

# NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM REVIEW REPORT TUNISIA

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Education, training and labour market systems are increasingly challenged by global developments such as new and rapidly changing technologies, the 4th Industrial Revolution, demographic changes and climate change. All these have a profound impact on the lives of individuals and on society. The development of technology, especially information and communication technology (ICT), has boosted economic globalisation and opened new opportunities for people, but also new risks. Amidst these developments with uncertain outcomes, some things are for sure: firstly, a fast-evolving world and a changing labour market require individuals to become real lifelong learners, to acquire new competences to cope with change and to adapt and further develop existing competences. And, secondly, there is a growing demand for valid information on the changing labour markets and future prospects. This goes along with a growing need for supporting people to manage their more frequent and complex transitions within and between education and work.

In this context, there is a greater need than ever for career development support. At the same time, career development support – that is lifelong career guidance, and in particular career education, and career development support for workers – itself faces challenges in adapting to the new circumstances. Changes in delivery and developing the innovation capacity of career development support services are required to achieve deeper impact and empower individuals to manage their own career paths. Technology is already having an impact on traditional services, and the concept of career-management skills is increasingly gaining ground, not only in Europe but also on other continents. To inform national policy and practice and future EU and ETF activities, the current report is being developed.

This report focuses on Tunisia. It extracts information on the primary career guidance<sup>1</sup> policies and services offered by national systems from two main sources: first, analyses of official or ministerial documents concerning career guidance, and examinations of official stakeholder websites specifically dedicated to career guidance, and secondly, stakeholder consultations. To set the scene for this report, a definition of career guidance shall be provided, defined in the joint statement “Investing in career guidance” of EU and UN institutions and agencies:

“Career guidance describes the services which help people of any age to manage their careers and to make the educational, training and occupational choices that are meaningful for them. It helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications, skills and talents – and to relate this knowledge about who they are to who they might become in life and work. Individuals, families and communities differ in the extent to which they are able to visualise and plan their future. It is an important role of career guidance to address such differences and inequalities.

The overall aim of career guidance is to develop the capacity of individuals to manage their careers (known as ‘career management skills’). It involves a range of connected learning activities that help people to access services, resources and experiences related to employment and further education and training. These include provision of:

- careers education,
- careers information,
- individual and group guidance/counselling,
- skills assessment and psychometric testing,
- engagement with employers, and
- the development of skills needed for job seeking and self-employment.

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<sup>1</sup> In some countries terms such as ‘career counselling’, ‘career development’, ‘careers information, advice and guidance’, ‘vocational counselling’ or ‘vocational guidance’ are used to refer to the range of activities that is included here within the term career guidance.

Career guidance is delivered face-to-face, at a distance or in a blended mode. Guidance is provided to people in a wide range of settings: primary and secondary schools and vocational training centres, tertiary and higher education institutions; public and private employment services; public and private career guidance centres; in workplaces, trade unions, NGOs and professional bodies as well as in local community settings. Career guidance is important within educational provision, skills development, social protection measures and active labour market policies.

Career development is a continuous process throughout life. It is fundamental to the smooth transitions of young people as they, in ever greater numbers, are presented with choices about continuing education and training and to adults needing to upskill, reskill or to move within the labour market. It is not only the unemployed who are in need of career guidance. Now more than ever, as demand for labour is changing rapidly, it is also relevant to people in work who are looking to move jobs.”<sup>2</sup>

The ILO recommends adapting career guidance to the special needs of each country. The development of career guidance within each country should be based on a broad understanding of the aims of career guidance and the provision of an appropriate administrative system and qualified technical personnel<sup>3</sup>. The issue of youth unemployment in Tunisia has been steadily increasing since the 1990s, particularly affecting higher education graduates and women, especially in specific fields and remote regions. Despite educational opportunities for girls, challenges persist in certain career paths due to preferences for men in hiring processes and traditional gender roles. Unemployment remains a significant social issue despite being a demand of the 2011 uprising, with youth unemployment estimated at 37.4% and higher education graduates at 49.4% in 2013. However, young people have limited exposure to the workforce during their education, often prioritizing diplomas for secure jobs. Despite efforts to promote entrepreneurship, youth interest remains low, and start-ups struggle to address graduate unemployment, particularly outside the engineering field.

The expansion of higher education, particularly in certain branches, reflects underlying factors such as the undervaluation of vocational training and a post-colonial cultural mindset favouring administrative roles. However, this massification has led to a mismatch between education and the job market, exacerbated by the predominance of small enterprises. Structural explanations for unemployment include regulatory constraints in the labour market, limited local flexibility, and the prevalence of informal employment. Efforts to promote entrepreneurship face challenges, highlighting issues in regulatory and socio-cultural environments. Recent studies show that the health crisis has prompted young people to take greater responsibility for their employability, demonstrating resilience and self-reliance. Institutional mechanisms, including universities, play a key role in enhancing graduate employability but require improvement in terms of readability, coherence, and effectiveness. Initiatives like the National Classification of Qualifications aim to improve training and career guidance systems but face challenges in implementation and stakeholder engagement.

In summary, the issue of professional integration in Tunisia is primarily driven by high unemployment rates among higher education graduates, especially in specific fields and inland regions of the country. Dysfunctions upstream of university contribute to the massification of higher education and unemployment among graduates, while downstream obstacles to career progression exist for both graduates and employees without university diplomas. Addressing these challenges requires the development of a comprehensive, systematic, national level value chain in training, professional guidance, and career support involving various structures and actors under the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MEFP), and the Ministry of Higher Education, in addition to non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

<sup>2</sup> Cedefop, European Commission, ETF, ILO, OECD, UNESCO (2021): Investing in Career Guidance. URL: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/investing-career-guidance>

<sup>3</sup> OIT (1949), R087 - Recommandation (no 87) sur l'orientation professionnelle, I. Généralités, [https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:55:0::NO::P55\\_TYPE,P55\\_LANG,P55\\_DOCUMENT,P55\\_NODE:REC,fr,R087,/Document#:~:text=L'orientation%20professionnelle%20est%20bas%C3%A9e,meilleure%20utilisation%20des%20ressources%20nationales](https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:55:0::NO::P55_TYPE,P55_LANG,P55_DOCUMENT,P55_NODE:REC,fr,R087,/Document#:~:text=L'orientation%20professionnelle%20est%20bas%C3%A9e,meilleure%20utilisation%20des%20ressources%20nationales)

Several avenues and levers of action to improve career guidance policies and services have been identified, including designing a national strategy, conducting cultural work, enhancing visibility and accessibility of existing initiatives, prioritizing the operationalization of existing projects, empowering stakeholders, and establishing sustainable financing mechanisms. These prioritized courses of action were methodically established after:

- The identification of key actors and main mechanisms dedicated to employment and education and training in Tunisia;
- The assessment of what has been accomplished and the gaps that remain to be filled to improve the quality of policies and services and make them more accessible to their target audiences;
- The identification of the opportunities and room for manoeuvre capable of guiding institutional work on quality employability and opening up career development prospects for the employed population.

These are the main blocks around which the report is structured.

## 2. CONTEXT AND SYSTEM OVERVIEW

### 2.1. Context

**The high unemployment rate, especially among university graduates, reflects the poor performance of the Tunisian economy.** Although it has fallen from 30.1% in 2020 to 24.6% in 2023, graduate unemployment remains relatively high. This type of unemployment therefore represents a challenge for Tunisia to ensure that high qualifications do not become a handicap in accessing the labour market. International experience shows that the higher the skill level, the easier it would be to find a job<sup>4</sup>. According to a World Bank study (2014)<sup>5</sup>, the highest proportions of inactive young people are among those with the lowest levels of education, particularly those in rural areas. In rural areas, more than four out of five NEET<sup>6</sup> young people have no secondary education (81.5% of males, 83.8% of females). Similarly, around a fifth of rural NEETs have not completed primary education (15% of young men, 24.7% of young women).

**According to the Tunisia National Institute of Statistics (INS), more women are unemployed than men.** In 2023, the unemployment rate of female university graduates were 32.9 percent, twice that of their male counterparts (14.4%). Indicators of employment and unemployment for the year 2023, published by the INS, shows that the unemployment rate is approximately 15.8 percent in the third quarter of 2023. This differs by gender. For males, the unemployment rate is 13.4 percent and 21.7 percent for women.

**Over the past decade, Tunisia's population has continued to grow at a very moderate rate of 1% per year.** Tunisia has reached a total population of 12.356 million in 2022, up from 10.900 million in 2010. However, this suggests that Tunisia is in a phase of demographic transition in view of the evolution of its age structure, with an increase in average life expectancy (77 years overall, 75 years for men and 79 years for women<sup>7</sup>) and with a decline in fertility rate<sup>8</sup>. These future demographic changes are expected to have a direct impact on how to develop the education system and on the number of jobs to be created. It is also likely to have an impact on the long-term evolution of health and pension expenditure. This in turn will have a negative impact on public spending.

**Tunisia is facing several challenges, not the least of which is the economic slowdown and an increase in emigration,** which affects all socio-professional categories, in particular doctors, engineers, and teachers, but also medium and low skilled people. There is also irregular migration, particularly by young people seeking a better future. Migration rates have increased over the past 20 years, from 5% in 2000 to 7.6% in 2022 (UsN DESA, 2020). The proportions of male and female migrants have remained relatively stable over the past 20 years, but there has been a sustained upward trend in female emigration since 1990 (up to 44.3% of total migrants). This is particularly the case for women with a higher level of education looking for better career perspectives<sup>9</sup>.

**The trend in the unemployment rate for young people aged 15-24 (%) by gender shows that this level remained high** at 39.1 per cent in the 3rd quarter of 2023, compared with 42.5 percent in the 4th quarter of 2020. These rates are lower than in 2020, which reached 42.5% and 44% respectively. With the slowdown in economic growth, the Tunisian labour market is finding it increasingly difficult to

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<sup>4</sup> Emmanuelle NAUZE-FICHET et Magda TOMASINI (2002), « Diplôme et insertion sur le marché du travail: approches socioprofessionnelle et salariale du déclassement », ÉCONOMIE ET STATISTIQUE N° 354 and CHEN Zhongchang, WU Yongqiu (2007), "The relationship between education and employment: A theoretical analysis and empirical test", Higher Education Press and Springer-Verlag.

<sup>5</sup> Banque Mondiale (2014), "Surmonter les Obstacles à l'Inclusion des Jeunes"

<sup>6</sup> NEET: Young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training. The NEET indicator is a powerful tool for analyzing youth exclusion as it focuses on all young people who experience difficulties in making the transition from school to work.

<sup>7</sup> The World Bank, World Development Indicators database

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, DataBase

<sup>9</sup> European Training Foundation (ETF), Skills and Migration Country fiches, 2022, [etf\\_skills\\_and\\_migration\\_country\\_fiche\\_tunisia\\_2021\\_en\\_1.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europa.eu/etf_skills_and_migration_country_fiche_tunisia_2021_en_1.pdf);

create high-skilled jobs that can absorb a skilled workforce. Tunisia also suffers from regional disparities in human development indicators. Tunisia's labour market is also largely affected by a mismatch between jobs and skills.

**Tunisia achieved economic growth of 0.4% in 2023, compared with 2.6% in 2022. This is an indication that the Tunisian economy is not in a growth phase.** Economic recovery will not be as easy in 2024-2025 and is likely to be slow and lengthy. This will directly affect employment in the country, especially among young graduates.

**According to the Employment and Wages Survey of Enterprises in 2022**, the results of which were published by the INS in 2024, the breakdown of permanent employees by occupational category and by gender is balanced. Women are present in all sectors of activity and contribute equal to that of men. For example, 20.2 percent of female managers work in the manufacturing sector, compared with 23.5 percent of men. Similarly, 17.4% of women managers work in the information and communication sector, compared with 14.2% of men. Finally, female managers are more strongly represented in the teaching sector, with a share of 8.1% compared to 4.8% for men.

**The World Bank's Tunisia Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) identified reducing skills mismatches and improving the quality of education as key reforms to strengthen Tunisia's human capital and improve equity across the country's regions.** These reforms are also needed to improve the inclusion of young people and women in the labour market. This requires that the country can increase opportunities for young people and women, to improve the tangible and intangible skills of graduates, and further to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

**According to a study by the World Bank in 2020<sup>10</sup>, many of Tunisia's youth are unsatisfied with their current jobs.** Overall, 32% of young workers have the feeling that the work they do is not in line with their qualifications or skills. This is a source of frustration as well as a loss of income. In some sectors, workers are employed in jobs where the basic skills required do not match their qualifications. In a country such as Tunisia, which has invested heavily in education, the availability of skilled labour is relatively high, in contrast to the availability of low-skilled labour, which is not perfectly in line with the needs of productive enterprises. These workers, with a lower level of education but with professional skills, are needed to develop a productive base and sector dynamics, as in agriculture and for some types of services. Failure to attract and retain this type of worker could hamper the development of certain sectors and regions. By playing a role in the training of human capital throughout the country, whether vocational or technical, TVET could encourage investors to invest more in labour market demand and to encourage women and young people to opt for this type of training, which can be a solution to the problem of skills shortage.

## 2.2 System overview

In Tunisia, career decisions are often influenced by various institutional and societal factors. Career guidance in Tunisia is a recent development, dating back to the early 1990s, following the adoption by the Tunisian government of the International Labour Office (ILO) Recommendation 142 on the development of human resources. In Tunisia, career guidance has always been linked to educational guidance. It is an organisational mechanism that, in almost all cases, guides secondary school students to streams and courses of study on the basis of their school results. This system was based on an administrative approach that consisted of automatically guiding secondary school students according to a score calculation that established an order of merit. Following the reform of the education system in 1991, new educational services were introduced, with the creation of the post of "Regional Teacher Coordinator for School and University Guidance" in 1992. In 1993, it was decided to create the post of "guidance counsellor" on the basis of Decree No. 93-1468 of 5 July 1993 creating a cycle of specialised higher education studies at licence and master's level, within a university

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<sup>10</sup> World Bank (2020), "Tunisia Skills Development for Employment The Role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training"

establishment<sup>11</sup>. This was the occasion for the creation of the body of "Information and Guidance Counsellors" (CIO). Its mission was limited to providing secondary school students with a framework of information on the various options available at the baccalauréat. In response to the lack of support in terms of choice and career guidance, the 2002 Education and Training Act established the right of students to information. It opened new possibilities and included the principles of gradualism (two-stage guidance at the lycée) and flexibility (reorientation - assessment - individual interviews) and the creation of "listening and guidance offices".

As a universal right, education remains compulsory until the age of 16 (article 44 of the new Constitutional Law). Education is one of the country's priorities, as it offers people better prospects for social and professional development, according to the law on Education (No. 2002-80 of 23 July 2002). Education in Tunisia is a three-pillar system based on: i) primary and secondary education, ii) vocational education and training (VET), iii) and higher education. Several regulatory bodies ensure the governance of the institutions and sectoral agencies involved in education. Their coordination and cooperation are not always efficient. Each institution pursues its own strategy without an overall vision for lifelong learning and the full development of Tunisia's human capital potential.

Career guidance in secondary education was established by a 1991 law initiated by the then minister, Mohamed CHARFI. Its aim was to provide pupils in their last year of secondary school with information and advice on careers, with a view to helping them enter university. This system was reformed by the Orientation Law No. 80 of 23 July 2002, Article 22 which establishes a three-year preparation cycle that aims to prepare pupils for vocational training. As well, Article 11 of which stipulates that pupils have the right to diversified and complete information on all matters related to school and university guidance, so that they can make an informed and convincing choice about their education and career paths.

Since 2010, youth workers have been responsible for providing information and informal advice to young people in the 344<sup>12</sup> 'youth centers'. They are also responsible for helping them to develop their own projects. In 2019, the JEUN'ESS project has been launched, initiated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in partnership with the Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Investment Promotion, as part of the EU4YOUTH program (Programme d'Appui à la Jeunesse Tunisienne) financed by the European Union. It aims to create decent jobs for young people in disadvantaged areas and to help them transition to the formal economy through the promotion of social and solidarity economy (SSE). The project proposes an approach based on promoting and strengthening collective entrepreneurship through SSE organisations and mechanisms.

Although the number of students enrolled in higher education in Tunisia has fallen, it remains high. Higher education in Tunisia comprises 13 universities, including a virtual university for distance learning. Within these universities, there are 206 public and 80 private higher education institutions in 2023. The number of students has reached 305 918 Tunisian students in 2023 compared with 357 391 students in 2012. In 2023, there are 9 498 foreign students studying in these institutions of which 79.6 percent come from Africa. The overall success rate is 74.3%<sup>13</sup>. University guidance is limited to providing students, who have passed their baccalauréat, with useful information on choosing a career in the various Tunisian universities. It should be noted that the application and access to universities are centralised and managed according to a formalised approach, which is widely disseminated to students through a guide and a website. Universities have long been required to provide information on the occupations targeted by the degrees they offer when applying for accreditation of the various courses. Higher education institutions are invited to provide career guidance services through the internship department. But the financial and human resources at their disposal are very limited.

More and more 'open days' are being organized by universities where they are providing small-scale services on job search skills. To support career guidance, university teachers provide information and

<sup>11</sup> This is "the Institut Supérieur de l'Education et de la Formation Continue" (ISEFC)

<sup>12</sup> Ministère des jeunes et du sport, [التقرير السنوي لنشاط الوزارة 2022 \(sport.tn\)](https://sport.tn)

<sup>13</sup> According to the statistics of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research for the academic year 2021-2022.

advice on labour market opportunities as part of universities' strategies to improve young people's integration into the labour market. The fact remains, however, that in some disciplines it is difficult for the Ministry of Higher Education to strike the right balance between academic training and the employability of the courses. In 2021, a consortium of seven Tunisian universities<sup>14</sup> together with the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and with 4 European partners from Italy, France, Spain and Austria was formed as part of the RAQMYAT project, which is an EU-funded project namely under the Capacity Building for Higher Education action of the Erasmus + programme, with the aim, to promote digital strategies for doctoral training in the Humanities and Social Sciences in Tunisia. Among the actions initiated, mention should be made of those relating to the training of teacher-researchers with a view to strengthening their capacity in terms of producing digital resources for doctoral training and improving their ability to support doctoral students in the development of their career plans. The main objectives of the RAQMYAT project are to improve the research capabilities of doctoral students by strengthening their digital skills (digital humanities) and to promote the use of digital resources to improve the non-academic skills of doctoral students (transversal skills and employability).

Vocational education and training (VET) are the responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, which is currently updating the 2008 Vocational Training Act and other related laws and regulations. Career guidance is addressed in Articles 30 and 31 of this Act. The aim is to improve the quality of training and provide learners with the skills they need to be better integrated into the labour market. The Ministry has also made significant progress in the development of entrepreneurship through a process that has led to the designation of nine vocational training centres as entrepreneurship training centres in 2021. Significant efforts have also been made to reform certification and quality assurance systems.

In 2012, vocational guidance counsellors were appointed in the vocational training centers managed by the Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training (ATFP). The aim of this initiative is to encourage young people's participation in vocational education and training (VET), whose graduates are more likely to be in employment than graduates of higher education. In this way, guidance counsellors play an important role in disseminating the programs of the ATFP training centers. They can be involved in the selection of trainees for the different programs and in supporting the trainees in their initial and continuing training and in completing the programs. The ATFP has a network of 136 establishments throughout the country, covering more than 400 specialties in 12 economic sectors. There are 49 sectoral training centers, 61 training and apprenticeship centers, 14 centers for young rural women and 13 artisan training centers. Ten vocational training centres have been opened for the new school year 2023-2024, which will offer more than 64,000 training places and nearly 10,000 work experience contracts to be provided by the ATFP centres. Currently 68 of 136 vocational training centers have a career guidance counsellor.

