30.4 ⁽⁷⁾	30.1	34.9	31.1	29.3
		Female	85.2	82.3 ⁽⁷⁾	81.9	83.9	82.8	81.4
15	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%) ⁽⁸⁾	Total	31.4	33.9 ⁽⁷⁾	33.1	30.3	31.9	33.4
		Male	51.6	55.5 ⁽⁷⁾	55.0	50.5	53.5	55.3
		Female	10.8	11.6 ⁽⁷⁾	10.6	9.7	9.8	11.2
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%) ⁽⁸⁾	Low ⁽²⁾	36.5	38.6 ⁽⁷⁾	38.4	35.0	38.2	32.5
		Medium ⁽³⁾	27.1	30.6 ⁽⁷⁾	29.9	27.6	28.2	26.9
		High ⁽⁴⁾	59.8	54.5 ⁽⁷⁾	49.7	46.5	47.2	49.5
17	Employment by sector (%) ⁽⁸⁾	Agriculture	11.8	8.7 ⁽⁷⁾	6.1	6.4	6.7	8.0
		Industry	24.3	28.1 ⁽⁷⁾	29.7	29.9	31.2	30.9
		Services	63.9	63.2 ⁽⁷⁾	64.2	63.8	62.1	61.0
18	Incidence of self-employment (%) ^{c, (8)}		32.4	31.4 ⁽⁷⁾	28.6	27.7	27.8	24.4
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%) ^{c, (8)}		26.0	25.1 ⁽⁷⁾	22.1	21.9	21.7	19.2
20	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%) ⁽⁸⁾	Total	23.8	23.0 ⁽⁷⁾	25.3	25.9	26.4	23.8
		Male	23.1	20.2 ⁽⁷⁾	21.3	22.5	22.4	20.0
		Female	26.8	34.3 ⁽⁷⁾	41.2	40.1	42.9	38.5
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%) ⁽⁸⁾	Low ⁽²⁾	24.6	21.4 ⁽⁷⁾	22.5	24.2	23.0	21.1
		Medium ⁽³⁾	19.7	17.4 ⁽⁷⁾	20.3	20.1	22.0	19.1
		High ⁽⁴⁾	24.1	28.4 ⁽⁷⁾	31.5	30.5	32.6	29.7
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%) ⁽⁸⁾	Total	39.1	37.4 ⁽⁷⁾	40.1	42.1	41.7	35.3
		Male	37.1	33.7 ⁽⁷⁾	34.7	36.6	37.2	31.7
		Female	49.8	56.6 ⁽⁷⁾	67.1	70.0	64.5	57.5
23	Proportion of people aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%) ⁽⁸⁾	Total	29.3	32.2 ⁽⁷⁾	33.4	34.5	31.5	M.D.
		Male	24.3	26.6 ⁽⁷⁾	26.7	30.0	26.6	M.D.
		Female	34.5	38.2 ⁽⁷⁾	40.4	39.1	36.8	M.D.
24	Participation in training / lifelong learning (% aged 25-64)	Total	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.

	Indicator	2010	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022
25	Human Development Index	0.687	0.710	0.727	0.716	0.715	M.D.

Last update: 28/08/2023

Sources:

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: World Bank, World Development Indicators database

Indicators 7, 10, 11: UNESCO, Institute for Statistics

Indicators 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

Indicator 12: OECD PISA 2018 Results (Volume I) Annex B1

Indicator 25: UNDP

Notes:

(1) Estimation.

(2) Low – ISCED 0-2.

(3) Medium – ISCED 3-4.

(4) High – ISCED 5-8.

(5) Applies to 2018.

(6) Applies to 2012.

(7) Breaks in series due to the adaptation to the new definition of employment (adaptation to the 19th resolution of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians).

(8) Data from 2010 revised according to the results from population, housing and establishments census 2017.

Legend:

C= ETF calculations

N.A. = Not applicable

M.D. = Missing data

Annex: definitions of Indicators

	Description	Definition
1	Total population (000)	The total population is estimated as the number of people having their usual residence in a country on 1 January of the respective year. When information on the usually resident population is unavailable, countries may report legal or registered residents.
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15-24) (%)	This is the ratio of the youth population (aged 15-24) to the working-age population, usually aged 15-64 (or 15-74 or 15+).
3	GDP growth rate (%)	Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency. Aggregates are based on constant 2010 US dollars. GDP 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.
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	<p>The share of value added from agriculture, industry and services.</p> <p>Agriculture corresponds to ISIC divisions 1-5 and includes forestry, hunting, fishing, crop cultivation and livestock production. Value added is the net output of a sector after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or depletion and degradation of natural resources. The origin of value added is determined by the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), revision 3 or 4.</p> <p>Industry corresponds to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) tabulation categories C-F (revision 3) or tabulation categories B-F (revision 4), and includes mining and quarrying (including oil production), manufacturing, construction, and public utilities (electricity, gas, and water).</p> <p>Services correspond to ISIC divisions 50-99 and include value added in wholesale and retail trade (including hotels and restaurants), transport, government, and financial, professional and personal services such as education, healthcare and real-estate services. Also included are imputed bank service charges, import duties, any statistical discrepancies noted by national compilers, and discrepancies arising from rescaling.</p>
5	Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	<p>Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of GDP.</p> <p>Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans, as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.</p>
6	Public expenditure on education (as % of total public expenditure)	<p>Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of total public expenditure.</p> <p>Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans, as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.</p>
7	Adult literacy (%)	Adult literacy is the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over who can both read and write a short simple statement on their everyday life, and can understand it. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy' – the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.

	Description	Definition
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+) (%)	Educational attainment refers to the highest educational level achieved by individuals, expressed as a percentage of all persons in that age group. This is usually measured in terms of the highest educational programme successfully completed, which is typically certified by a recognised qualification. Recognised intermediate qualifications are classified at a lower level than the programme itself.
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%)	Early leavers from education and training are defined as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education who were not in further education or training during the 4 weeks preceding the survey. Lower secondary education refers to ISCED 1997 levels 0-2 and 3C short (i.e. programmes lasting under 2 years) for data up to 2013, and to ISCED 2011 levels 0-2 for data from 2014 onwards.
10	NET enrolment rates in secondary education (ISCED level 2-3) (%)	This indicator covers enrolment in a given level of education of children/youths belonging to the official age group corresponding to the given level of education.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	Total number of students enrolled in vocational programmes at a given level of education (in this case, upper secondary), expressed as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled in all programmes (vocational and general) at that level.
12	Low achievement in reading, maths and science – PISA (%)	Low achievers are 15-year-olds who fail to reach level 2 on the PISA scale for reading, mathematics and science.
13	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)	The activity rate is calculated by dividing the active population by the population of the same age group. The active population (also called 'labour force') is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed people. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
14	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%)	The inactivity/out-of-the-labour-force rate is calculated by dividing the inactive population by the population of the same age group. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
15	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed people by the population of the same age group. Employed people are all people who worked at least 1 hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated.
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed persons by the population of the same age group. Employed persons are all persons who worked at least 1 hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated. Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: Low (ISCED level 0-2), Medium (ISCED level 3-4) and High (ISCED 1997 level 5-6, and ISCED 2011 level 5-8).
17	Employment by sector (%)	This indicator provides information on the relative importance of different economic activities with regard to employment. Data is presented by broad branch of economic activity (i.e. agriculture/industry/services) based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC). In Europe, the NACE classification is consistent with ISIC.
18	Incidence of self-employment (%)	The incidence of self-employment is expressed by the number of self-employed people (i.e. employers + own-account workers + contributing family workers) as a proportion of the total employed population.

	Description	Definition
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)	The incidence of vulnerable employment is expressed by the number of own-account workers and contributing family workers as a proportion of the total employed population.
20	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15-64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the 2 weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the 4-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment; or had found a job to start later (within 3 months).
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15-64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the 2 weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work (had taken specific steps in the 4-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment; or had found a job to start later (within 3 months). Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: Low (ISCED level 0-2), Medium (ISCED level 3-4) and High (ISCED 1997 level 5-6, and ISCED 2011 level 5-8).
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15-24 who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the 2 weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the 4-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment; or had found a job to start later (within 3 months).
23	Proportion of people aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	The indicator provides information on young people aged 15-24 who meet the following two conditions: first, they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the ILO definition); and second, they have not received any education or training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey. Data is expressed as a percentage of the total population of the same age group and gender, excluding respondents who have not answered the question on participation in education and training.
24	Participation in training / lifelong learning (% aged 25-64)	Participants in lifelong learning refers to persons aged 25-64 who stated that they received education or training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the question on participation in education and training. The information collected relates to all education or training, whether or not it is relevant to the respondent's current or possible future job. If a different reference period is used, this should be indicated.
25	Human Development Index	The index is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living.