Career guidance for unemployed and employed adults has been provided since 1993 by the National Agency for Employment and Self-Employment (ANETI), which is also responsible for providing information on vocational training for training seekers with the aim of integrating them into working life. It is also responsible for setting up databases on employment and vocational qualifications for the benefit of firms and jobseekers. The staff of the centers devote most of their time to managing labour market integration programs, especially for young graduates. ANETI is also responsible for preparing and helping people to set up their own businesses. Each office has at least one vocational counsellor. There are 112 offices throughout the country. Given the weakness and ineffectiveness of the careers guidance system in higher education, the ANETI offices were the first port of call for graduates and their first opportunity to engage in a conversation about careers.

Regarding the role of civil society in disseminating career information and contributing to the guidance of young people, it is important to note that some regional and local initiatives have been taken by

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<sup>14</sup> The consortium is made up of the University of Tunis El Manar, , University of La Manouba, the University of Tunis, the Virtual University of Tunis, the University of Sousse, the University of Sfax and the University of Kairouan, as well as the University of Vienna, the University of Granada, the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (FMSH), the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. and UNIMED-Mediterranean Universities Union, as coordinator of the project.

NGOs, such as “Centre d’Orientation et de Reconversion Professionnelle” which is a project of the Tunisian-German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (AHK Tunisia). The objective is to match the skills of job seekers with the real needs of Tunisian firms. However, there is no systematic collection of statistical data available on the nature of the work of all these NGOs and its impact.

Overall, the information that is available on careers and career guidance is very fragmented. Similarly, it is still difficult to obtain quality information on the evolution of the Tunisian labour market and on occupations with a relatively high absorption capacity in terms of jobs. Many young people are constrained to rely on informal information when making decisions about education and work opportunities. Unfortunately, this information is still unreliable and therefore does not reflect changes in the demand for labour in the Tunisian economy.

In 2012, the Tunisian government decided to strengthen cooperation between the various ministries and agencies involved in education and training. As part of a new approach based on human resources development, the reform aimed at unifying the various career guidance systems. Also, the reform focused on the way in which information and advice are provided to job seekers and to companies that are looking for specific skills for their activities.

### 3. POLICY FRAMEWORK

The 2023-2025 development plan<sup>15</sup> considers human capital to be the foundation of Tunisia's inclusive development. This is the first of six strategic axes that make up the backbone of the plan: axis 1 is "human capital promotion strategy". The aim is to place Tunisia among the top 50 countries with a very high level of human development (HDI above 0.8) by 2035. With an HDI equivalent to 0.731 in 2021, Tunisia belongs to the group of countries with a high level of human development (HDI above 0.7), ranking 97th out of 191 countries. This strategic axis also aims to increase the Human Capital Index (HCI) from 0.52 in 2020 to 0.7 in 2035<sup>16</sup>[2]. Thus, with a score of 0.52, Tunisia ranks 102 out of 174. This score informs us that Tunisian children born today would have 48% lower productivity in adulthood than they would have had if they enjoyed better education and health. This national index of 0.52 shows that the future economic capacity of the population will be halved, and that future GDP growth will fall by 1.4 percentage points annually (ITCEQ 2020)<sup>17</sup>.

Within this framework, the plan calls for investments of around 3,739 million Dinars over the period 2023-2025 in the fields of education; higher education; vocational training; youth and sport; culture; and the family, women, children and the elderly. It's an ambitious goal that the government has been trying to achieve in a gloomy economic situation since 2011, and especially since the Covid-19 health crisis. This crisis has amplified the structural problem of unemployment that has plagued the Tunisian economy for decades. In the current economic sluggishness experienced by the country, and indeed by most developing economies, the validation of a vision for the promotion of human capital can only nurture the hope of significantly developing and improving the careers of those involved in the labour market.

In fact, Tunisia does not have an integrated career guidance system, even though several programs and even strategies - or draft strategies - are aimed directly or indirectly at improving workers' careers and skills, which will be described below. The Development Plan's human capital promotion strategy relies instead on a wide-ranging system spread across several ministerial departments. However, it is clear that the most important cross-cutting mechanism is that of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MEFP). A visit to the MEFP website<sup>18</sup> reveals that the "career development support scheme" implicitly stems from three major "strategies":

The first is the National Strategy for the Reform of the National Vocational Training System (Stratégie Nationale de la Réforme du Dispositif National de la Formation Professionnelle, 2014-2018). It is based on the idea that the promotion of human capital and career development must rely in particular on a high-quality, equitable and inclusive education and training system. The ultimate aim of this strategy is to establish a system capable of producing skills and qualifications in line with international standards. To achieve this, it is structured around the following specific objectives: (1) A national vocational training system that integrates the national human resources preparation system; (2) Guaranteeing quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness; (3) A system for financing vocational training that meets the needs of individuals, companies, the region and society, and embodies the principle of lifelong learning. Adopted in 2013, this strategy intended for the period 2014-2018 has not been updated, despite various efforts to evaluate and update it by the ministry's various departments. The main criticism leveled at this strategy is the fact that it focuses solely on the employability of young people, neglecting the ongoing training of those already employed (ITCEQ 2018)<sup>19</sup>. Although this

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<sup>15</sup> The 2023-2025 development plan is based on a vision called Tunisia 2035 and was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 09 March 2024.

<sup>16</sup> The Human Capital Index was created by the World Bank in 2018 to highlight the economic and professional potential of their citizens. It also measures how much human capital each country loses through lack of education and health.

<sup>17</sup> ITCEQ (2020), Indice du capital humain et système éducatif Tunisie, Tribune de l'ITCEQ N°29, Décembre.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.emploi.gov.tn>, accessed in April 2024.

<sup>19</sup> ITCEQ (2018), "La réforme de la formation professionnelle en quête de concrétisation", Notes et analyses de l'ITCEQ, N°2.

strategy has included actions in the field of guidance (lifelong learning, bridges between courses, improved communication, etc.), it has never really been implemented, evaluated or updated<sup>20</sup>.

A new project announced on the website of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training aims at reforming the vocational training system with a much broader vision geared towards career and skills development. The project, being prepared and validated while this report was being written, aims to embody the principle of lifelong learning and better meet the needs of individuals, companies and the region.

The second strategy is the National Employment Strategy (NES; *Stratégie Nationale pour l'Emploi - SNE*) - actually a draft strategy that is still in the process of validation. The Ministry's website only describes the process of preparing this employment reform. The aim of this reform is to update the National Employment Strategy (2013-2017), which was adopted in December 2012. But from the outset, this first strategy showed signs of weakness, as it was slow and difficult to operationalize (ETF 2014)<sup>21</sup>.

Formulating the new NES has taken a long time. It was initiated in 2016 with the launch of the National Dialogue for Employment and the Tunisian Declaration for Employment. The preliminary diagnostic report was prepared and published in November 2019<sup>22</sup>. The ultimate objective of the draft strategy is to respond to the need to offer decent jobs for all, jobs guaranteeing respect for fundamental labour principles and rights, conditions for social dialogue, the benefit of minimum social security services and a minimum level of income deemed socially acceptable. According to Zouari (2021)<sup>23</sup>, "this strategy shows that the fight against unemployment and other decent employment deficits (such as underemployment, informal and vulnerable employment) cannot be tackled through the sole conduct of active employment policies, whatever their degree of effectiveness. The creation of decent jobs must stem from the implementation of a multi-dimensional, cross-cutting strategy covering all public policies likely to contribute to the creation of jobs in sufficient quantity and quality."

The inability to validate and operationalize this reform project has handicapped government action to promote human capital. For several decades, this action has been fundamentally based on Active Labor Market Programs (ALMP). Admittedly, the names of such programs change (Forsati Program, Amal Program, Solidarity Program Contract, Karama Program, Civil Service Contract...), but their impact is weak and ineffective. The "Contract for Integration into Professional Life" (*Contrat d'Insertion à la Vie Professionnelle, CIVP*) remains the flagship program that has endured through the various governments. However, even this program is increasingly criticized as an instrument that favours companies over jobseekers. It should be added that this draft strategy does not explicitly mention career guidance as a means for improving employability in Tunisia.

The third strategy is the National Entrepreneurship Strategy (SNEt). This strategy was validated in 2016. The operational plan for the national entrepreneurship strategy, grouping five programs, was launched on December 14, 2018. The implementation of these programs was to be spread over the period 2019 - 2021 (Edupreneurship, Take-off, New exporter, CatalySME, Generation+), but continues to this day due to the Covid-19 crisis. The strategy also encompasses two other programs: the "New generation of promoters" program and the "Auto-entrepreneur" program. Finally, the strategy is intended to be consistent with the Social and Solidarity Economy Act of June 30, 2020. Career guidance is not explicitly mentioned. In a speech on February 22, 2024, the new Minister, freshly appointed in January 2024, announced that "the implementation of a national strategy to support economic entrepreneurs is, from now on, a priority"<sup>24</sup>, intending a strategy review and enhancement.

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<sup>20</sup> [http://www.emploi.gov.tn/uploads/pdf/Reforme\\_FP\\_Tunisie-Fr.pdf](http://www.emploi.gov.tn/uploads/pdf/Reforme_FP_Tunisie-Fr.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> ETF (2014), *Les politiques de l'emploi et les programmes actifs du marché du travail en Tunisie*.

<sup>22</sup> BIT/MFPE (2019), *Stratégie Nationale pour l'Emploi*, Rapport de Diagnostic, Novembre.

<sup>23</sup> Abderrazak Zouari (2021), *Enfin, une stratégie nationale pour l'emploi voit le jour*, Leaders, 17 février 2021, <https://www.leaders.com.tn/article/31447-abderrazak-zouari-enfin-une-strategie-nationale-pour-l-emploi-voit-le-jour>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.4c.tn/Content/images/Arr%C3%AAt%C3%A92016\\_4426%20VF.pdf](https://www.4c.tn/Content/images/Arr%C3%AAt%C3%A92016_4426%20VF.pdf); <https://africanmanager.com/la-mise-en-place-dune-strategie-nationale-pour-soutenir-les-entrepreneurs-economiques-est-desormais-une-priorite/>

The three "strategies" form the basis of Tunisia's employment "policy". Of course, other ministries have their own specific programs. School and university information counsellors, as well as education counsellors, are integrated into the educational and administrative staff according to the Law<sup>25</sup> on the Orientation of Education and School Teaching, while not specifying the roles and tasks of those counsellors. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has for several years been deploying the Higher Education Modernization Project to Support Employability (Projet de Modernisation de l'Enseignement Supérieur en Soutien à l'Employabilité, PromESes). In particular, a legal framework governing the operation of the 4Cs (Centre des Carrières et de Certifications des Compétences) has been put in place, with the publication of the Order of 07 October 2016<sup>26</sup>. The ATFP currently has 101 people responsible for providing information, guidance and support to young people before and throughout their training. These civil servants, who work in the ARE (Accompagnement and Relation with the Environment) department, help to instill the values of citizenship in young trainees and help them to develop their career plans, by providing psychological, social and environmental support throughout their time at the training center. The ARE department works in four main areas to ensure that learners have a secure career: (1) Information and guidance, (2) Development and relations with the environment, (3) Supporting learners in relation to career plans, psychological and social issues, and (4) Learner follow-up<sup>27</sup>.

Finally, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training and the European Training Foundation (ETF) have been working with many actors from across the Vocational and education training (VET) system on integrating entrepreneurship as key competence skills in VET<sup>28</sup>.

However, to sum up, it is clear that the regulatory framework for the promotion of human capital is insufficient and incomplete. The challenges facing Tunisia in terms of human capital promotion, career development and the fight against unemployment, particularly among young graduates, call for greater efforts to put in place a regulatory framework that is inclusive and legible for all players in the labour market. As the next section will show, the current diversity of programs, some of which have proven their effectiveness, is an asset for implementing a new employment policy and putting an end to the dispersion of actions and their lack of coordination, thus helping to boost their effectiveness.

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<sup>25</sup> Loi d'orientation de l'éducation et de l'enseignement scolaire (Loi n°2002-80 du 23 Juillet 2002), [https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/tunisia\\_loi\\_orientation.pdf](https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/tunisia_loi_orientation.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.4c.tn/Content/images/Arr%C3%AAt%C3%A92016\\_4426%20VF.pdf](https://www.4c.tn/Content/images/Arr%C3%AAt%C3%A92016_4426%20VF.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.atfp.tn/index.php?id=102>

<sup>28</sup> ETF (2023): <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/key-competence-lighthouse-partnering-more-entrepreneurial>

## 4. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

### 4.1 Promoting coordination, cooperation, and good governance

Various institutions occasionally collaborate and are active in providing help for career development. In Tunisia, educational and vocational guidance is provided by guidance counsellors, whose job title varies according to the counsellor's assignment to one of the four ministries offering guidance services: the Ministry of National Education ((Ministère de l'Éducation), the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research ((Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique) the Ministry of Youth and Sports (Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports) and the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MEFP) (Ministère de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi), including its two supervisory agencies: The Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training (ATFP) (Agence Tunisienne de la Formation Professionnelle)<sup>29</sup> and The National Agency for Employment and Self-employment (ANETI) (Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant)<sup>30</sup>.

The Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, the Tunisian Employment Agency of Professional Training, the National Agency for employment and self-employment, the National Observatory for Employment and Qualifications (ONEQ) (L'Observatoire National de l'Emploi et des Qualifications), the Tunisian Technical Cooperation Agency (ATCT) (Agence Tunisienne de Coopération Technique), and others provide support to the Ministries of Education in their work. Depending on the level of education and the kind of service provider, these bodies have different mandates for advising the Ministries of Education about career management, counselling and guidance. Examples include:

- **“The National Classification of Qualifications (CNQ) (La classification nationale des qualifications)**, adopted in 2009 as a reference framework to link the diplomas awarded to the corresponding qualification levels. The CNQ should support lifelong learning and strengthen links between different components of the human resource development system, responding better to the needs of economic sectors and making qualifications easier to understand.
- **Sectoral Committees for the LMD ((licence-master-doctorat) system**, established in 2018 by the Ministry of Higher Education, is in charge of evaluating the offer of HE institutions with the aim to readapt the programmes and make them more focused on agreed learning outcomes and employability.
- **The National Employment and Qualifications Observatory (ONEQ)** under the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, is a specialised body supporting decision-making in the field of Employment and Qualifications and is responsible for the identification of skills and competences needs at national level.
- Several agencies under different ministries are charged with related tasks such as setting standards, quality assurance, and coordinating training provision for initial and continuing training”<sup>31</sup>.

To improve employability, the Tunisian universities are called to undertake major restructuring at all levels, in terms of both training, research, governance and management structures and student life. The Ministry of Higher Education and the employers' union (Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Crafts) signed an agreement in early 2005, updated in 2014, to boost University - Business productive partnership. The main measures undertaken to strengthen students' employability through

<sup>29</sup> Available at: <http://www.pm.gov.tn/pm/entreprise/viewetablissement.php?lang=en&id=203> (16-04-2024)

<sup>30</sup> BEN YOUSSEF MNIF, S. NACEUR, A, GUESMI;M. (2020) “Career and vocational counselling in Tunisia: towards a professionalisation of the job of vocational counsellor”, REVUE ECOTIDI NOVEMBRE 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Available at: NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – TUNISIA; ETF (europa.eu) <https://www.etf.europa.eu> (20-05-2024)

enterprise<sup>32</sup>- university relations are: First, the co-construction of applied bachelor programs and professional masters (curricula designed and implemented in a full partnership between professors and professionals). Second, the compulsory internships and graduation projects (at least 30 credits) in all applied bachelor programs and professional masters. Third, the establishment of a university-observatories network (The National Employment and Qualifications Observatory: ONEQ) to improve the actions and measures taken to maintain the University's status as a leading institution for graduate level employability and prospecting for employability niches; Fourth, the implementation of an action plan to develop an entrepreneurial culture.

Recently, on April-16-2024, an agreement was signed between the **Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training (ATFP) (Agence Tunisienne de la Formation Professionnelle) and the Tunisian Organisation for Education and Family (OTEF) (Organisation Tunisienne pour l'Education et la Famille)**<sup>33</sup>. OTEF<sup>34</sup> is an NGO fully funded by public administration, founded on 18-19 September 1964 responsible for the strengthening of the family's structure, to ensure its cohesion and to help it fulfil its educational, social and economic functions and to activate its role as a basic unit of society. The OTEF is in charge of briefing young people with the lead care and helping them to successfully study and reconcile their choices. The agreement aims to develop educational and recreational activities consistent with the programs of ATFP aimed at: (a) establishing a civilised, civic and environmental behaviour for trainees; (b) increasing the openness of the vocational training system to its social, cultural and educational environment; (c) taking care of dropouts in order to accompany them and integrate them into vocational training institutions or educational institutions; (d) taking care of trainees with special needs through social, psychological and pedagogical clubs; and (e) establishing joint cultural, social, scientific and sports clubs.

**ANETI (National Agency for Employment and Self-Employment) (Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant)** provides career guidance (information, employability skills training etc.) in line with local labour market needs. Training centres (not any school, only the sector-based training centres<sup>35</sup>) have the opportunity to co-develop local employment plans and seek support for their graduates from ANETI. By doing so, training centres gained the ability to suggest some actions based on the needs of their students to find work and to have an impact on the creation of local employment action plans. This is an additional step in the training centre's/school's ongoing attempts to strengthen its public-private cooperation in order to guarantee that its students receive career guidance and vocational education that is relevant to the labour market (example: the vocational training centre for arboriculture at Boughrara Sfax, see below). Demand for further training is particularly strong in the fruit-growing sector. The Boughrara training centre is one of eight sector-based centres. Located in the Sfax region, its initial and continuing training offer is a response to the region's socio-economic needs. The centre was created in 2000 following the merger of two centres: the agricultural mechanics vocational training centre and the olive oil recycling centre. The specific training courses include olive and fruit tree pruning and master olive tree pruner.

The "**Classification Nationale de Qualifications**" is regulated by Presidential Decree 2009-2139 of the 8 July 2009. The decree sets the levels for a reference framework for diplomas. The aim of the CNQ is to operationalise lifelong learning by reinforcing the links within the system for human resource development and the needs of economic sectors. These levels should guide public and private

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<sup>32</sup> Available at: <http://www.emploi.gov.tn/fr/109/emploi> (16-04-2024) and Available at: <https://www.emploi.nat.tn/fo/en/global.php?menu1=2> (16-04-2024)

<sup>33</sup> Available in: <http://www.atfp.tn/index.php?id=7> & available in: <https://www.facebook.com/atfp.tn> (17-04-2024)

<sup>34</sup> OTEF: is NGO's public agency founded on 18-19 September 1964 under visa No. 3697 of March 1965 and in accordance with the Associations Act No. 154 of November 7, 1965,

<sup>35</sup> The sector-based training centres= there are 60 vocational training centers under the supervision of other sector ministries that are supervised by the ATFP on pedagogical methods. These are (a) The National Tunisian Tourism Office (Office National du Tourisme Tunisien; ONTT) manages public provision of training for the tourism industry with eight centers; (b) The Agricultural Extension and Training Agency (Agence de la Vulgarization et de la Formation Agricoles; AVFA), under the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, with 39 centers, provides initial training but mainly focuses on continuous education (2014: 26,387 beneficiaries). AVFA also has its own center for training the trainers, with around 1,300 trainers; and (c) the Ministry of Defense with 13 training centers.

providers to ensure the quality of qualifications<sup>36</sup>. The framework of CNQ was jointly developed by the Ministry of Education (Ministère de l'éducation), the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment (Ministère de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi) and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique) after consulting with the Ministry of Defence (Ministère de la Défense Nationale), the The Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries (ministère de l'Agriculture, des Ressources hydrauliques et de la Pêche), the Ministry of Tourism (Ministère du Tourisme et de l'artisanat), the Ministry of Public Health (ministère de la santé publique), the Ministry of Employment (Ministère de l'emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle) and the Administrative Court (Justice Administrative Tunisienne)<sup>37</sup>.

The Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Education share responsibility in their respective sub-sectors. The Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment has been active in dialogue and cooperation with international partners to advance the agenda of the NQF and develop further its instruments.

## 4.2 Key civil society stakeholders

In Tunisia, civil society groups are essential in fostering employability because of their support for entrepreneurship, skills development programs, job placement services, advocacy, and research. They help to create an atmosphere that is conducive to sustainable economic development and improve people's employability opportunities. The function of civil society participants in offering assistance for career development in Tunisia is: campaigning and raising awareness, building capacity and training, partnerships and networking, information distribution through a variety of platforms, advocacy and reform of policies, monitoring and evaluation, empowerment and community engagement and donor involvement and support. The extent and magnitude of activities carried out by civil society organisations in Tunisia are frequently influenced by donor engagement.

Regarding employability in Tunisia, several players are essential to the creation and dissemination of labour market data, skill requirements predictions, and career development support services: **Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations and funding bodies**. Besides these formal, informal, national, and international bodies, the role of parents in career guidance needs to be highlighted. By offering support, advice, and guidance, parents and family elders have an impact on their children's career decisions. Based on their personal experiences, goals, and assessments of the demand in the labour market, they advise their kids to pursue specific academic programs or vocational training. In addition, parents help children get access to financial resources, professional and educational opportunities, and social networks.

### Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

NGOs are a significant part of social, political, and economic life in many parts of the world. Wherever there is a need to solve a problem or address an issue, one can usually find a non-profit organisation working in the field. NGOs in Tunisia have most often come into existence in response to the failure of the government to provide for basic needs, to protect human rights, or to enhance the quality of life. The specific historical and political context affects the work of NGOs in each country, including Tunisia. There are a few groups with the same goal to support the Agency for employment and self-employment (ANETI) in their efforts to support the professional integration of job seekers:

<sup>36</sup> ETF. Europa.eu, NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – TUNISIA available in: [<b>NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK</b> – <b>TUNISIA</b>](#)

<sup>37</sup> The Higher Education system in Tunisia National Report (June 2019), Meric-Net, Available at: [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=http://www.meric-net.eu/files/fileusers/275\\_Tunisia\\_National%2520Report%2520template\\_MERIC-Net.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwi748-VzaSFaxWeRKQEHfO8AWkQFnoECBqQAQ&usq=AOvVaw2CF5GsYz463Q8FmISltall](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=http://www.meric-net.eu/files/fileusers/275_Tunisia_National%2520Report%2520template_MERIC-Net.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwi748-VzaSFaxWeRKQEHfO8AWkQFnoECBqQAQ&usq=AOvVaw2CF5GsYz463Q8FmISltall)

- The local development association Kalaat Andalous (Association locale pour le développement kalaat elAndalous),
- The association « Appui aux initiatives de développement AID »,
- The association for the Professional Formation of Adolescents (AFPA),
- The Tunisian Young Chamber of Commerce (JCI) (La Jeune Chambre Internationale de Tunisie),
- The association FACE Tunisie, and other organisations are among those that support job search initiatives<sup>38</sup>. This last one offers a digital platform that enables job seekers to post a video CV online in an effort to get a better opportunity at national or global level. Particularly, the platform helps young people who are unable to physically access job postings announced in an ANETI office or employer office, e.g. because of living in a remote area, to get access.
- The associations of lower-class workers such as the Union for Unemployed Graduates (UDC) (Union des diplômés Chômeurs) and the National Organisation of Private Workers (ONPDT) (Organisation Nationale des Privés de droit Travail), whose goals are to protect lower-class workers' interests and exert pressure on the government to hire more workers.

There is a long list of NGOs whose basic projects include encouraging entrepreneurship and employability. We don't claim to cover all the NGOs in Tunisia, but we have tried to select those that were considered the most dynamic at the time this exploratory work was carried out:

- Tunisian Women's Association for Research and Development (AFTURD) (Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement): AFTURD focuses on empowering women and enhancing their employability in Tunisia. The organisation offers skills development programs, entrepreneurship training, and networking opportunities for women. AFTURD also advocates for gender equality in the labour market and supports policies that promote women's participation in the workforce.
- Tunisian Association for Youth Employment<sup>39</sup> (AJL) (Association Jeunes Leaders): Association Jeunes Leaders (AJL) is a Tunisian youth organisation and a regional development actor. Based in the coastal city of Monastir and active since March 2012, the Association Jeunes Leaders contributes to the economic integration of young people and women through entrepreneurship and sustainable employability. AJL's mission is to strengthen the managerial, organisational and operational capacities of young people by facilitating their socio-economic integration and promoting the mentality of self-employment. Since 2012, AJL has managed more than 12 projects with 15 public and private organisations and has involved more than 5,000 young people and stakeholders in its activities.
- Tunisian Association for Management and Social Stability (TAMSS) (L'Association Tunisienne pour la Gestion et la Stabilité Sociale): TAMSS focuses on promoting employability and entrepreneurship among disadvantaged youth in Tunisia. It offers training programs, mentorship, and financial support to young entrepreneurs. TAMSS also facilitates access to funding opportunities and assists in business development for aspiring entrepreneurs.
- Tunisian Association for the Support of Minorities (ATSM) (L'Association Tunisienne de Soutien des Minorités): ATSM is a civil society organisation that supports marginalised groups, including ethnic and religious minorities in Tunisia. They work towards promoting employability and combating discrimination faced by these communities. ATSM provides vocational training, job placement services, and advocacy for equal employment opportunities.

To conclude, these NGOs demonstrate a lack of financial resources and material resources despite their good intentions to find ways to alleviate the current crisis. The lack of better supervision further

<sup>38</sup> Available in: <https://www.tanitjobs.com/blog/86/les-associations-et-les-demandeurs-d-emploi-en-tunisie#nav2>

<sup>39</sup> Available in: [https://www.safir-eu.com/en/organismes/association-jeunes-leaders#:~:text=Association%20Jeunes%20Leaders%20\(AJL\)%20is,through%20entrepreneurship%20and%20sustainable%20employability.\(10-04-2024\)](https://www.safir-eu.com/en/organismes/association-jeunes-leaders#:~:text=Association%20Jeunes%20Leaders%20(AJL)%20is,through%20entrepreneurship%20and%20sustainable%20employability.(10-04-2024))

highlights the issue of project organisation and piloting capacity. They also need collaborations that help them secure funding from investors for their projects. It's important to note that they mostly focus on the public sector and do not have a strong influence on the private sector. Thus, they may have a great opportunity to accommodate job seekers in this environment.

In addition to these NGOs, there are also advocacy groups that support job searching, such as the CORP (Centre d'orientation et de reconversion professionnelle), a branch of the Chamber of Commerce. Through this branch, the Chamber hopes to provide a platform through which half of the applications<sup>40</sup> received can be integrated into the workforce through stage contracts or recruitment. Furthermore, the CORP assists job seekers in improving employability and making appropriate career and training choices based on Tunisia's labour market realities, professional ambitions, initial training, interests, and skills. It provides a professional review at the end of interviews, offering complementary training in soft skills and vocational reconversion. For companies, consultants identify human resources needs and provide a short list of the best profiles.

## International organisations and funding bodies

There are many national institutions, civil society groups and international institutions that actively support employability in Tunisia. While every group has a different focus and methodology, they all work to improve people's employability chances in Tunisia by improving their skills, job possibilities, and overall employability. In the following paragraphs, we present the most significant cooperation projects in the field of entrepreneurship and employability in Tunisia:

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)<sup>41</sup>: UNDP's mission in Tunisia is to help Tunisia's key players (government, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders) to manage the transition to a more democratic, transparent, accountable and resilient society. Shortly after the revolutionary changes that shook Tunisia in January 2011, UNDP launched a strategic plan to support Tunisia in managing its transition to democracy. Through this plan, UNDP is helping Tunisia address the persistent problem of unemployment and offer an alternative to salaried employment while also addressing employability challenges. The Ministry of Employment and Professional Training (MEFP) developed the Stratégie Nationale de l'Entrepreneuriat en Tunisie (SNET) in 2018<sup>42</sup>.

In order to develop inclusive and sustainable local ecosystems and the socioeconomic autonomy of women and youth, UNDP Tunisia and the Foundation Orange Tunisie established a partnership in January 2022. This partnership, which was recently extended until 2025, provides an opportunity to strengthen these efforts in the Kairouan, Gafsa, Kébili, Tozeur, Tataouine, Médenine, and Gabès regions. UNDP Tunisia and the Orange Tunisie Foundation, support young and female entrepreneurs, focusing on digital inclusion and climate change. The partnership promotes youth awareness and green technological advancements for economic growth in affected regions.

With funding from the Kingdom of Norway and in collaboration with Orange Tunisie, the Ministry of Employment and Professional Training (MEFP) and UNDP organised a boot camp on May 31, 2023, to encourage entrepreneurial culture among young people in the southern region of Tunisia<sup>43</sup>.

UNDP oversaw the development of a report on Tunisia's informal economy on December 22, 2022. The goal of this project is to investigate Tunisia's informal economy, its scope, and the factors that underlie informal behaviour.

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<sup>40</sup> Available in: <http://www.corp.tn/le-corp/> (21-05-2024)

<sup>41</sup> Available in: <https://www.undp.org/fr/tunisia>

<sup>42</sup> Available in: <https://www.undp.org/fr/tunisia/projets/entrepreneuriat-pour-le-developpement>; START DATE (November 2018) / END DATE (December 2023) /United Nations Development Programme/ DONORS: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS- MPTF-UN COVID-19 Response Rcvy; TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS= \$5,464,752

<sup>43</sup> Available in: <https://www.undp.org/fr/tunisia/communiqués/bootcamp-pour-la-promotion-de-la-culture-entrepreneuriale-chez-les-jeunes-du-sud-de-la-tunisie>

## European Union<sup>44</sup>

The European Union (EU) considers Tunisia a privileged partner and is currently running the following projects to improve employability in Tunisia. We highlight that under the Erasmus Plus Program there is a dedicated funding scheme focused on Capacity Building (CB) for VET where the components of career guidance, entrepreneurship and employability are very well present. The Capacity Building (CB) projects for VET contribute to the Economic and the Investment Plan and/or the European Training Foundation (ETF) recommendations under the Torino process. In the call 2022 (ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CB-VET), among the 93 evaluated projects, 58 were Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Vocational Education and Training projects chosen for funding with a total amount of €21.3 million of EU funding. To note, within the 2023 call, a total of 162 applications were received and 62 projects have been selected for funding with a total amount of €22.763.373,80 million of EU funding<sup>45</sup>. In this last call in 2023, Tunisia submitted 9 project proposals under the CB for VET and 4 projects of this type were accepted and funded.

Project title	Dates	General objective	Financial data
RAQMYAT - Digital strategies for doctoral training in human and social sciences in Tunisia ("Stratégies numériques pour la formation doctorale en sciences humaines et sociales en Tunisie")	start: 2020 end: 2027	Promote the emergence of a new paradigm for doctoral training in the Humanities and Social Sciences, by developing doctoral students' digital practices for research and cross-disciplinary skills for employability.	Project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of European Union
Program for the implementation of the national strategy for the improvement of intermediation in the labour market - II	start: 2022-05-27 end: 2027-06-0	Increase the scope and quality of labour market intermediation and guidance services for vulnerable young people: Improve the employability of young people in advance. Supporting the modernization of the National Agency for Employment and Self-Employment (ANETI). Support the communication strategy and governance of ANETI.	European Union contribution: €4 million
JEUN'ESS: Promotion of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) and creation of decent jobs for Tunisian youth	start: 2019-09-01 end: 2024-08-31	The general objective of the JEUN'ESS project is to promote decent work for young people through the social and solidarity economy: Improving knowledge of the value chains of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and the characteristics of the informal economy at the regional level Capacity-building of SSE support organisations Creating decent jobs at the local level across the SSE in six governorates Improving the working conditions of informal economic operators across the SSE	European Union contribution: €9 million

<sup>44</sup> Available at: [https://ue-tunisie.org/organismes-195\\_organismes.html?orgEnt=1](https://ue-tunisie.org/organismes-195_organismes.html?orgEnt=1)

<sup>45</sup> Marchionne, S. (2023). Vocational Educational Training (VET) in Tunisia: barriers and challenges to its internationalisation and possible solutions to boost socio-economic development of the country in *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, Volume 35, Issue 3, pp. 208-237 DOI: 10.36366/frontiers.v35i3.837

Project title	Dates	General objective	Financial data
Program for the implementation of the national strategy for the improvement of labour market intermediation - I	Start: 2020-12-08 End: 2025-06-02	<p>Contribute to improving the economic, social and political inclusion of the most disadvantaged Tunisian youth through a local development approach in Tunisia and more specifically in the targeted regions (examples: Gabès, Médenine, Gafsa, Kasserine, Sfax, Sidi Bouzid, Bizerte, Jendouba...)<sup>46</sup>.</p> <p>Expected results or changes are:</p> <p>R1.1: The private sector contributes to the improvement and implementation of sustainable economic development projects in youth employment chains;</p> <p>R1.2: Support for the social economy and solidarity sector contributes to job creation and the structuring of actors in the target regions;</p> <p>R1.3: Improved governance and quality of the education system;</p> <p>R1.4: Improving the effectiveness of labour market intermediation services through consultation between private and public stakeholders;</p> <p>R1.5: Measures to improve the employability of young people are being put in place through the strengthening of the spirit of creativity and support for post-doctoral students.</p> <p>R2: Increased inclusion of Tunisian youth through improved access to culture and sport at the local level</p> <p>R3: Youth-related issues are included in the design and implementation of public policies at the national and local levels</p>	European Union contribution: €6 million
Support program for training and professional integration in Tunisia (Programme d'Appui à la Formation et l'Insertion Professionnelle en Tunisie) (PAFIP)	Start: 2015-12-30 End: 2027-06-30	<p>The program aims to promote the employability and professional integration of young Tunisian men and women, through an overall upgrading of the training system and a systemic approach focused on strengthening the capacity of players at central and local levels.</p> <p>By addressing the management of the system, the quality of the training provided and the practices of the centres in synergy with the private operators, the programme promotes the socio-professional integration of young people in initial training and the upgrading of skills of workers in continuing training. Thus, it helps to meet the needs of companies for skilled personnel, in transporting industrial sectors.</p> <p>The programme also promotes the capacity-building of individuals and the improved socio-professional integration of young men and women into decent jobs. By placing field actors at the heart of the programme, the programme promotes greater social cohesion at the regional level. Support for the actors responsible for driving the reform, its regional anchoring, as well as the integration and articulation of training and employment policies, sustain the achievements of PAFIP.</p>	European Union contribution: €3.2 million. Total project budget (EUR): €27 million

<sup>46</sup> The map of Tunisia showing the beneficiary regions and the categories of projects undertaken by the European Union. Available in: [https://ue-tunisie.org/projetsCarte-212\\_carte.html](https://ue-tunisie.org/projetsCarte-212_carte.html), (21-05-2024)

Project title	Dates	General objective	Financial data
IRADA: Support for projects to improve the quality and relevance of the initial, continuing and employment support services in the 8 target governorates (Gabès, Médenine, Gafsa, Kasserine, Sfax, Sidi Bouzid, Bizerte et Jendouba)	Start: 2019-01-01 End: 2025-12-14	Contribute to improving the quality and relevance of initial, continuing training and employment support services to better meet the needs of the domestic and international labour market. Specific objective: 1: Financing training projects in partnerships between public training centres and private economic sector organisations on topics identified by the public-private dialogue platform in each of the target governorates (Gabès, Médenine, Gafsa, Kasserine, Sfax, Sidi Bouzid, Bizerte et Jendouba). 2: Promote the recruitment, development of economic activity, and continued employment of the direct beneficiaries of the selected training projects (prioritairement des jeunes, femmes et hommes sans emploi, en reconversion ou en formation initiale) 3: Meeting the skills needs of economic operators in the priority sectors selected by the PDPPs (Plateforme de Dialogue Public-Privé) of the governorates that are the source of the training projects	European Union contribution: €10 million. Total project budget (EUR): €10 million
IRADA - Technical assistance (private sector component)	Start: 2018-08-01 End: 2025-01-31	The Technical Assistance action, in coordination with l'UGP (Unité de Gestion de Programme), IRADA and its local Antennas, should contribute to strengthening institutions, economic players and local civil society, through the formulation of development strategies and in the implementation of "federating" projects stemming from an effective regional public-private partnership.	European Union contribution: €4.5 million
IRADA Main results and activities (these achievements may be considered as the pillar of a career guidance in Tunisia)	<p>The main activities of IRADA Project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Regional antennas</b> Each of the governorates has its own regional antenna consisting of an antenna manager, a staff member from the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, a private sector expert and an assistant(e).</li> <li>▪ <b>Public-Private Dialogue Platforms (PDPP)</b> Each region has a Public-Private Dialogue Platform whose role is to participate in the debate on the potential and challenges for economic development. They are composed of different actors from different backgrounds, public sector, private sector, civil society, the associative world, etc.</li> <li>▪ <b>Focus Group</b> Each of the platforms is supported in its mission by focus groups formed around the value chains identified for both the technical and vocational training axis. These focus groups ensure that they conduct research on the different value chains, conduct market, feasibility, opportunities and implementation studies.</li> <li>▪ <b>Expertise power stations</b> Within the framework of the IRADA Programme, two expertise centres are made available to the platforms. The first facility assists and manages the activities of the Private Sector (SP) and the second facility supports the activity of Vocational Training (FP).</li> <li>▪ <b>Program Management Unit (UGP)</b> A Tunis-based Program Management Unit consists of a National Programme Officer (NPR), a financial and administrative management unit, a private-sector technical unit and a technical unit for Vocational Training and Employment. The implementation of the various components of the project is ensured by the UGP which, in accordance with the European Union's donation agreements, concludes implementation contracts with operators on the basis of tenders or conventions and protocols.</li> <li>▪ <b>Financing</b></li> </ul>		

Project title	Dates	General objective	Financial data
		Cooperation programme financed by the European Union (32 million euros) implemented by the Ministries of Development, Investment and International Cooperation (MDICI) and Vocational Training and Employment (VET) until 2022.	

World Bank (WB): The World Bank's Systematic Country Diagnostic<sup>47</sup> (SCD) for Tunisia identified the reduction of skills mismatch as an important element of a key driver for change toward improving equality of opportunities and increasing resilience. It identifies the skills mismatch and low-quality education as two of the main human capital weaknesses of Tunisia, particularly in its lagging regions. It highlights the poor quality of education in primary, secondary, and higher education as a deterrent for youth inclusion and job creation<sup>48</sup>. Investments in higher value-added sectors can help drive skills development, given the right interaction with and rapidity of response by the public institutions. The current World Bank Country Partnership Strategy<sup>49</sup> addresses the need for skills development in its third pillar, acknowledging the SCD approach. It also emphasises the importance of scaling up skills as part of the new social contract. Its objective 3.2: 'Increased opportunities for young and women' emphasises the relevance of upgrading the hard and soft skills of graduates, with particular focus on the importance of enhancing entrepreneurship skills.

Tunisia Tertiary Education for Employability Project (TEEP)<sup>50</sup> is an important project funded by the WB<sup>51</sup> in order to improve the employability of tertiary education students and to strengthen the management of higher education: "The project consists of two components. The first component, improving employability of graduates, aims at improving the employability of future graduates by supporting supply side measures to better align graduates' skills and competences with labour market needs. It consists of the following two sub-components: (i) support a set of incentive measures, using the competitive grant scheme developed under the higher education reform project (projet d'appui à la réforme de l'enseignement supérieur (PARES II) and the competitive fund scheme for quality support program (PAQ); and (ii) a set of systemic and cross-cutting activities which will support the preparation or implementation of the PAQ grants foreseen under sub-component one. The second component, strengthening the management of higher education will combine a set of PAQ incentives and systemic measures aimed at improving the management of the higher education system. It consists of three sub-components: (i) using the PAQ competitive grant scheme developed under the PARES II project - in particular the PAQ management capacity window, to improve governance and management, quality assurance, including through support to young universities; (ii) set of systemic measures (for example with regard to strategic planning, capacity building measures for better governance, quality assurance and financial management, student admission, and a functioning higher education management and information system) to support the areas of governance and management, quality assurance, and financing; and (iii) project management unit (PMU) to reinforce its coordinating and managing capacity by recruiting - on a competitive basis - additional qualified and experienced technical staff to effectively coordinate, monitor, and evaluate activities carried out under each sub-component"<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Report No. 97858-TN. Discussed by the Board of Executive Directors in June 2015, Available in <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/465581593566209488/pdf/Tunisia-Skills-Development-for-Employment-The-Role-of-Technical-and-Vocational-Education-and-Training.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> The 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results indicated that the education system was not producing enough students with good quantitative skills.