KEY DONOR PROJECTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

A major player in the country is **UNRWA**¹³, the UN agency that supports Palestinian refugees. The agency offers its support through vocational training offered to young Palestinian refugees, managing eight training centres with semi-professional, trade and short-term courses in a variety of specialisations that aim to prepare students for local employment. The specialisations include construction, nursing, hairdressing and fashion. The programme has achieved significant success, reaching more than 123 000 graduates as of 2020. Furthermore, graduates of the programme enjoy high success rates in finding employment or self-employment. UNRWA also supports young women through its training programme. Of the 7 930 trainees who graduated from the programme in 2021, more than 3 500 were female.

Other international players are very active in the country. The **Forsah Technical and Vocational Education and Training**¹⁴ programme is a 5-year project aiming to enable TVET institutions in the West Bank and Gaza to meet labour-market demands and provide Palestinians with meaningful, well-paying employment and income-generating opportunities. Funded by US-AID, Forsah TVET supports the development of new technical and vocational training and improves the quality and relevance of existing technical programmes, with a particular focus on improving youth access and creating partnerships with the private sector. The **Lutheran World Federation**¹⁵ in Jerusalem runs another initiative called the Vocational Training Program (VTP). This initiative has served as one path for Palestinians to receive vocational training since 1949, including through programmes specifically designed for blind students. The VTP works actively to strengthen gender equity in the region by providing culturally accepted training to young women. One such example is training in electronics and telecommunications. With two training centres in Ramallah and Beit Hanina, the VTP is able to train about 210 students every year in fields such as carpentry, car mechanics and telecommunications. The **Technical Vocational Education and Training League**¹⁶ started operations in Palestine in the early 2000s, and now has 16 members throughout Palestine, offering learning opportunities to students from various backgrounds. With vocational education and training in Palestine, students have a chance to work towards a better future for themselves and their families.

This is a non-exhaustive overview of the main interventions in the field of education, training and employment.

¹³ <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/vocational-training>

¹⁴ <https://www.irex.org/files/rapid-sector-analysis-report-2023>

¹⁵ <https://jerusalem.lutheranworld.org/content/vocational-training-program-91>

¹⁶ <https://www.tvet.ps/en>

Project	Donor	Implemented by	Summary / areas of work
Youth Economic Empowerment in Palestine (YEP)	Belgium & EU	Enabel	Address the lack of economic prospects for Palestinian youths, including vulnerable youths and young women, by empowering them to access decent employment opportunities
Skilled Young Palestine	Belgium	Enabel	Improve the transition of youth to employment and self-employment through improved skills and competences
Inclusive access to quality education and learning	Belgium	Enabel	Young people in Palestine develop into active and critical citizens, ready for local and global challenges through improved education, training, guidance and access to employment
Pathways to Employment in Palestine	Belgium	Enabel	Young people in Palestine develop into active and critical citizens, ready for local and global challenges through improved education, training, guidance and access to employment
Youth Employment in the Mediterranean (YEM)	UNESCO & EU	UNEVOC	Skills forecasting and assessment, digital skills development, work-based learning, regional cooperation
EPISODE – Enhancing Palestinian Social and Digital Entrepreneurship	EU	UNIMED	Enhance digital social entrepreneurship by defining future skills, upskilling teachers and mentors, co-creating a blended course, piloting it with youth, and providing an online microlearning unit
Programme for Access to the Labour Market (PALM II)	BMZ	GIZ	Improve labour-market policy to meet the needs of jobseekers and companies
UFM Hub for Jobs, Trade and Investment	BMZ	UFM	Foster regional cooperation in employment, trade and investment within the framework of the UFM
More job opportunities for Palestinian youth II	BMZ	GIZ	Improve the quality of and access to labour-market-oriented university education.
Demand-Oriented TVET (DO TVET)	BMZ & Norway	National TVET Commission and GIZ	Align VET with the needs of the private sector and foster employability among young people
More job opportunities for Palestinian youth	BMZ	MOL	Increase employment opportunities for Palestinian young people thanks to training that meets the needs of the labour market
Forsah TVET	US	Implementing agency	Support TVET institutions to better prepare Palestinian graduates for the labour market and to productively engage in local and regional economies
Finance for Jobs (F4J)	World Bank	Implementing agency	Support skills development and job creation for youths

ABBREVIATIONS

Enabel	Belgian Development Agency
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
GDP	Gross domestic product
ILO	International Labour Organization
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMIS	Labour market information system
MAS	Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MOHESR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MOSD	Ministry of Social Development
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NZF	National Qualifications Framework
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PFESP	Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection for Workers
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWRA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
VET	Vocational education and training
WBL	Work-based learning
YEP	Youth Economic Empowerment in Palestine

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