<sup>49</sup> Report No. 104123-TN. Discussed by the Board of Executive Directors on May 17, 2016. Available in <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/465581593566209488/pdf/Tunisia-Skills-Development-for-Employment-The-Role-of-Technical-and-Vocational-Education-and-Training.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Available in: <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P151059> Project ID: P151059

<sup>51</sup> Project ID: P151059 / Commitment Amount US\$ 70.00 million / Borrower: Ministry of Economy and Planification/ implementing Agency: National Agency for the Advancement of Scientific Research, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

<sup>52</sup> Available in: <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P151059>

International Labour Organisation (ILO)<sup>53</sup>: JEUN'ESS (EU funded) is one of the projects about the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) in Tunisia. They focus on optimising the "solidarity chain" to enable greater added value for Tunisian products. They support SSE entities, such as cooperatives, to strengthen their production, transform and diversify their products, and access markets through better marketing and certification strategies. At the strategic level, the ILO office in Tunis is the main partner of the Ministry of Economy and Planning in the Social and Solidarity Economy portfolio. It supported the establishment of a commission and provided experts who developed the SSE 2035 vision as part of Tunisia's 2023-2025 Development Plan. The Ministry also receives support for mapping social entrepreneurship initiatives in Tunisia, their evaluation for capitalization and scaling up. The "Community Fund" also provides support to local communities and social partners for the development of SSE projects. An SSE guide for local communities has been developed to allow greater capitalization and coordination of SSE action at the local level<sup>54</sup>.

In order to guarantee the financial inclusion of categories not yet covered or insufficiently covered by the financial sector (banks, microfinance, insurance and postal financial services), the National Strategy for Financial Inclusiveness<sup>55</sup> contains an axis entitled «The social and solidarity economy » which aims to find adequate financing instruments for the SSE. The strategy proposes three measures: firstly, developing new financial products such as "crowd funding" ; secondly, developing financing processes such as the creation of a fund through a legislative text or the extension of the scope of intervention of the National Guarantee Fund (FNG) for the inclusion of enterprises of the ESS and thirdly, allowing SSEOs to benefit from microfinance services through the reform of the Law-Decree No.2001-117 on the organisation of microfinance activity<sup>56</sup>. The LIMITL'ESS clubs are another initiative of these projects. In partnership with the international labour organisation ENACTUS, ENACTUS LIMITL'ESS clubs have been established alongside the LIMITL'ESS Generation clubs within youth and cultural centres in Tunisia. Their aim is to raise awareness among young people about the values, principles, and opportunities promoted by SSE (Social and Solidarity Economy). Institutional partners of ILO are the Ministry of Development, Investment and International Cooperation (MDiCI) (Main partner), Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries (MARHP), Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment (MFPE), Ministry of Social Affairs (MAS), Social partners: Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA); Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT); and Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries (UTAP).

**Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH):** LTDH is a prominent human rights organisation in Tunisia that also focuses on labour rights and employability. They advocate for fair working conditions, social protection, and equal opportunities in the labour market. LTDH conducts research, raises awareness, and engages in policy advocacy to improve employability and protect workers' rights.

**Agence Française de Développement (AFD):** Since 1996, AFD has supported the establishment/rehabilitation of 28 training centres run in dialogue with the private sector. This new programme, focused on industry professions, supports the implementation of the government's new strategy, in the context of an unprecedented social contract with the social partners, to improve youth employability and inclusion<sup>57</sup>. The PAFIP (Programme d'Appui à la Formation et à l'Insertion Professionnelle) project focuses on four employment areas in the North and East of the country and on the "industry" sector. It aims to bring about a qualitative leap in the system at all levels. It is based on both an enhanced strategic management by the ministry and a strong territorial establishment of the reform:

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<sup>53</sup> Available in: [https://www.ilo.org/africa/countries-covered/tunisia/WCMS\\_744336/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/africa/countries-covered/tunisia/WCMS_744336/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>54</sup> Decree No 2013-5183 of 18th November 2013, setting the criteria, procedures and conditions for granting public funding to associations...

<sup>55</sup> The National Strategy for Financial Inclusiveness was developed by the Ministry of Finance was approved by a restricted Council of Ministers on June 25th, 2018. Available in: National Strategy for Financial Inclusion 2018-2022. And <https://www.ilo.org/publications/public-policies-social-and-solidarity-economy-and-their-role-future-work> (02-06-2024)

<sup>56</sup> The legal persons, including the SSEOs don't benefit from microfinance because microfinance institutions finance only natural persons.

<sup>57</sup> Available in: <https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/de-la-creation-de-centres-de-formation-laccompagnement-de-la-reforme-du-secteur>

- Support for the running of 17 training centres for 15 professional activities in the industry sector, in eight governorates, with the aim of making the system more responsive to business needs and of allowing these centres to play a leading role in the socioeconomic development of territories. This support includes upgrading the facilities of centres and, in certain cases, expanding or creating training areas. Specific assistance will be provided for the creation of an “agribusiness” centre in the Bizerte competitiveness cluster;
- Assist the National Teacher Training and Training Engineering Center (Cenaffif) in overhauling training; Build the management and coordination capacities of the structures of the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment; Support the structuring of a “training” mission at the industry employers’ organisation UTICA and trade union UGTT in order to enhance the social dialogue on vocational training between the State and social partners<sup>58</sup>.

Education for Employment (EFE)<sup>59</sup>: The EFE Network equips young women and men with the skills they need in today’s job market and links them to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities where they can succeed. EFE concretely supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. EFE-Tunisia is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO) established in 2012 that is leading a national initiative to create economic opportunities for unemployed young people across Tunisia. EFE-Tunisia is part of the global EFE network present in 8 countries in the MENA region. EFE approach begins with an in-depth labour market analysis that focuses on building partnerships with private sector companies across Tunisia - from global multinationals to local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to identify recruitment needs and the skills required to do the job. EFE then designs targeted, sector-specific training programs for young people, leading to direct employment or micro-entrepreneurship opportunities. EFE-Tunisia operates in all the governorates, with beneficiaries who are graduates of higher education, vocational training or non-graduates. Since its creation, it has trained over 17,000 people, over 60% of whom are women, and over 85% of whom have been associated with various employment opportunities.

## Barriers, enablers and opportunities

All of the above-mentioned organisations aim to support career development in a similar way. In general, the public views boosting employment and activities that prepare for the world of work, employability, and assisting with educational objectives as the main purposes of career guidance. But there aren’t any well-established, reliable systems in place for communication, cooperation and coordination. Regarding the practices and operations as well as the policies pertaining to career guidance, there is a lack of coordination at all levels. No single organisation in charge of career guidance is prepared to take the lead in organising the effort. Numerous non-governmental organisations operating at the local level have demonstrated efficacy in offering career development support to individuals who are not in education or employment, school dropouts, or immigrants. Ministries, the EU, and bilateral donors all assist them, but maintaining continuity and ensuring sustainability after the project’s conclusion is the primary obstacle to the services they offer.

To date, donor involvement in the development of career guidance in Tunisia has taken many forms: funding for a national resource centre; funding for job search training programs at universities; study visits to other nations for staff members of various national institutions and agencies, however often not targeting the responsables in the country to ensure uptake of lessons learned after the study visit; hosting of national and regional seminars with the participation of external experts. The suggestions for external donor support have been made to various ministries, agencies, departments, and institutions, some of which have no function or obligation for providing career guidance, in the lack of a national plan for career guidance. Overall, these interventions have a local, diffuse effect, and occasionally only result in the repetition of small-scale work. Also, it can be difficult to coordinate the support of donors both inside and between ministries, agencies, and organisations, as well as among the donors themselves.

<sup>58</sup> Idem (24-05-2024)

<sup>59</sup> Available in: <https://efetunisie.org/presentation/>

The Employment Strategy should acknowledge officially the role of the civil society organisations' (CSO) as significant players in the labour market, particularly when it comes to outreach, career guidance, and working with young people from several vulnerable groups. Additionally, the manner and extent of allowing CSOs to become employment service providers would be taken into consideration when changing the legislative framework in the field of employment. In order to ensure the long-term viability of different career development programs that rely on time-bound donor resources, it may be imperative to ensure stable funding and diversify financing sources for them.

So far, social partners have a limited role in career guidance, except for participation in job fairs organised by governmental institutions, to help with job advice and information. This is undoubtedly caused in part by the perceptions of career guidance as only related to guidance for vocational training, but it's also a result of Tunisia's overabundance of graduates, especially those with higher education, which makes the country an employer's labour market. As a result, employers have no reason to communicate in any manner with the public regarding careers and employment prospects. In addition, employees may lack knowledge about available career development services, especially in remote or underserved areas and cultural norms and language limitations can impact service acceptance. Consequently, the creation of networks allowing the pooling of resources, knowledge and experience can help facilitate access to and participation in services and increase their influence. To sum up, stakeholders can optimise their influence and advance employability by cultivating cooperation and switching to active outreach and support to those most in need, including by involving CSOs.

All of the issues mentioned above (see annex for details) have led to a situation whereby existing career guidance services in the education and employment sectors have stayed in a permanent state of underdevelopment. Attempts to innovation and development have been made with project funding from external sources but these have been limited in focus, time and budget, and where successful, have not been subsequently mainstreamed. Hence, a **national resource centre for career guidance** is highly recommended. The pooling of existing resources into a single national agency would give a critical mass to career guidance provision. Its duties should include representing the ongoing relationship between the fields of education and employment, youth and social inclusion and ensuring the overall coordination and development of the career guidance system. Furthermore, the procedures for collaboration between important players in the creation of the career guidance system must be intended in the **Action Plan of the Tunisian Strategy of employment**. To attend this goal all the **governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, educational structures** (for example: representatives from the University Career Centres 4C, educational and socio-professional referents of the "Pôle Etudiant Entrepreneur" PEE), **international organisations and funding bodies** (for example: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH: GIZ, Education For Employment: EFE) and the **civil society organisations** must cooperate through e.g. a formal **Working group like a national lifelong guidance forum**. A **national lifelong guidance strategy** should build the policy framework and link to existing policies including the national employment strategy.

## 5. MAIN SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

In this section, we present the main career guidance services in Tunisia. We have chosen to classify them by service provider, from primary education to retirement age. We note that this is not an exhaustive list, but rather a selection of broad-spectrum programs.

### 5.1 Education, training and work-based learning for youth

In the education sector, the Ministry of Education, and more specifically the **Communication Department**, provides a service for promoting information and guidance on academic, university, and professional orientation, as well as developing communication skills. With the reform of the educational system in 1991, the position of **regional coordinator teacher for school and university orientation** was created with a mission of providing information and guidance for both school and university orientation. Subsequently, in 1993, there was the creation, through Decree 93-1468 of July 5, 1993, of a specialized higher education cycle at the Higher Institute of Education and Continuing Education (ISEFC), establishing the body of profession of **Information and Guidance Counsellors (IGC)**, located at the Ministry of Education. The mission of the IGC is limited to providing informational guidance on different specialty streams in the baccalaureate through periodic visits to educational institutions, targeting only secondary school students. They have no role in accompanying, mentoring, or advising. The promulgation of the 2002 Education and Teaching Law, ensuring the student's right to information, included principles of gradualism (a two-stage orientation in high school<sup>60</sup>) and flexibility (reorientation<sup>61</sup>), coupled with the creation of **listening and counselling offices**<sup>62</sup>. Since 2002, no mechanism has been put in place to establish individual support and mentoring, thus creating a gap between the needs of the job market and the educational system in Tunisia. This gap results in unemployment, early school dropout, distorted perception of vocational training, lack of choice for university orientation, and difficulty in university reorientation, among other consequences. Young people who dropout of school find themselves without institutional professional support, leading to involvement in the informal sector, sometimes even the illegal one. Moreover, the orientation of students towards vocational training is based on school failure, given its negative image in society. Students who succeed in transitioning to university (national baccalaureate exam) are oriented based on their academic results (a scoring system carried out by a computer program) and the capacity of the training paths of higher education institutions, rather than on the student's preference or the needs of the job market. Outside school, guidance for young people is often provided by associations and NGOs.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS) in Tunisia provides various career guidance and development services for students and graduates. The key services offered include:

**Information programs on professions and sectors of activity for students who have passed their national baccalaureate exams:** These programs entail organizing conferences, job fairs, and information and advice campaigns aimed at assisting students who have passed their national baccalaureate exams in making informed decisions about university study programs. Factors considered include their scores<sup>63</sup>, the scores of the last person oriented towards the requested university from the previous year, and the absorption capacity of the desired institution. To support these efforts, MESRS produces and distributes an annual national guide to university programs for baccalaureate holders. However, this system relies on computerised administrative management and is therefore far from being in line with international best practices in career guidance.

<sup>60</sup> In the first year (4 pathways) and in the second year of secondary school (4 pathways and 6 specialties).

<sup>61</sup> Possibility of reorientation at the end of the 2nd year of secondary school in case of success.

<sup>62</sup> Before 2010, there were 200 counseling and listening offices covering 500 college and secondary schools in Tunisia. 6% of them have offices that will remain operational in 2022 (with neither psychologist or sociologist there).

<sup>63</sup> The score is calculated based on the student's academic results in their baccalaureate exam.

University career and skills certification centers (4C): These centers offer guidance to students in choosing their academic and professional paths. They provide support such as CV preparation, internships, as well as training and certification workshops covering languages, IT, and soft skills. Despite being positively received for their efforts to better prepare youth for the job market, their sustainability is uncertain given the absence of a clear and complete regulatory institutional framework that governs the operations and the valorization of the effort of human resources<sup>64</sup>. Their sustainability relies on the voluntary efforts of accompanying teachers and limited financial resources from non-permanent partnerships.

**End-of-studies internship:** The majority of university programs require an end-of-studies internship to be completed within a company specializing in the same field. The conditions of this internship vary from one program to another. An agreement is signed between the university, the company, and the student to ensure the smooth progress of the internship. These internships are unpaid and are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain, especially for certain specialties.

**Co-constructed<sup>65</sup> training paths:** These paths are developed in partnership with professional organisations to meet specific skill needs and enhance the professional integration of higher education graduates. However, these initiatives are dependent on the willingness of professional partners to maintain their partnerships with higher education institutions.

**Quotas for professionals at master's programs:** As part of the call for applications to master's programs by higher education institutions, a quota for professionals is generally established based on specific criteria. This professional will thus be able to improve its skills, while also serving as a liaison between the university and the socio-economic environment.

Professional networking: These initiatives include networking events, hackathons, seminars, and similar activities organized by certain higher education institutions, often with the support of student clubs and collaboration from the socio-economic community.

**Guidance for continuing education programs:** MESRS encourages graduates to pursue further education by providing information on continuing education programs, professional certifications, and additional diplomas that can enhance their skills and employment prospects, most often in collaboration with the National Center of Continual Training and Professional Promotion (CNFCPP).

Further, the MESRS via the **National Agency for the Promotion of Scientific Research / Agence Nationale de la Promotion de la Recherche Scientifique (ANPR)** has launched a program as part of the **Project for the Modernization of Higher Education in Support of Employability (PromESSE-Tn) / Projet de Modernisation de l'Enseignement Supérieur en Soutien à l'Employabilité (PromESSE-Tn)**. One of its outputs is to study the professional integration of Tunisian university graduates. While some universities, via their observatories<sup>66</sup>, have been able to carry out such studies on the professional placement of students from the relevant university and come up with reliable results, others have not. This is due to the institutional and organisational vacuum behind the existence of university observatories, whose role could be more relevant with a more effective legislative and organisational framework. Under the same program, emphasis was placed on promoting the transfer of knowledge and technology from academic circles to the professional world, and on supporting the creation and operation of spin-offs. Here too, the institutional and legislative vacuum has prevented

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<sup>64</sup> The legal framework exists, but it is incomplete due to budgetary reasons, particularly regarding the stakeholders in the 4C (Decree of October 7, 2016 from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research: [https://www.4c.tn/Content/images/Arr%C3%AAt%C3%A92016\\_4426%20VF.pdf](https://www.4c.tn/Content/images/Arr%C3%AAt%C3%A92016_4426%20VF.pdf)).

<sup>65</sup> Co-construction is an approach involving academics and professionals in the design and implementation of a professional training program. It enables the preparation of national diplomas (Bachelor's or Master's) as defined in Article 3 of Law No. 2008-19 of February 25, 2008, regarding higher education (MERSRS (<http://www.uni-renov.rnu.tn/old/content/fr/7/Co-Construction.html>)).

<sup>66</sup> University observatories were established by the ministerial decree of higher education and scientific research dated April 3, 2008. Their main purpose is to collect quantitative and qualitative information aimed at producing analysis tools, decision-making aids, and strategic guidance for the benefit of the University and its stakeholders. The rate of active observatories is very low due to the institutional vacuum that characterizes them.

**Technology Transfer Offices (BuTT)** from playing their role as catalysts for scientific entrepreneurship.

In addition, Tunisian universities are playing a growing role in supporting entrepreneurship in Tunisia – in parallel to public employment services – through (a) **launching entrepreneurial education programs** or dedicated teaching units, (b) launching of **student entrepreneur centres / Pôles Étudiants Entrepreneurs (PEE)** dedicated to supporting and promoting entrepreneurship among students and supported by *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)*, (c) the organisation of entrepreneurial **competitions and events**, often in collaboration with student clubs, and (d) **partnerships** with industry, local businesses, associations and NGOs.

Finally, under the supervision of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, youth animators have been tasked with providing informal information and advice to school dropouts who attend youth centers (450 centers throughout Tunisia) on accessing vocational training and job market opportunities. These initiatives, though numerous, suffer from a lack of individual support mechanisms and an evaluation/adjustment strategy.

## 5.2 Unemployment support and support to NEETs

In the employment and vocational training sector, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MFPE) provides the following services:

**TO JOBSEEKERS**, mainly the **Public Employment Services (SPE)** through advisors working in employment offices (90 throughout the country) of **The Agency for employment and self-employment / Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant (ANETI)**. ANETI acts as a mediator between job supply and demand, bringing people together and facilitating the recruitment process. It welcomes, informs, and guides jobseekers, helps them draw up their professional projects and assists them in improving their employability. It works with training organisations to offer vocational training programs to jobseekers to enhance their skills and employability on the job market. It also collects and disseminates information on the labour market (employment trends, growth sectors, qualifications sought by employers, average salaries, etc.) for the businesses and job seekers. The services provided by ANETI are aimed at those seeking employment, entrepreneurs looking to establish their own business, youth seeking vocational training, and companies seeking to meet their human resource needs.

ANETI manages the **Active Employment Programs (PAE)**<sup>67</sup>, in particular, the Support Program for the Recruitment of Higher Education Graduates / *Programme d'appui au recrutement des diplômés du supérieur (PARDES)*<sup>68</sup>, the Adaptation Action Program to Improve Employability / *Programme d'actions d'adaptation pour l'amélioration de l'employabilité*<sup>69</sup>, the Contract for Initiation into Professional Life (CIVP)<sup>70</sup>, the Civil Service Contract (CSC) / *Contrat Service Civil*<sup>71</sup>, the Support program for small business promoters / *Programme d'accompagnement des promoteurs des petites*

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<sup>67</sup> <https://www.emploi.nat.tn/NvPrg/index1.html#schedule>

<sup>68</sup> This program aims to encourage private sector companies to recruit first-time job-seeking graduates of higher education and improve the supervision rate.

<sup>69</sup> This program involves organizing adaptation sessions for job seekers aimed at enhancing their employability and facilitating their integration into companies where work requires additional training or adaptation. This is done within the framework of an agreement concluded between the employment office and the concerned party.

<sup>70</sup> This contract aims to assist job seekers in acquiring professional skills to facilitate their integration into the workforce and to meet the needs of private sector companies (duration: 12 months).

<sup>71</sup> This contract aims to enable first-time job-seeking graduates of higher education to engage in activities that allow them to develop their abilities and skills, and to acquire practical capacities facilitating their integration into the workforce, whether through wage employment or self-employment (contract duration: 12 months).

*entreprises* (PAPPE)<sup>72</sup>, the "FORSATI" programme<sup>73</sup>, the "Karama" dignity contract programme<sup>74</sup>, regional public worksites, the Tunisian Solidarity Bank / *Banque tunisienne de solidarité* (BTS)<sup>75</sup>, la *Banque de Financement des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises* (BFPME), the National Fund for the Promotion of Crafts and Small Trades / *le fonds national de promotion de l'artisanat et des petits métiers* (FONAPRAM), and the fund to promote industrial decentralisation / *les fonds de promotion et de décentralisation industrielle* (FOPRODI). Despite the laudable objectives of such plans, they nevertheless have certain shortcomings. For example, in addition to budgetary and financial constraints, there is a lack of efficiency in the creation of sustainable and equitable jobs (in terms of gender and geographical distribution), insufficient coordination between the various players involved (other ministries, businesses, civil society organisations, the education system, international organisations, etc.), a poor match with the needs of the labour market, certain problems of governance and transparency, and so on. The development of an active employment policy tailored to the needs of NEETs who have not attained a higher level of education requires the reinforcement of actions already undertaken, through individual support for jobseekers. A gender perspective also needs to be considered, since according to a study carried out by the United Nations, women spend more time in NEET situations than men, despite having a relatively higher level of education<sup>76</sup>. Moreover, the unemployment rate among female graduates is three times higher than that of males in 2023, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INS). It is worth noting that the latest program launched by the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training in April 2024 concerns the rescue of small businesses, in cooperation with the French Development Agency and the Tunisian Solidarity Bank. This newcomer is part of the implementation of the Vocational Training and Employment Support Program / *Programme d'Appui à la Formation et à l'Insertion Professionnelle* (PAFIP), which aims to implement the state's policy in supporting the economic empowerment of youth by diversifying financing products and developing mechanisms for surrounding institutions.

**FOR SEEKERS OF INITIAL TRAINING**, vocational guidance services are offered through training advisors<sup>77</sup> employed by the vocational training centers of the Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training (ATFP). The ATFP, which operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MFPE), manages 136 vocational training establishments, covering 400 specialties in 12 economic sectors<sup>78</sup> (ATFP holds 93% of the national training system and primarily operates within the industrial sector). Currently, the ATFP has 101 information, orientation, and youth support officers before and throughout their training courses. Each year, the MFPE produces and distributes a national guide to vocational training programs and centers. It should be noted that other ministries (e.g. Defense, Tourism, Agriculture) have a role to play in vocational training in Tunisia. These include the National Tunisian Tourism Office (ONTT), with 8 vocational training establishments operating in the tourism and hotel sectors; the Agricultural Extension and Training Agency / *l'Agence de Vulgarisation et de Formation Agricole* (AVFA), with 39 vocational training establishments operating in the fishing and agriculture sectors; the Ministry of National Defense, with 13 vocational training establishments covering various economic sectors, including industry, construction and public works; the private sector for initial vocational training, with around 1,000 training establishments

<sup>72</sup> This program includes assistance in ideation, developing the project study and business plan, accompanying small business promoters, and partially covering the counterpart services allocated to public structures and provided by small businesses

<sup>73</sup> The beneficiary of the 'Forsati' program will be provided with personalized support throughout the stages of identifying, building, and realizing their professional project to facilitate their integration into wage employment or self-employment. The project must be in harmony with the job seeker's aspirations, skills, and abilities, as well as with the needs of the economy and the requirements of the labour market (Duration: 18 months).

<sup>74</sup> Facilitating the integration of first-time job seekers holding higher education degrees into the professional world by enabling them to acquire additional qualifications relevant to the needs of private sector companies in terms of skills, and by providing them with practical capacities aligned with the requirements of the real work environment.

<sup>75</sup> For young people with a professional qualification; graduates of higher education and individuals seeking professional reintegration. BTS is a bank specialized in financing micro-projects in various sectors of activity.

<sup>76</sup> [https://tunisia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/R%C3%A9sum%C3%A9%20analytique\\_Les%20NEET%20en%20chiffres\\_Nov%202023.pdf](https://tunisia.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/R%C3%A9sum%C3%A9%20analytique_Les%20NEET%20en%20chiffres_Nov%202023.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> These counsellors play an important role in publicizing the programs offered by training centers. They are involved in selecting trainees for various specialties offered in vocational training and support them throughout their training journey.

<sup>78</sup> Currently 68 of 136 vocational training centers have a career guidance counsellor.

operating mainly in the service sector. The engineering of training programs and the training of trainers in the initial training sector is provided by the National Centre for Training for Trainers and Training Development / Centre National de Formation des Formateurs et de l'Ingénierie de Formation) (CENAFFIF). Despite a well-established institutional framework and numerous reforms, the vocational training system remains inefficient (low and declining enrolment rates, high dropout rates, etc.), marginalized (vocational training is synonymous with failure) and ineffective, given the difficulty of implementing, monitoring and reforming governance mechanisms.

**FOR WOMEN.** The Ministry for the Family, Women, Children and the elderly designed “Raidat”, a guidance program to stimulate women's entrepreneurship and empower unemployed women. It helps these women escape precariousness.

**FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY.** There are specific institutions supporting disabled people, particularly the blind, run by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

**FOR ENTREPRENEURS** wishing to create their own businesses, through "entrepreneurial" centers<sup>79</sup> (22 throughout the country) aimed at promoting the entrepreneurial spirit and self-employment through support mechanisms (training and access to financing). For entrepreneurs wishing to develop their projects, support grants and financing funds are offered. We note that these actions are carried out separately from those conducted in the academic sector.

To facilitate the launch and development of startups in Tunisia based on innovation, renewal and the adoption of new technologies, the Startup Tunisia program has been launched. This is a public program included in the **National Strategic Plan “Tunisie Digitale”** 2016-2021, renewed as part of the **National Strategy for Digital Transformation 2022-2025**. Its three pillars are: STARTUP ACT (a legal framework based on a merit label and a series of benefits and incentives for entrepreneurs, startups and investors), STARTUP INVEST (a new investment framework with the aim of fostering the emergence of a solid and dynamic Venture Capital (VC) industry), STARTUP EMPOWER (a new support scheme for startups and Ecosystem Support Structures (SSOs) with missions: financing startups and SSOs, ecosystem animation, and international connections). The strategy also includes the adaptation of training and employment policies to the needs of the ICT sector.

This program has given rise to over 900 accredited startups, 35% of which were founded by women, in 2023. Several other public bodies (e.g. The Agency for the Promotion of Industry and Innovation (APII) through its 5 intervention centers and its Business incubator network (RNPE) and its "Start'App II" training and support program, the business centers under the Ministry of Industry, Agricultural Investment Promotion Agency APIA, Women's entrepreneurship promotion program RAIDA, Technology clusters, etc.), private (incubators, gas pedals, etc.), international (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development EBRD, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ, etc.), associations and NGOs (e.g. INJAZ, ENDA IA, etc.) have also played an important role in supporting entrepreneurship. Despite the multiplication of such initiatives, the economic, social and sustainable development impact is not at its desired level, given the poor pooling and coordination of these actions and an overall business environment that is not conducive (administrative burden, difficult access to financing, etc.). A gender perspective should be considered given the low rate of female entrepreneurship (less than 10%).

### 5.3 Workers / Employed

In Tunisia, workers and employees benefit from various services and protections, including social security, paid leave, labour standards, vocational training, trade unions, protection against discrimination and harassment, minimum wage, occupational health and safety etc. To support the career development of employees in Tunisia, the MFPE provides in-company skills development and career advancement services for those seeking further training, through the **National Center of Continual Training and Professional Promotion (CNFCPP)**. Within the framework of the

<sup>79</sup> The Entrepreneurial Space aimed at promoting the entrepreneurial spirit and independent work. These centers are installed in the capitals of each governorate.

Professional Promotion Scheme, the latter works with the **Institutes for Higher Vocational Training** (IPST), a network of university organisations and training centers under agreement with the CNFCPP to offer training courses with approved diplomas. The services offered by CNFCPP are periodically updated on its website aimed at businesses, workers, and professionals (federation, chamber of commerce, etc.). The MFPE's training effort is supported by public (-20% of market) and private (+80% of market) training establishments<sup>80</sup>.

However, this does not address a fundamental issue in Tunisia's employment sector, namely, brain drain and startup exodus, which poses a significant threat to Tunisia's economy. This drain persists despite some initiatives, notably those of the *Caisse de Dépôt et de Consignation* (CDC), which has developed innovative financing mechanisms to encourage the retention of startups and talents in Tunisia (e.g., Flywheel program, Deal and Sail mechanisms, creation of Anava fund of funds etc.). A more concerted effort in terms of regulation, business environment, and talent retention policies (salary alignment, recognition and skills valorisation, personal career plans, creation of professional development opportunities, etc.) should be undertaken by coordinating the actions of all relevant stakeholders.

The **Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation** (ATCT) acts as an intermediary between Tunisian skills and employers in foreign countries, particularly Arab and African countries, by offering vacancy platform (see chapter 8. access for details). To support public services in vocational guidance, career retraining, Workforce training and intermediation between job supply and demand, the Tunisian-German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (AHK Tunisia) has implemented a project called “**Centre d'Orientation et de Reconversion Professionnelle** (CORP)”. The center offers a range of career guidance services, career counselling and vocational training to help individuals acquire new skills or reorient themselves professionally. Very little information exists about the program's impact. On a sectoral level, initiatives have been taken by the supervising ministries to support career guidance and retraining (e.g.: career guidance and retraining fair, services and careers in the information and communication technology sector by the Ministry of Communication Technologies in Tunisia).

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[https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/C12578310056925BC125701F004D855F\\_CVET%20Tunisia\\_03\\_FR.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/C12578310056925BC125701F004D855F_CVET%20Tunisia_03_FR.pdf)

## 6. FUNDING

Career guidance services in Tunisia are a shared responsibility of several stakeholders but concern in particular the Ministries of Education, Higher Education, Employment and Vocational Training and several government agencies including ANETI and ATFP. The Tunisian state funds all public services for career development support.

A sum of 420 million dinars has been allocated in the 2023 budget to the National Employment Fund of the **Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training**<sup>81</sup>. The Fund aims to finance employment programmes and support small and young entrepreneurs. According to a document of the State budget for the year 2023 published by the Ministry of Finance on its website, 181 million dinars will also be devoted to the employment contract program (CIVP). In addition, an envelope of 67.8 million dinars will be mobilized for the benefit of 20,000 graduates of higher education and beneficiaries of the “contract-dignity” program. 29 million dinars will go to the voluntary civil service programme; 25 million dinars to the “new generation of entrepreneurs” programme. As for the value of the appropriations for the financing of small projects in 2023, it will reach 70 million dinars, according to the same document.

Since the early 1980s, the Tunisian State has initiated and implemented Active Employment Programmes (APEs), including several accompanying programmes. The Active Employment Programmes (APEs) aim to facilitate the insertion of and increase the employability of job seekers. Active programmes include several types of intervention, including labour market intermediation, entrepreneurship support and temporary employment programmes. Expenditures on active employment programmes absorb approximately 0.5% of GDP, placing Tunisia at the same level as OECD countries. The share of these expenditure in total government spending increased after the Revolution from 2.3% in 2010 to 3.2% in 2011, then gradually decreased to stabilize around 1.5%.

Data from the **Ministry of Finance** show that the total consumption of the budget allocated to APEs is equitably distributed between small business development support programmes (36%), regional workshops (33%) and programmes managed by ANETI (31%)<sup>82</sup>. It should be noted that since the 2008 reform of vocational training, three schemes have been applied to finance continuing training: (1) the tax credit enabling companies subject to vocational training tax to receive an advance equal to 60% of the amount of the tax (TFP); (2) the drawing right open to companies not subject to TFP (craftsmen and very small businesses); and (3) financial assistance opened up by Article 39 of the Investment Incentive Code for training linked to new technologies.

In the education sector, the Ministry of Education provides a service of information and vocational guidance to high school students. It employs educational and academic information and guidance counsellors, state officials, who work at the regional level. There are a total of 138 counsellors in all Tunisia.

Among the initiatives initiated in the early stages of the implementation of the reform, the Project for the Modernization of Higher Education in Support of Employability “PromESsE” aims at improving the employability of graduates of higher education and strengthening the management of the higher education. Between May 2017 and June 2019, MESRS launched 16 thematic project calls to support the initiatives of major actors in Higher Education and Scientific Research to meet the objectives of improving employability. These incentives are funded by the PAQ-PromESsE Innovation Funds. 127 innovative projects benefit from these funds, of which 20% are funded by young public universities (newly established)<sup>83</sup>. Component 1 of the PAQ-PromESsE Innovation Funds focuses on improving the employability of postgraduate graduates and future graduates by supporting supply-related measures to better align the qualifications and skills of graduates with the needs of the labour market. It consists of two sub-components: Subcomponent 1.1: Competitive fund for incentives to improve the

<sup>81</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_867712.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_867712.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.gbo.tn/sites/default/files/2022-02/PAP-2022%20Emploi%20fr.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/105251600103825181/pdf/P151059-IBRD-85900-TEEP-Promesse-PFS-2019-pdf.pdf>

employability of graduates. Subcomponent 1.2: Measures to support employability. The cost of the project is EUR 75.00 million, or the equivalent of 152.250 million Dinars' (exchange rate in January 2016: EUR 1 = DT 2.03). The project is funded at 6% by the Government of Tunisia, and 94% by the EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), which is the equivalent of 142.100 million DT under the loan agreement No. 8590/TUN of EUR 64.3 million<sup>84</sup>.

The Department of Higher Education has launched several pilot experiments in which it has attempted to integrate the information and vocational guidance function, among which are career centres and competence certification centres (4C). Teachers and management teams are not remunerated for their support, counselling, guidance and training work with students. It is a network of volunteers, who have benefited from training as trainers for the majority. The career centers do not have a budget line, its expenditure comes from sponsorship of socio-economic partners, in the form of training and accompanying programmes for staff and students.

Although it is the main labour market intermediary in Tunisia, ANETI spending accounts for only 31% of total EPA spending. During the period 2012-2017, more than 80 per cent of ANETI's EPA expenditure was concentrated mainly on three programmes: SIVP, SCV and CAIP, of which 44 per cent were for the SIIP programme alone. The CIDES and CRVA programmes remain marginal (less than 1% of ANETI expenditure), while FORSATI and the KARAMA Contract are barely launched (below 5%). As for the support programme for small business promoters "PAPPE", which is open to all job seekers and includes several entrepreneurial training sessions, in addition to the support sessions, its share represents on average only 5% of the ANETI expenditure for EPAs.

The financing of project proposals is primarily provided by the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (TSS) for projects with a cost not exceeding 150,000 DT and by the Finance Bank for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (FSMEs) for larger projects. The BTS annually finances 60,000 projects (1/4 micro-enterprises and 3/4 micro-credit) with a credit amount of TND 200 million. Several other microfinance institutions have also been established (Zitouna Tamkeen, Microred, Enda Tamweel, Advans Tunisia, CFE, Taysir) to finance entrepreneurs. Article 58 of Decree-Law No. 2011-11765 on the organisation of the activity of microfinance institutions as amended by Law No. 2014-46 of 24 July 201466 allows micro-credit associations (AMCs) to continue to operate on condition that they comply with the provisions of this decree-law, including the establishment of a minimum allocation of 50,000 TND. The requirements of funding institutions, in particular those relating to capital and guarantees, discourage many applicants from establishing or expanding enterprises. More than 80 per cent of UNFPA credits are allocated to men and less than 20 per cent to women.

In addition to local institutional funding, significant financial resources dedicated to the development of employability and the promotion of entrepreneurship come from foreign funding. This includes funding provided by the European Union (EU), international organisations (ILO, WB, etc.) and/ or NGOs as part of various strategic development support and/or competitive projects (see section 5.2).

In conclusion, Tunisia's experience shows that the relevance of reform programmes is not enough. Indeed, implementation needs to be ensured, which requires both the allocation of the necessary resources to institutions dedicated to career guidance, employability and the calibration of the funding to which programme beneficiaries are eligible, according to their needs. Moreover, effective career guidance necessarily depends on an information system that enables the monitoring and anticipation of qualification and skills needs, to enable budgeting. Surveys of labour and skills needs by type and level of qualification are essential. This information must be accessible and regularly updated to inform career guidance provision.

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<https://www.webmanagercenter.com/2023/01/10/499471/budget-de-letat-2023-420-millions-de-dinars-pour-le-fonds-national-de-emploi/>

## 7. ACCESS

In conclusion of prior sections, weaknesses related to access to career guidance exist (a) in the education sector, where access to quality career education and guidance services from primary education onwards as structured, regular learning process is not provided, (2) for employed and workers, since the focus of ANETI lies on young graduates, and (3) for disadvantaged people including those residing in remote areas. For the latter, especially in landlocked regions of Tunisia, low industrialization and the lack of economic opportunities explain the high unemployment rates and the modest prospects for progressive careers (outside regional and local administrations) recorded in certain regions. Migration towards urban centers and in particular the capital, and beyond national borders, towards European countries – sometimes illegally and at the risk of the lives of the people concerned – constitutes a confirmed trend. However, migration keeps the regions concerned in underdevelopment with effects for young people.

In this regard, the ATCT (Tunisian Technical Cooperation Agency), an organisation under the supervision of the Ministry of Investment, Development and International Cooperation, tries to enhance access to service by managing the administrative dossiers of (normally highly skilled) Tunisian labour migrants. ATCT is an expert in international professional mobility, recognized by various international institutions and ISO 9001 certified for the quality of its services. It manages an application bank of over 35,000 CVs which it makes available to foreign employers wishing to benefit from Tunisian skills. In addition, the ATCT assists and advises candidates in their efforts to succeed in international recruitment. It has representative offices abroad which canvass on its behalf and follow up candidates placed by the Agency. ATCT has 7 representative offices in the following countries: Saudi Arabia (Ryadh and Jeddah), Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar with coverage of Bahrain, and Mauritania with coverage of West African countries. Candidates can register free of charge on the ATCT website, which also allows them to quickly create their CV, consult job offers and apply, track their application and, if necessary, prepare for interviews with potential recruiters. To be eligible for the job bank, applicants must hold at least a baccalaureate or a Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle (CAP), with at least two years' professional experience backed up by a certificate of experience and have a proven professional qualification<sup>85</sup>. However, due to limited resources (social, relational, linguistic, etc.) of people concerned, this mechanism is not as significantly effective as it could potentially be in the interior regions.

In addition to migration, four essential mechanisms for access to employment and career development exist in these landlocked regions: institutional mechanisms, the university, interpersonal mechanisms (family and knowledge networks) and associative mechanisms (NGOs and development associations).

The **institutional mechanisms**, mainly composed of ANETI (National Agency for Employment and Independent Work), that offers services designed at central level (SIVP contracts, additional professional training, Entrepreneurship spaces, etc.). Through its 113 offices and "Espaces Entreprendre" throughout Tunisia, ANETI welcomes, informs, guides and supports people looking for work. It also carries out initiatives to help the long-term unemployed (training in promising fields such as ICTs, awareness-raising and support in setting up micro-enterprises). However, it is worth noting that ANETI's efforts primarily target recent graduates, and its services are less comprehensive in addressing the broader aspirations and needs of existing workers. ANETI has a wealth of information at its disposal, since the overwhelming majority of higher education graduates (84%) are registered in the ANETI database. In addition, the ANETI database also includes certain data from the information systems of the social security funds (CNSS and CNRPS) for people employed in the structured private sector or the public sector (Ateb, 2020)<sup>86</sup>. However, despite its importance as a reference and local

<sup>85</sup> Information available on the ATCT website: <https://www.atct.tn/fr>

<sup>86</sup> Ateb, H. (2020), L'employabilité des jeunes en Tunisie: défis et opportunités, Rapport préliminaire de l'étude commandée par la GIZ sur l'employabilité en Tunisie [https://www.giz.de/en/downloads\\_els/GIZ\\_2020%20Hafedh%20ATEB\\_L%E2%80%99employabilit%C3%A9%20des%20jeunes%20en%20Tunisie-d%C3%A9fis%20et%20opportunit%C3%A9s.pdf](https://www.giz.de/en/downloads_els/GIZ_2020%20Hafedh%20ATEB_L%E2%80%99employabilit%C3%A9%20des%20jeunes%20en%20Tunisie-d%C3%A9fis%20et%20opportunit%C3%A9s.pdf)

institution, this organisation (and the mechanisms it offers) suffers from a lack of personalization to specific individual issues and adaptation to regional specificities and is not sufficiently modernized (does not sufficiently exploit the enormous potential offered by ICT). In addition, it does not provide enough mechanisms to stimulate career development and lifelong employability. Finally, in its component of stimulating employability through entrepreneurship, if this organisation has great institutional visibility and is in line with other institutions present in the regions, the entrepreneurial intentions that may have aroused generally struggle to succeed, given the lack of entrepreneurial dynamics and the incompleteness/narrowness of markets (consumers, financing, supply, etc.) in the regions. Many private recruitment firms and sites dedicated to employment have emerged to compensate for the inadequacies of ANETI. But this offer remains essentially concentrated in large cities and not very accessible to natives of landlocked regions.

**The university** plays a key role in inland regions, both in terms of its moral weight (as a place where knowledge is passed on) and its physical and cognitive proximity to the local economic and social fabric. The initiatives carried out by the **4C centres**, the teaching and academic activities linked to the promotion of entrepreneurship (raising awareness of entrepreneurship and pre-incubation of projects) and the opinions and advice given by teachers and other academic players are often highly relevant in view of their in-depth knowledge of local realities and resonate strongly with the local population. It should also be pointed out that universities in general (regardless of where they are based) play an important role in opening up career prospects. In fact, given the lack of specific institutional mechanisms for career development, it is not uncommon for employees (particularly those in the civil service) to return to the university to study for professional or research master's degrees that can open the door to promotions in their place of work. Another key university player is the **Université virtuelle de Tunis (UVT)**, which offers various forms of support and assistance to both teachers and students, whether in entrepreneurship, ICT skills or other more targeted areas of expertise. The fact remains, however, that landlocked regions, often lacking local economic dynamism and a sufficiently well-developed entrepreneurial fabric and are often not conducive to converting the learning acquired into quality employability or opening up career development prospects.

**Interpersonal relationships (family and acquaintance networks)** are undoubtedly a key source for career guidance and support in the job search. When analysed in terms of social capital, family and friends provide affective support reinforced by emotional intensity and a capital of mutual trust and reciprocity capable of providing certain solutions to individual problems of integration into the labour market. However, in the terms of Granovetter's analysis (1973<sup>87</sup>, 2000<sup>88</sup>), the resources provided by family and friends are 'strong ties' which, despite the trust and sense of security they give individuals, do not enable them to break out of their cognitive patterns and comfort zone, or to access rich, relevant information and guidance. Conversely, 'weak ties', i.e. relatively infrequent relationships and interactions outside the intimate circle, are likely to provide the informational variety needed to form decisions and engage in steps to access employment and improve employability. This is why the resources that family and friends can provide, including in terms of access to employment, remain limited.

Finally, **associations (NGOs and development associations)** are very active in the interior regions, especially since the popular uprising in 2011. These players play a key role in socio-professional integration and improving the standard of living of certain socio-demographic categories (rural women/artisans, higher education graduates, small farmers, etc.) and their approach is generally relevant because it starts from local realities and constraints and encompasses the mobilisation of other local institutional and associative players. Associations and NGOs (e.g. GIZ, Mercycorp, etc.) have played an important role in strengthening the human and social capital of the target groups, in creating and sustaining micro-businesses and in promoting and initiating concrete and successful initiatives in the field of social and solidarity-based entrepreneurship. However, as they are limited to particular socio-demographic categories and their success depends on the mobilisation of specific

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<sup>87</sup> Granovetter, M. (1973), « The strength of weak ties », American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 78, No. 6, p. 1360-1380.

<sup>88</sup> Granovetter, M. (2000), Le marché autrement : les réseaux dans l'économie, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer.

regional resources, the scope of these initiatives remains limited. What's more, given the impressive number of initiatives undertaken by associations, there is still a lack of knowledge about successful initiatives and the key factors in their success.

As for **gender discrimination**, it does not formally exist since, on the one hand, girls now have access to all courses of study and are even in the majority in certain courses and levels of higher education and, on the other hand, Tunisian labour legislation does not allow gender discrimination in recruitment or pay. However, socio-cultural considerations linked to the social pressure to marry, and the role assigned to women in the family continue to hinder women's ability to achieve their full potential in their career development. This is also reflected in the career guidance women and young women receive. It should be added that it is women from inland regions who are particularly exposed to difficulties in accessing career guidance services. Indeed, the social pressures women face often lead them to censor themselves, curb their professional ambitions and fail to realize their full potential. Many of them resort to micro-entrepreneurship, which is generally not very emancipating for women (few local opportunities, family and social constraints preventing networking and mobility, etc.).

**Other socio-cultural considerations** (the prevailing mentality associating social success with occupying high positions in government and large companies and in certain professions such as medicine and engineering; risk aversion, etc.) more generally hinder the multiplication and diversification of opportunities for access to employment and career advancement. This cultural dimension largely explains the devaluation of vocational training and the social hierarchy established between the different specialties of the baccalaureate and, consequently, the social hierarchy of university training.

Overall, the foregoing discussion highlights the main constraints on access to career development support and employment, but also shows that the difficulties identified are not insurmountable. More specifically, there are opportunities for action at four levels: 1/ Working on the cultural dimension of beliefs and prejudices in order to rehabilitate vocational training and enable women to exercise their full potential in their careers; 2/ Working to strengthen the industrial fabric, in particular by creating high-potential businesses and activities that can absorb higher education graduates; 3/ Bring graduates and institutional players in the field of employment up to date with new technologies and new professions and 4/ Encourage operators in institutional bodies dedicated to employment and careers to update themselves in terms of professional practices and to play a key role in collecting, federating and disseminating information and guidance on successful socio-professional integration initiatives, whether these initiatives are associative, regional, institutional or community-based.

To summarize, in Tunisia a key barrier to accessing career guidance services is the geographical location of individuals. More precisely, the country's inland regions are penalized: (a) in terms of quality of infrastructure and lack of economic dynamism; (b) in terms of the quality of career guidance services due to their remoteness from the dynamism of the major cities, an unsuitable offer because it is essentially designed at central level, an operation with the means at hand and the confinement of the cognitive schemas of those involved to realities that are not very diversified. While the main institutions dedicated to vocational training and integration are theoretically present throughout Tunisia, the resources (human, financial, know-how, etc.) available to these institutions in landlocked regions are limited; (c) more specifically, the human resources dedicated to career guidance are generally civil servants from the region. Given the lack of economic dynamism in the regions in question, their cognitive patterns are limited due to the repetitive and undiversified situations they have to deal with, and their lack of mobility; they learn on the job and make do with what they have, often based on their interpersonal relationships with other players in the region. To this extent, they can only reproduce existing or even outdated schemes and have difficulty engineering creative solutions. Several large-scale cooperation projects have grasped the scale of this problem and tried to respond to it. For example, the pilot project "Support for employment and vocational training stakeholders in Gabès": This project was part of the ETF's GEMM (Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean) project, set up between the MEFP and the ETF. The GEMM project aimed to consolidate regional governance of vocational training and employment to improve the employability of jobseekers in the regions.

## 8. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

74% of Tunisians use the internet, of which 85% access it via mobile devices. Additionally, 91% of internet users utilise social media<sup>89</sup>. 65.6% of Tunisians own a smartphone, but only 44.4% own a computer, while the use of the internet for applying to job offers does not exceed 0.3% of the total usage among Tunisian internet users<sup>90</sup>. Overall, more than a third of the population (37%) is digitally very included<sup>91</sup> with an average score of 84%<sup>92</sup>. The least included are those with a low level of education; aged 45 or over; with a low household income. Tunisians' appetite for the internet is confirmed (score 84), as are their skills. However, the types of uses are mainly social and informative (scores of 83 and 89 respectively). Productive and administrative uses are less common (scores of 48 and 8 respectively). In particular, job searching, which is likely to be used by many people, obtains relatively low scores. The use of administrative services is still embryonic (score less than 10), with significant differences between different groups<sup>93</sup>. The Tunisia Digital 2021-2025 strategy recognizes digital technology as a vector of social and economic development and includes initiatives that act in favour of multiple value-creating channels via digital: access for all to high and very high-speed internet, easier access to public services through their digitalization, the digitalization of administration, job and value creation through the development of a startup ecosystem, support for innovation.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), using information and communication technologies (ICT) to deliver information eliminates time and space constraints and increases visibility and access to information. In addition, ICT-based communication channels help to increase individual access to professional support. Digital and distance tools for career development support can include: Tools for evaluating attitudes and skills relating to specific career pathways, online career assessments, websites to explore occupational, educational, training, and employment information, including interviews with professionals, databases for occupational educational, training, and employment opportunities, tools to maintain a CV and a career portfolio (educational, training, employment, and volunteer work), instructions in career decision making, communication with service providers, and communication with other persons making career decisions<sup>94</sup>. In Tunisia, various career development support services and activities are currently using digital technologies, with different services and targets.

### 8.1 Digitization of the public career guidance services

In an effort to inform citizens about the digital services available to them, the web portal of the Tunisian government lists all online services with hyperlinks, which can be filtered by the type of target user and the ministry providing the service<sup>95</sup>. The Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training provides about ten services, with the majority being administered by ANETI, The National Agency for Employment and Self Employment, ranging from registering a candidate in the ANETI job seeker space, to consulting job offers and requests, searching for employment for individuals with special needs, and providing job search advice. A set of resources is made available online, gathering advice and best practices in job search techniques. However, career guidance from advisors is provided in

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<sup>89</sup> Survey by the National Telecommunications Observatory (INT), 2021, on Internet and Social Media Usage in Tunisia: <https://www.intt.tn/upload/files/Rapport%20Enqu%C3%AAt%20.pdf>

<sup>90</sup> Survey by Sigma Conseil, published by the INT in December 2023:

<https://www.intt.tn/upload/files/Rapport%20Enqu%C3%AAt%20Usage%20Num%C3%A9rique%202023.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> It therefore differs from international indices such as the Network Readiness Index which aims to compare the overall level of the country: study in collaboration between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Tunisian Ministry of Communication Technologies (MTC) conducted by Deloitte France

<sup>92</sup> The score of 100 represents a perfect scenario, and the score of 50 acts as a threshold

<sup>93</sup> [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-03/IIN\\_Exec%20Summary.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-03/IIN_Exec%20Summary.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---ifp\\_skills/documents/publication/wcms\\_841125.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_841125.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> <http://fr.tunisie.gov.tn/6-services-en-ligne.htm>

person. While being well supported, these online services are rather basic, with limited user interaction and lacking intelligent skill-matching or other advanced features.

However, ANETI is moving forward with a strategic reform, Vision 2030, for serving more job seekers with better quality employment. The World Bank is supporting this reform, in particular, the digitalization of services and the dematerialization of services and internal procedures through the project “Digitizing Employment Services in Tunisia” (2023- 2025). A diagnostic of ANETI’s existing Information System (IS) highlighted various issues, notably a fragmented system with various IS that were poorly interconnected and an IT system that was not meeting the needs of both internal (ANETI staff, including job counsellors and other function support) and external users (job seekers and enterprises). The project aims to strengthen the digital foundations of ANETI through the implementation of several activities such as setting up the governance, organisation, and information system management, bringing greater efficiency to all support functions through electronic management of mail and documents, upgrading the information technology infrastructure and security, including equipment, materials, and software, and the matching solution to match job offers with job seekers<sup>96</sup>.

Currently, ANETI is experimenting with some digital tools both in terms of support and guidance as well as employment programs, including profiling tools within pilot employment offices. Furthermore, still within the framework of the same project, the ANETI Academy Digital (AAD) is currently being implemented. The objective of the AAD is to enhance individual and organisational effectiveness by connecting employees with multimodal learning offers. After the selection and installation of the learning system (in progress), the project will enter another phase, which involves operationalizing the system by appointing and training stakeholders in conducting online learning, designing educational content, and assembling courses on the platform. The AAD would be a catalyst for rapidly developing skills, which will contribute to improving the services provided to job seekers and business leaders<sup>97</sup>.

## 8.2 Digital career services related to the education sector

The Virtual University of Tunis (UVT) is a public institution founded in 2002 to develop web-based and internet-based courses and university curricula and to ensure wider access to lifelong learning and continuing education throughout the country. This multidisciplinary university aims to provide its students with opportunities for professionalising courses tailored to the needs of the scientific and socio-economic environment as well as to the needs of the Tunisian and international labour market. Since the pandemic and up to the present, UVT has put its distance learning platform “Environment Digital Work, ENT” (<https://ent.uvt.rnu.tn/>) available to universities, higher education and research establishments and their teachers and students. This ENT platform is an Environment Digital Work offering a LMS (Learning Management System), complete Moodle-based solution for distance learning. UVT also offers a range of courses related to soft skills and career choices, one can mention the course on soft skills and professional orientation linked to career guidance by the EU funded project RAQMYAT. The widespread adoption of UVT online courses positions UVT as a key player in the digitalisation of the career guidance services.

As it comes to university orientation, all information related to choices, scores, and orientation guides is available on the public platform <https://www.orientation.tn>, which supports students in making their choices. In this context, one noteworthy initiative is the platform <https://orientini.com>, designed for various stakeholders (students, job seekers, and even Guidance Counsellors), which provides a range of **services such as personality and career interest tests** based on the RIASEC model, and Baccalaureate SMS Score Calculation for University Orientation in Tunisian Public Universities and the Tunisian Military Academies, in order to estimate the chance of being accepted into the chosen university. It also **provides job profiles and compiles a comprehensive set of information in support of school and university orientation**. The platform also offers an **online counselling space**; <https://www.orientini.com/Conseil-Orientation>, where users can type a message to ask

<sup>96</sup> The World Bank, Digitizing employment Services in Tunisia, Project Information Document, February, 2023

<sup>97</sup> [https://www.emploi.nat.tn/ckeditor/ckfinder/userfiles/files/NEWS%20N9%201\(2\).pdf](https://www.emploi.nat.tn/ckeditor/ckfinder/userfiles/files/NEWS%20N9%201(2).pdf)

questions about public university orientation, studies, or private universities. Answers are given by Guidance Counsellors (“Conseillers d’orientation”).

Regarding specific digital services for career guidance, the ATUGE Association of Tunisians of the Grandes Ecoles, in partnership with the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, has been organising, since 2021 and up to the present, the annual edition of the **Careers and Orientation Forum**, a 100% digital forum, which made it possible to reach high school graduates from the 24 governorates, in order to help them choose their post high school study directions. The forum targets young graduates and also retraining students in order to improve their employability by helping them make the right career choices. It allows visitors to interact with several companies and universities through their virtual stands. During the 2022 edition, 7000 people participated, including 91.6% high school students. More than 70 speakers were mobilised, around 20 panels were held, presenting various professions as well as the study courses to get there. Virtual stands of public and private universities were visited by high school students and students looking for information on the professions of the future and trendy sectors in Tunisia and around the world. 21 video clips presenting the professions were also broadcasted. The live broadcast on social networks reached more than 200000 people and generated 50000 interactions<sup>98</sup>.

Continuing in the context of higher education, 4Cs career centres have actively worked on connecting and networking all centres with various partners in the socio-economic world through a common **national platform** ([www.4C.tn](http://www.4C.tn)). Unfortunately, the sustainability of this project could not be maintained, notably due to dependence on funding (PromESSE PAQ 4C Competitive Fund) and a lack of project continuity following political changes. However, the 4Cs continue to offer free certifications in digital skills to all Tunisian students, particularly through the Microsoft Imagine Academy platform (MSIA).

Regarding secondary education, in response to the urgency imposed by the pandemic, the National Center for Educational Technologies (CNTE), affiliated with the Ministry of Education, launched the **distance education platform** [www.scolarite.education.tn](http://www.scolarite.education.tn). This platform was built to enable teachers to communicate with their students, share interactive lessons, assignments, and services, with personalised spaces dedicated to students, teachers, and parents. Currently, the platform provides various **services to parents related to schooling and allows them to choose the specialization that their children will follow for their secondary studies and their baccalaureate**.

Within the framework of entrepreneurship support, various initiatives for launching digital platforms exist, such as the national entrepreneurship portal [www.Moubader.tn](http://www.Moubader.tn), or [www.financini.org.tn](http://www.financini.org.tn), a digital platform that brings together financing and support mechanisms for entrepreneurs in Tunisia. In addition, a large part of the events in the support ecosystem are held in hybrid format. As an example, we can cite the Riyeda event in its 11th edition, co-organized by APII, a public sector actor, and TPM, a private sector actor. The event brings together all stakeholders in entrepreneurship in a hybrid format, in person at “the City of Culture” and online on the Eventoo platform.

With regard to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in career guidance, it remains marginal in this field for the time being. However, given the permanent mismatch between the needs of companies and the supply of skills, the opportunities offered by AI are more likely to penalise hiring in certain intermediate or even higher level positions rather than allowing a qualitative refinement of information and communication on training and employment offers.

In summary, given the disparities in digital inclusion among citizens, several avenues for medium and long-term improvement are proposed in section 11, based on the various surveys and studies, in particular, studies by the Tunisian Institute of Strategic Studies (ITES, *Institut tunisien des études stratégiques*)<sup>99</sup>. On a national level, promoting the deployment of digital infrastructure, including fibre optics, would be a catalyst for the use of all online public or private services.

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<sup>98</sup> <https://www.atuge.org/fr/article/forum-des-metiers-et-de-l-orientation-bilan-de-la-2eme-edition/07/07/2022/80>

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.ites.tn/post/63d8e00a812b45414fb0067a>

Regarding existing digital career services, it is clear that there are numerous initiatives, with disparities in terms of quality, support, and impact. Often, these isolated initiatives are not part of a cohesive strategy and action plan. For example, some ministries work together but on an ad hoc basis, like in the context of university orientation, but with information systems that do not have the necessary interoperability.

# 9. QUALITY OF THE PROVISION OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SERVICES WITHIN A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

## 9.1 Standards

Tunisia has had a relatively strong employment and vocational training system in place since the 1990s. Human resources involved in career guidance and employability support are committed overall and frequently participate in trainings and national and international events (seminars, symposia, etc.), as well as in international or national programs and projects involving working with different decisive players in the field (ILO, WB, GIZ, Enda, etc.). However, whether they work in emblematic institutions such as ANETI, in public entrepreneurial support structures or in other dedicated institutions, they mostly learn on the job and, therefore, require rapid and regular upgrading and updating of their professional practices, which are often out of step with the rapidly changing needs of businesses. Furthermore, as highlighted in Section 5 “Coordination and cooperation”, 5.2 “Key civil society stakeholders”, even if civil society organisations have significantly supported the advancement of the career development support system in Tunisia, effects are not systematic and not sustainable.

There are also no practitioner associations bringing together practitioners from employment, education, youth and social inclusion sectors to facilitate exchange of points of view and experience, and on the refinement of professional practices. This lack of a formal professional organisation for career guidance practitioners in Tunisia impedes the progression of career guidance as a recognized profession. Moreover, employees at prominent career guidance institutions such as ANETI and ATFP may come from various backgrounds, lacking stringent certification prerequisites. There are associations for HR specialists, psychologists, and other related professionals but without a role in career guidance. The increased professionalization of career guidance practitioners in Tunisia is hampered by this absence.

Currently, guidance practitioners in Tunisia pursue two fields of training and they have different qualifications. Firstly, for those who want to work as school and university counsellors in lycées, the University of Tunis offers a master’s degree program. It is legally required for this employment to have such a qualification. The training program’s content and approach are significantly impacted by the training that is given to French “conseiller d’orientation psychologue” (COP) employees by the Ministry of Education in France. Secondly, the rigorous certification requirements for practitioners working in lycées are not applied to the recruitment of individuals who conduct career advising activities in ANETI and ATFP centres. The guiding personnel of ANETI and ATFP may hold degrees in psychology, social sciences, education, training, or unrelated fields. “Practitioners who work in lycées define themselves as a “corps de conseillers d’orientation”, an informal network that concerns itself with their professional interests and working conditions. Practitioners working at ATFP have a strong informal network that similarly concerns itself with professional interests and working conditions. In general, each group of practitioners (lycées, ANETI, ATFP) works in isolation from the others. The “conseillers d’orientation” in the lycées are very protective of their job title with reference to the titles used by practitioners in the other two groups”<sup>100</sup>.

Three positions of counsellors are created at ANETI, namely, counsellors in information and professional orientation, counsellors in placement and professional insertion, and counsellors assisting in promoting self-employment. Recruitment for these positions requires solely obtaining a bachelor’s degree in one of these fields: psychology, social sciences, education, and training<sup>101</sup>. Each

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<sup>100</sup> Mejri, A., & McCarthy, J. (2017). Careers Information and Guidance in Tunisia. Career Guidance and Livelihood Planning Across the Mediterranean, pp 143-144.

<sup>101</sup> Ben Youssef, S, Naceur, M, Guesmi, M. 2020. Career and vocational counselling in Tunisia: towards a professionalization of the job of vocational counselor. Revue ECOTIDI.

employment office deploys a professional orientation counsellor whose main objective is to assist graduates in finding employment and future entrepreneurs in starting their own businesses.

According to Mejri, A., & McCarthy, J. (2017)<sup>102</sup> Tunisians' perceptions of career guidance is: "Given the paucity of career guidance provision in the education and training sectors as a whole and the absence of a national careers information system, most young people and adults have no concept of what career guidance is and its benefits, and where to obtain it. For many Tunisians the choice of learning and work opportunities is a haphazard process built on anecdotal information about the labour market. The translation of the terms "orientation professionnelle" into Arabic causes real problems for the social appreciation of career guidance. The most frequent understanding in Arabic is that "orientation professionnelle" refers to guidance for vocational training. Given the Tunisian societal perception of VET, many Tunisians feel that "orientation professionnelle" has nothing to offer them as they are trying to avoid VET as the preferred choice for their children. Thus, in the lycées, the law supports "orientation scolaire et universitaire" and guidance practitioners have no role in promoting VET learning opportunities". Such an image needs to be repaired based on joint quality standards for guidance across sectors and a changed practice.

Cooperation projects with different national and international actors are often an opportunity for staff operating in institutional employment support structures, if not to fully master the standards in this area, at least to upgrade and update/increase their qualification levels and, consequently, the quality of their interventions. Thus, major projects have been carried out, such as the Support Program for Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and the Employability of Graduates (*Programme d'appui à l'Education, à la Formation Professionnelle, l'Enseignement Supérieur et à l'Employabilité des diplômés*, "PEFESE"), financed by the EU. The project aims to strengthen the technical capacities of central structures and institutions responsible for vocational training and employment, in partnership with other stakeholders: ministries of education, higher education and youth; social partners; civil society and the public sector. It pursues the general objective of dynamically adapting human resources development systems to improve the training/employment match and strengthen the national career guidance system. This is an ambitious project that concerns all the sub-systems (education, vocational training, higher education) that prepare Tunisian citizens for the Tunisian labour market, as well as the labour market organisations that help with professional integration. In particular, it concerns the actors and activities (information and guidance) that support Tunisian citizens in making transitions within and between these sub-systems, towards and into the labour market. Other projects, such as the "Training and Professional Integration Support Program" (*Programme d'appui à la Formation et à l'Insertion professionnelle*) - "PAFIP", funded by AFD, and the "Support for employment and vocational training stakeholders in Gabès" pilot project, part of ETF's GEMM project (Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean) established between the MEFP and ETF, aim to enhance the effectiveness of the vocational training system and improve its governance at both national and regional levels.

## 9.2 Staffing

The ANETI network is made up of multiservice employment offices, specialized offices for executives and "Espaces Entreprendre". Despite resource discrepancies between urban centers and remote regions, which also encompass variations in space and infrastructure, ANETI extends its reach across all 24 governorates of the country. The majority of ANETI's staff are university-educated advisers, most of whom work in the field of information and vocational guidance/retraining advisers, placement and integration advisers, recruitment advisers for companies (teams of occupational psychologists specialising in vocational selection and recruitment advice), executives specializing in employment policies and prospecting, sectoral analyses, information and awareness-raising, skills diagnosis (and a team dedicated to the "Tunisian Skills and Professions Repository", "*Référentiel Tunisien des Métiers et des Compétences*" -"RTMC"), professional guidance and integration support, support for socially

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<sup>102</sup> Mejri, A., & McCarthy, J. (2017). Careers Information and Guidance in Tunisia. Career Guidance and Livelihood Planning Across the Mediterranean, 139–150.

vulnerable people, soft skills development, CV writing, support in implementing career plans. While the exact staff-to-jobseeker ratio remains undisclosed, ANETI's annual activity report for 2020, amidst the Covid crisis, highlights several staff-related challenges. These issues substantially account for the significant gaps in ANETI's goal attainment. They include a shortage of advisers in vocational information and guidance units, especially in remote areas, insufficient training for advisers across most regions, particularly in support services, and elevated work pressure hindering prompt data processing<sup>103</sup>.

In educational settings such as schools, colleges, and lycées, the role of career guidance counsellors is institutionalized. School and university information counsellors, as well as education counsellors, are integrated into the educational and administrative staff according by law. Indeed, in 1992, the position of 'regional teacher coordinator for school and university guidance' was created, followed by the establishment by decree in 1993 of the body of Information and Guidance Advisers (CIO) in lycées, at the same time as the creation of a specialized postgraduate course at *the Institut Supérieur de l'Education et de la Formation Continue* (ISEFC)<sup>104</sup>. The 2002 law on education and teaching supported pupils' right to information and introduced the principles of gradualism (two-stage guidance at lycée) and flexibility (reorientation - assessment - individual interviews), as well as the creation of listening and counselling offices geared more towards providing individual support for secondary school pupils<sup>105</sup>. However, a cross-check of the Ministry of Education's figures for the 2022/23 school year<sup>106</sup> shows that, in state schools, the average ratio of pedagogical assistance staff to number of pupils has hovered around 0.06% (1 advisor to ~7.000 learners) and 0.07% between the five school years 2018/19 and 2022/23 and that, in state secondary schools, the average ratio of practitioner advisers to pupils in preparatory and secondary education has remained at around 0.3% over the same period.

In universities, there is a notable absence of dedicated human resources specifically qualified and officially designated for student guidance. Guidance is provided more on a group basis (information meetings and seminars on the courses offered by the institution and/or on highly employable fields of study) and informally (exchanges between students and lecturers in the context of courses or requests for guidance from students). In reality, there is a lack of comprehensive vocational information and data on job prospects at all levels of education. Guidance counsellors often lack crucial insights into career options and labour market trends, leading to decisions based on anecdotal advice rather than comprehensive information. Both education and higher education sectors fail to systematically gather data on graduates' future paths, and there's a significant absence of information on pupils and students who drop out<sup>107</sup>.

The human resources dedicated to improving employability and career development in specialist institutions generally come from the public administration and/or operate on a civil service basis. As these institutions suffer from a certain rigidity and formalism and are not very digitalized, they do not allow for the desired responsiveness. In this regard, it should be emphasized that the low influx of project leaders in entrepreneurial support structures, the rather archaic functioning of companies and sectors which provide the most employment, and the lack of intense and supported interactions between institutions dedicated to employability and the industry are not conducive to refining the

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<sup>103</sup> ANETI's annual activity report for 2020,

[https://www.emploi.nat.tn/ckeditor/ckfinder/userfiles/files/rapport\\_aneti2020.pdf](https://www.emploi.nat.tn/ckeditor/ckfinder/userfiles/files/rapport_aneti2020.pdf), accessed on 05/06/2024.

<sup>104</sup> Décret n 93-1468 du 5 Juillet 1993.

<sup>105</sup> Ben Youssef, S., Mabrouk, M., & Naceur, A. (2023), Argumentaire Colloque International « L'orientation scolaire, universitaire et professionnelle en Tunisie : quelles politiques et quelles pratiques pour un système unifié ? » 20-21 octobre 2023,

[https://orientunisie2023.sciencesconf.org/data/pages/Argumenatire\\_Colloque\\_Orientation\\_Tunisie\\_2023\\_VF\\_Diffusion\\_12\\_06\\_2023.pdf](https://orientunisie2023.sciencesconf.org/data/pages/Argumenatire_Colloque_Orientation_Tunisie_2023_VF_Diffusion_12_06_2023.pdf)

<sup>106</sup> [http://www.edunet.tn/article\\_education/statistiques/stat2022\\_2023/education\\_ar.pdf](http://www.edunet.tn/article_education/statistiques/stat2022_2023/education_ar.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> John McCarthy, Rapport intermédiaire sous-phase 1 de phase 1 du Composante C « Mise en place d'un dispositif d'information et d'orientation », Mission d'assistance technique au profit du Ministère de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi en Tunisie dans le cadre du Programme d'appui à l'Education, à la Formation Professionnelle, l'Enseignement Supérieur et à l'Employabilité des diplômés (PEFESE), 22 Avril 2014, [http://www.reformeformation.gov.tn/fileadmin/etudes\\_publications/Rapport-%20PEFESE-Composante%20C%20-Information%20et%20Orientation%20Professionnelle.pdf](http://www.reformeformation.gov.tn/fileadmin/etudes_publications/Rapport-%20PEFESE-Composante%20C%20-Information%20et%20Orientation%20Professionnelle.pdf)

professional practices of human resources dedicated to employment and careers. It is therefore a vicious circle, which reaffirms the fact that the relative modesty of the effectiveness of these dedicated institutions is more of a structural nature than linked to human failings.

Consequently, opportunities to improve staff performance in employment support and career development support could include : 1/ Better targeting, when they are recruited, of suitable profiles in terms of qualifications (specialism and professional experience); 2/ Long placements in equivalent structures in the countries of the North, enabling them to acquire the appropriate professional practices and support mechanisms; 3/ Strengthening these human resources in their ability to use ICTs so that they can quickly draw on the most relevant information for their action, and 4/ At institutional level, strengthening business intelligence and information systems and working towards better informational interaction with industry components, on both an interpersonal and inter-organisational basis.

### 9.3 Quality of data and information

One of the main aims of institutions and programs dedicated to employability, career guidance and employment support is obviously to make information and guidance easily available to job and training seekers and, also, to collect information from potential employers on available job opportunities and the current and future requirements of companies in terms of human resources, skills and qualifications. In addition, this information collected also allows career guidance and employment support structures to readjust/calibrate their current and future activities and programs.

By virtue of its mission, ANETI analyses and forecasts changes in the labour market. ANETI therefore makes a significant contribution to improving knowledge of employment potential (making available and updating information on job opportunities) and to better regulation of the labour market. However, the failure to operationalise "trades and skills" reference systems prevents optimal guidance, profiling of jobseekers and a high degree of fluidity in intermediation on the labour market. In addition, the system misses out on a large proportion of placement opportunities, since information on activities in the informal sector, as well as on the learning and experience acquired by individuals in this sector, is not integrated into the system. In this regard, offering career guidance, actively reaching out to various groups of population, and conducting awareness-raising initiatives could facilitate individuals' transition from the informal to the formal sector. Therefore, a crucial aspect of employee training within ANETI and similar career guidance frameworks should focus on identifying skills needs and developing skills of informally employed. This approach would eventually streamline the integration of data pertaining to the informal sector into the ANETI information system. Finally, despite ANETI's efforts to establish a labour market infrastructure, which comes close to what might be called a **labour market information system** (LMIS), on the one hand, this information system can be improved, as it does not take informal activities into account, and on the other, the analyses and forecasts generated by ANETI primarily serve its internal purposes and those of its hierarchy. These valuable insights are not widely disseminated or utilized by other organisations involved in professional integration and career development support, except for academic researchers and authors of career guidance reports.

Despite the mentioned shortcomings, ANETI's information system harbours a wealth of knowledge that can inspire action and, thus, holds significant potential for performance. This is attributed to its capability for real-time data recording and processing. In addition, the overwhelming majority of higher education graduates (84%) are registered in the ANETI database. This database also integrates certain data from the information systems of the social security funds (CNSS and CNRPS) for people employed in the structured private sector or the public sector. The ANETI database offers the possibility of multi-criteria consultation of all the data recorded and automatically produces statistical tables. The main indicators used are as follows: (a) the number of registrations and the number of re-registrations (of jobseekers) by exact date and service bureau; (b) the number of new registrations by exact date; (c) the number of jobseekers by date of last registration or re-registration, and in particular the number of jobseekers at the end of the month (DEFM), conventionally defined as those who have registered or re-registered (clocked in or out) during the last two months; (d) the number of ALMP

beneficiaries (contracts signed, contracts terminated, contracts in progress, etc.) by type of programme, date (start, end) and host company; (e) job offers received, by date and by company; (f) placements made, by exact date and by company; (g) all training or support operations for the benefit of project holders (self-employment or micro-enterprises); (h) information from social security databases showing the dates and duration of contributions for employees and companies.

These **statistics** can be broken down by date (with detailed history), age, gender, place of residence, level of education, diploma (type, exact title of diploma, specialty, training institution, year obtained), home office, all services received (date, nature, etc.), relevant information on employers and job offers: socio-demographic characteristics of companies, sector of activity, location of company, occupation required, type of contract, training and experience required, etc.<sup>108</sup>. Overall, however, the same obstacles block the fluidity of information and its visibility for stakeholders: the plurality of integration strategies, stakeholders, and mechanisms and the consequent density of information, and sometimes, also, the competition rather than complementarity between organisations, the persistence of a significant distance between institutions and the rapidly evolving needs of the industry, and institutional constraints on reactivity due to functioning which remains essentially administrative.

The university plays an important role in disseminating information on career guidance, employability schemes, programs and opportunities. However, the universities being in a logic of emulation with each other for obvious reasons of classification and this even if they collaborate together on several projects linked to employability, the scope of the information provided by the university remains limited to its own training offers and its internship and employment agreements with certain components of the socio-economic world. On the other hand, **university observatories**, which are often run on a shoestring, with the free labour of administrative and teaching staff at the university and its affiliated establishments, mainly collect statistics on the number of students per course/academic year (and changes in these figures), work placements and host structures, as well as information on students' medium-term career paths after graduation: higher level studies, mobility abroad, first job (after how many months of waiting, nature of the job held, employing organisation, etc.). This information, which is already difficult to collect in the absence of dedicated and paid human resources, is not sufficiently analysed in depth and quickly fed back into the training system (responsiveness in terms of courses and curricula offered) and into the structures (particularly the 4C centres)/mechanisms/actions for developing employability.

## 9.4 Monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback

A key role related to monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback is played by the **National Observatory for Employment and Qualifications** (ONEQ), which is an institutional body reporting to the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training. One of its essential missions is the monitoring and evaluation of vocational training and education policies and those relating to the labour market regulation. In addition, there are evaluation mechanisms inherent to the programs themselves (which generally remain at the periodic descriptive stage - annual; multiannual - and do not give rise to major consequential adjustments), as well as larger-scale projects, dedicated to the evaluation of employability and career development support mechanisms, generally carried out by international organisations (which mobilize significant resources, generally give rise to more detailed and multi-factorial assessments and have a significant impact on public policies), such as, for example, the report produced by the OECD in 2012 on the promotion of student entrepreneurship in Tunisian universities<sup>109</sup>, or the reports regularly produced by the ILO and the WB.

<sup>108</sup> Ateb, H. (2020), L'employabilité des jeunes en Tunisie: défis et opportunités, Rapport préliminaire de l'étude commandée par la GIZ sur l'employabilité en Tunisie, [https://www.giz.de/en/downloads\\_els/GIZ\\_2020%20Hafedh%20ATEB\\_L%E2%80%99employabilit%C3%A9%20des%20jeunes%20en%20Tunisie-d%C3%A9fis%20et%20opportunit%C3%A9s.pdf](https://www.giz.de/en/downloads_els/GIZ_2020%20Hafedh%20ATEB_L%E2%80%99employabilit%C3%A9%20des%20jeunes%20en%20Tunisie-d%C3%A9fis%20et%20opportunit%C3%A9s.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> Rapport OCDE, Promouvoir l'entrepreneuriat dans les universités tunisiennes, Editions OCDE, 2012, [Online]. Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k913fsf9w44-fr>

In addition, as employability has become a fundamental mission of higher education, **observatories** have been set up in universities to monitor the professional integration of graduates in the short and medium term. Furthermore, there is significant research carried out on the effectiveness of professional integration mechanisms, even if it is undertaken in different frameworks/disciplines (entrepreneurship, work and social studies, territories, gender studies, etc.). However, insofar as career guidance initiatives remain at the discretion of university managers (rectors, directors of institutions, study and placement managers, bachelor's and master's coordinators) and teacher-researchers and are not institutionalized in the sense of formal/dedicated mechanisms, the evaluation to which these initiatives may give rise also remains at an informal level. Besides, insofar as career guidance services are informal and students are not obliged to use them, it is difficult to estimate the number of students and parents who access these guidance services in relation to the total number of pupils and parents, and to know the real impact. Little is also known about the effectiveness of career guidance in (primary and secondary) education, and about related M&E mechanisms. Overall, it is well documented that the majority of professional decisions stem from information sourced from family and friends or anecdotes from former students. For most young people in Tunisia, the career path is predominantly a trial-and-error process. Consequently, the lack of career guidance services imposes a substantial cost on taxpayers, the (young) individuals involved, their families, and the economy as a whole<sup>110</sup>.

Therefore, the M&E mechanisms can be improved. Indeed, on the one hand, Tunisia should go beyond first-level indicators such as the number of training courses given or the number of candidates registered in programs and go beyond the reflex that training and support systems, whatever they are, can only be beneficial. On the other hand, substantial human and financial resources should be allocated for the long-term monitoring of program beneficiaries, especially since a good portion of these beneficiaries are difficult to follow over time, especially when they are engaged in informal and/or temporary work. Finally, the evaluation effort should be shared between the different stakeholders and guided by a goal and an overall coordination effort in the sense that the different issues and components of employability and the development of career cannot be compartmentalized and treated in a partial manner. In this sense, decision-makers would benefit from listing the numerous academic research carried out on the evaluation of employability systems and drawing the consequences in their actions, but also encouraging academic studies on fine-grained questions and aspects not sufficiently explored in the field of employment. But more importantly, it is crucial to consult the primary stakeholders in career guidance, namely the general public of both young and adults, to gather their needs, experiences and insights on career guidance services and how they could be enhanced.

To sum up, there is therefore considerable room for improvement in the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms used. More specifically, it is recommended to: (1) institutionalize monitoring and evaluation, both on a cultural level (eliminating the culture of avoidance) and organisational level (providing formal and systematic methods for M&E mechanisms, which are operationalizable and understandable by those who are concerned); the cross-sectorial and multi-organisational aspects needs to be considered to analyse the interplay of various stakeholders and sectors, (2) devote the necessary (permanent) financial resources to it; (3) go beyond first-level indicators such as the number of training courses provided or the number of candidates enrolled in programmes; and (4) finally, take advantage of (fragmented) academic research in this area by synthesizing it, and to involve the academic world in multidisciplinary projects dedicated to evaluation and the assessment of policy and service effectiveness.

In addition, career guidance services would benefit from being aligned with standards that are currently lacking and it was suggested that aligning the entire support system with a fully operational

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<sup>110</sup> John McCarthy, Rapport intermédiaire sous-phase 1 de phase 1 du Composante C « Mise en place d'un dispositif d'information et d'orientation », Mission d'assistance technique au profit du Ministère de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi en Tunisie dans le cadre du Programme d'appui à l'Education, à la Formation Professionnelle, l'Enseignement Supérieur et à l'Employabilité des diplômés (PEFESE), 22 Avril 2014, [http://www.reformeformation.gov.tn/fileadmin/etudes\\_publications/Rapport-%20PEFESE-Composante%20C%20-Information%20et%20Orientation%20Professionnelle.pdf](http://www.reformeformation.gov.tn/fileadmin/etudes_publications/Rapport-%20PEFESE-Composante%20C%20-Information%20et%20Orientation%20Professionnelle.pdf)

national qualifications system could be a guarantee of quality and give coherence to interventions throughout the career support value chain from education to employment, youth and social inclusions sectors. Further, ways of improving the performance of human resources dedicated to professional integration could consist of: (1) refinement of staff recruitment criteria, in line with the specific requirements of the support services provided (greater diversification of profiles, career paths and qualifications more in line with the positions, etc.); (2) more mobility and regular immersive experiences in highly dynamic and competitive work environments. More specifically, it is recommended to make mobility for counsellors mandatory during the qualification period (for learning and internship/apprenticeship) so that those residing and - in the future - working in remote areas outside of larger cities get to know the dynamic reality elsewhere; and (3) capacity-building in the use of ICTs to improve the responsiveness and relevance of actions.

# 10. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

## Summary of key findings

The Tunisian context provides challenges and opportunities related to career development and employment support, especially related to youth and education system. Despite a decrease in overall unemployment rates, challenges persist, including gender disparities, regional inequalities, and mismatches between skills and job opportunities. Efforts are underway to improve education quality, enhance vocational training, and align training programs with labour market demands.

Career guidance services have evolved since the 1990s, expanding from educational guidance to broader career support initiatives. However, challenges such as coordination among regulatory bodies and reliance on informal guidance sources remain. The government prioritizes education and has introduced reforms to enhance student guidance rights and improve employability. Still, there is a need to balance academic training with practical skills and ensure better coordination among stakeholders.

The 2023-2025 development plan based on a vision called Tunisia 2035 emphasizes human capital as crucial for inclusive development, aiming to elevate Tunisia's Human Development Index. However, challenges persist, including high unemployment rates among recent graduates. Efforts by ministries and international organisations focus on skills development, job creation, and entrepreneurship, but there is a need for more explicit emphasis on career guidance within these strategies.

Funding for career guidance services comes from both domestic and foreign sources, with significant government allocations and support from entities like the European Union. Challenges include ensuring effective implementation, coordination, and sustainability. Access to career guidance services in landlocked regions faces geographical disparities and resource limitations, requiring tailored regional initiatives and enhanced information systems. Many ongoing cooperation projects aim to improve regional governance and support employment. Digital technology offers opportunities to enhance career development support including access to guidance, with initiatives to digitize public services, provide online education, and facilitate virtual career events. Challenges include disparities in digital inclusion and fragmentation among digital initiatives.

Lastly, there are no cross-sectorial standards for career guidance that would ensure clear qualification, service standards and a joint understanding of the outcome of services, i.e. career management skills. Also, the number of staff appears inadequate for the mission of guidance service provision. Existing data and information for the use of guidance are insufficient, existing capacities are not used to the full extent possible in ANETI, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are either not in place, or not focused on assessing effectiveness of policies and services. Hence, ensuring the quality of career development support services involves aligning with standards, addressing challenges at the regional level, improving data quality and information dissemination, and institutionalizing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Overall, while Tunisia faces various challenges in career development and employment support, concerted efforts across sectors and stakeholders can lead to more effective and inclusive career guidance services, contributing to inclusive economic growth and social development. Furthermore, by rationalizing resources and efforts (avoiding redundancy of initiatives and giving greater clarity to what already exists), capitalizing on what has already been done, and trying to bring the numerous and important projects in progress to their successful conclusion, the career guidance system in Tunisia could show significantly superior performance. In conclusion, the outcome of existing multiple efforts to promote employability and entrepreneurship, as main focus so far, could be enhanced by systematically setting up career guidance policies and integrating career education and guidance from early primary education onwards next to offering career guidance for adults and disadvantaged groups.

## Key priorities

Three key priorities stemming from the review are:

1. On a strategic level, coordination and cooperation in support of guidance is a key priority, which involves (a) the establishment of a cross-sector coordination mechanism, and (b) the development of a national strategy for career guidance in a lifelong perspective across sectors that feeds into existing employment, education, youth and social inclusion strategies/laws.
2. At operational level, first, the professionalization of career guidance practitioners should be ensured through occupational standards and a qualification valid across sectors, and
3. In parallel to point 2, enhancing digital career guidance services should be prioritized.

## Detailed recommendations

The recommendations do not represent final solutions but are aimed at guiding policy and practice discussions. They follow the key pillars of this report and cover system, provider and practitioner levels:

## Policy framework

### Short-term

- Analyze this report that describes the existing policies and services related to career guidance in order to map missing services e.g. in primary and secondary education including VET that can prevent negative education and employment outcomes; analyse the content of the services and assess them against international practice of career education focused on the development of career management skills, and propose policy reforms based on the analysis (e.g. integration of career education in primary education).
- Give youth centres in Tunisia an official mandate in career guidance to ensure capacity and resources for this important out-of-education support following a personalized and needs-based approach that should also include outreach to young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and other disadvantaged groups.
- Specify in legal documents the roles and tasks of school and university information counsellors, as well as education counsellors, that are integrated into the educational and administrative staff according to the Law on the Orientation of Education and School Teaching
- Ensure a legal base civil servants at ATFP providing information, guidance and support to young people before and throughout their training in the ARE (Accompaniment and Relation with the Environment) department, and specify in legal documents their roles and tasks.

### Medium- to long-term

- Ensure capacity in career guidance within the National Center of Continual Training and Professional Promotion (CNFCPP) to increase uptake of offers by businesses, workers, and professionals through moving beyond mere information about trainings
- Develop a national strategy for career guidance across sectors that feeds into existing employment, education, youth and social inclusion strategies/laws. Indeed, we have shown that various strategies and mechanisms are being put into operation (promotion of entrepreneurship, additional training to increase employability, personal development courses, active encouragement to adopt the use of ICTs, etc.). However, these programmes (and the institutions that initiate and implement them) suffer from a lack of coherence and are not guided by a hierarchy of national priorities. As a result, they resemble disparate initiatives undertaken according to the opportunities for financial and technical support obtained, in a country with limited resources. This is the highest priority area for work to give visibility and fluidity to the institutional actions undertaken in favour of employment and careers. This requires a national strategic approach involving consultation, close

interaction and coordination between virtually all departments, and more particularly industry, employment and vocational training, higher education, technology, social affairs, the environment, local authorities, infrastructure and international cooperation, in close consultation with economic players and civil society. Furthermore, this strategy would make it possible to better structure the governance of professional guidance at the national level, whether in universities (particularly with regard to the 4Cs which suffer from the absence of dedicated human and material resources) or in other institutions dedicated to career guidance and whose challenges we have highlighted in terms of room for manoeuvre and qualifications of human resources.

## Coordination and cooperation

### Short-term

- Set up a national coordination mechanism on career guidance across education, employment, youth and social inclusion sectors that includes as well social partners, civil society organisations and donors, for now on a project basis, to (1) analyse and discuss the implications of this report, and (2) to kick-off the development of a national lifelong guidance strategy

### Medium- to long-term

- Ensure sustainability of a national coordination mechanism on career guidance through a clear mandate and a structured cross-sectorial cooperation mode; learn from EU experience on the forms of such mechanisms as permanent coordination bodies
- Support local and regional level career guidance through access to partners that coordinate at national level, e.g. school-social partner cooperation
- Efforts to coordinate the action plans of different stakeholders are essential to ensure synergy and capitalize on successful experiences. An appropriate governance structure and a clear vision around a unifying national lifelong guidance strategy could facilitate this coordination towards a common goal and optimize the allocation of resources. This will also contribute to ensuring the sustainability of initiatives and coherence between actions.

## Services

### Short-term

- Review all existing career education and career guidance activities in education against international good practice and define areas for reform
- Ensure a gender perspective in all guidance work since for instance women spend more time in NEET status than men, despite having a relatively higher level of education
- Enhance the value of internships. If the latter have been generalized and made compulsory in many university courses, it is necessary to rationalize and optimize their progress so that they fully play their role as the first effective immersive experience in the socio-professional world. Also, reform access and remuneration mechanisms for internships in companies for all learners including before university level.
- Increase the visibility of the career guidance programs among the target population by ensuring targeted communication actions based on digital tools.
- Consider diversity within target populations to make career guidance services more inclusive.
- Address the cultural dimension: focus on addressing cultural beliefs and prejudices to promote the value of vocational training, facilitating women in fully realizing their career potential.
- Ensure career guidance services for workers next to offering trainings, including (1) coordinate the action plans of different stakeholders to ensure synergy and capitalize on successful experiences. An appropriate governance structure and a clear vision around a unifying national lifelong guidance strategy could facilitate this coordination towards a common goal and optimize the allocation of

resources. (2) create awareness including through outreach and use of ICT, including through partnerships with social partners, about training programs; (3) address increasing brain drain and departure of startups through a more sustained effort in terms of regulation, business environment, and talent retention policies (salary alignment, recognition and valuation of skills, development of personalized career plans, development of professional development opportunities, etc.) by coordinating the actions of all relevant stakeholders.

- Ensure career guidance services for migrants (potential and returning migrants citizens or foreign-born incoming labour migrants and refugees) which are tailored to the different skills levels of migrants, and possibly be accompanied by opportunities of mentoring and networking support including with other migrants having the same needs.

### **Medium- to long-term**

- Develop career education curricula for all grades in primary, secondary, VET and higher education in line with international good practice to (1) move from information about education and occupations towards career management skills development and human empowerment, and (2) to overcome orientation of students towards vocational training based on school failure, and towards university based on an automated approach of referral; significant work on culture and mentalities should be integrated, particularly with regard to the perception of professional training, the image associated with different career prospects and professions and social pressure exerted on women, leading them to self-censor their professional ambitions and career progression.
- Next to career education as a service for all, develop mechanisms that ensure individual guidance support and mentoring for school and university students in need of more support.

## **Funding**

### **Short-term**

- Map the cost and output of career guidance services: costs/expenditures for career guidance in education (from primary, lower, upper secondary to VET and higher education): cost for practitioners (salaries/top-up salaries), for internet connection/PCs/laptops/a room/a webpage or other online services/guidance materials/ assessment tools; costs for cooperation with enterprises (internships, travel costs to visit enterprises, sending teachers to enterprises etc.) and other education providers (travel to primary/lower secondary school/university etc.); costs for open days/career days; costs/expenditures for career guidance for adults (costs for reaching out to vulnerable groups and inactive e.g. costs for outsourcing this to NGOs, costs for online services to adults, costs for tools like assessments, costs for guidance practitioners in public employment services who provide guidance (NOT employment counselling) etc.; output: nr of hours per individual in individual guidance etc.; this shall inform impact evaluations and return on investment studies, as well as create awareness of – internationally often visible – low investment in preventive career guidance, and the need for impact evaluation and longitudinal assessment of intervention effectiveness.

### **Mid- to long-term**

- Ensure adequate budgeting for career education and guidance in education as a preventive investment not a cost; and in career guidance for adults and disadvantaged people through budgeting for guidance work of youth centres and through outreach work

## **Access**

### **Short to medium-term**

- For ANETI, it is suggested to focus on the following areas: (1) customization of services: enhance the customization of services to align with the unique applicants' needs and characteristics of different regions; (2) tailored career development services: design and provide services that cater better to the evolving needs of career development and lifelong employability; (3) utilization of ICT:

Make optimal use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the abundance of available information to improve service delivery; (4) structural reorganisation and staff enhancement: implement structural reorganisation and elevate the capabilities of dedicated staff to ensure equitable access to high-quality career support services across all regions of the country; and (4) regarding support from associations (including NGOs and development associations): recognize the effective role of associative frameworks in career development, it is advised to invest in understanding the most successful associative initiatives and the pivotal factors contributing to their success. This understanding can serve as a valuable resource for informing and inspiring new practices within institutional structures dedicated to career guidance. (5) ensure capacity to cater for workers and disadvantaged groups next to primarily recent graduates.

### Medium to long-term

- Ensure the provision of high-quality career guidance in isolated regions.
- Strengthen industrial fabric: work towards bolstering the industrial landscape, particularly by fostering the creation of high-potential businesses and activities capable of absorbing graduates from higher education.
- Update graduates and institutional players: ensure that graduates and stakeholders in employment fields remain abreast of advancements in new technologies and emerging professions.
- Enhance role of institutional bodies: encourage institutional bodies dedicated to employment and career development support to stay updated on professional practices. They should also play a pivotal role in gathering, consolidating, and disseminating information and guidance on successful socio-professional integration initiatives, whether they stem from associative, regional, institutional, or community-based sources.

### Use of technology

#### Short-term

- Make full use of advantages of ICT by leveraging existing digital services and in this way integrating fragmented services to accompany face-to-face services with online self-learning and professional guidance support offers, also in view of remote areas with limited access to services.
- Regarding the education sector, take advantage of the widespread use, particularly due to the mandatory nature, of national platforms ([www.tarbia.tn](http://www.tarbia.tn) and [www.orientation.tn](http://www.orientation.tn)) to give access to guidance on secondary or university studies in order to offer parents, young students and high school graduates more detailed information about all educational options and also to provide e-career guidance throughout the course of studies from primary school to university. The same regarding vocational education and training (VET), the online learning platform ([www.ipst.edunet.tn](http://www.ipst.edunet.tn)), with 9600 participants enrolled in the available training programs<sup>111</sup>, provided by the National centre for continuing training and professional Promotion (CNFCPP) would benefit from providing e-guidance services, the same for the ATFP platform, the Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training, which currently compiles a comprehensive set of information related to VET ATFP <http://www.atfp.tn/>.

#### Medium- to long-term

- Prepare and train professionals in career guidance and employment support structures in the use of ICT and in particular AI in guidance.
- Develop user-friendly online career development services and social media tools, given the large use of mobile devices and social media in Tunisia.
- Address fragmented e-guidance initiatives and lack of interoperability between information systems through an intergovernmental approach to designing and implementing digital projects and

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<sup>111</sup> <https://www.ipst.tn/>

establishing federating project leadership to accelerate digitization for career guidance. This would allow aligning the objectives of each project with the missions of the national employment strategy and the national digital strategy and seizing the momentum of donors' enthusiasm for financing digital projects while ensuring their alignment with both national strategies. A national coordination mechanism would lead on such an initiative, which highlights again its value.

## Quality, professionalisation and continuous improvement

### Standards, staffing, and quality of information - short-term

- Review the current qualifications and qualification requirements for career guidance practitioners across sectors and assess them against international good practice
- Support the establishment of a community of career guidance practitioners across sectors for mutual exchange of experience, peer learning and to facilitate cooperation and coordination at local level;
- Ensure career guidance is an evidence-based support (e.g. data from tracer studies and national statistics show high employment rates in decent jobs for graduates of a certain qualification program/a sector and based on this families and potential students as well as teachers are informed about opportunities) and not about marketing for VET/university XY
- Review the quality of labour market information currently available and who can use it at the moment to overcome the lack of comprehensive vocational information and data on job prospects at all levels of education. Guidance counsellors often lack crucial insights into career options and labour market trends, leading to decisions based on anecdotal advice rather than comprehensive information.
- Since relevant career guidance initiatives can help individuals move from informal to formal sectors, employee training in ANETI and similar frameworks are to integrate how to make skills visible that are developed through informal activities and how to assess skills needs in the informal sector, which will also facilitate integration of informal sector data into ANETI's system.

### Standards, staffing, and quality of information - medium- to long-term

- Develop career guidance standards (occupational standards and a qualification as well as a career management skills framework defining the outcome of guidance) valid across sectors and ensure its effective operationalization, in particular of a common framework of qualifications and skills which would be usable in a homogeneous manner by all those involved in the career guidance system, making the system significantly more fluid and effective.
- Design two new learning programs to professionalize career guidance practitioners and to set the standard for practitioners working in education, employment, youth and social inclusion sectors: a EQF level 5 certificate for support staff (like subject teachers, school directors, librarians) and a master's degree program for ANETI, university career centre/ youth centre guidance experts.
- Strengthen the information, skills, and intervention capacities and ability to personalize the interventions of guidance counsellors, in particular in education and higher education.
- Enhance staff performance in employment and career development support: (1) Enhance the recruitment process to target candidates with suitable qualifications and professional backgrounds; (2) provide extended placements in similar institutions in more developed regions, allowing staff to gain relevant skills and support mechanisms; (3) improve staff proficiency in utilizing information and communication technologies (ICTs) to access pertinent information swiftly; (4) institutionally, enhance business intelligence and information systems, and foster better communication with industry stakeholders on both individual and organisational levels.
- Establish a nationwide systematic monitoring mechanism for graduates from all educational backgrounds. Such a system would enable continuous observation of the common transitions from education to education, and education to employment throughout an individual's lifetime. It would

also facilitate the provision of necessary adjustments for vocational integration and reintegration through an effective vocational guidance system. In this respect, ensure universities have trained and compensated human resources to monitor students' transition into the workforce post-graduation, as this data, when relayed to the teaching and student support network, will enhance students' prospects of swiftly and effectively entering the job market.

- Include the informal sector in the scope of career guidance work as work experience in the informal sector often plays a significant role in initial employment opportunities. In this regard, career guidance services can play a crucial role in facilitating the transition of individuals towards decent work while leveraging the professional experience gained in the informal sector.

#### **Monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback – short term**

- Evaluation efforts should prioritize collaboration among stakeholders, acknowledging the interconnectedness of employability and career development.
- Utilize existing academic research on career guidance and employability system evaluation and promote further studies on nuanced aspects of employment.
- Consult with key stakeholders, including the general public, for improving career guidance services based on the needs of the different target groups.

#### **Monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback – medium- to long-term**

- Increase the impact and effectiveness of the career guidance by generalising the adoption of management by objectives and installing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in order to measure the extent and results of each action undertaken both beforehand and afterward.
- Establish an institutional and legislative framework for university observatories.
- Enhance evaluation mechanisms by moving beyond surface-level indicators like training course numbers and questioning the assumption that all support systems are inherently beneficial.
- Allocate sufficient human and financial resources for long-term monitoring of program beneficiaries, particularly those in informal or temporary employment.

# ANNEX: OBSTACLES, FACILITATORS, AND PROSPECTS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT

The obstacles, facilitators, and prospects for civil society stakeholders' involvement in career development support in Tunisia are as follows<sup>112</sup>:

	Obstacles	Facilitators
Role in Regulation, Management, and Funding	Lack of stable funding: Stakeholders from civil society may find it more difficult to participate in career development support services due to limited regulatory frameworks and administrative obstacles. Their capacity to maintain programs may also be hampered by inadequate money and resources.	Participation can be facilitated by supportive government initiatives, such as legislative frameworks that promote public-private partnerships and civil society involvement. The ability to obtain funds from foreign donors or charitable organisations can also help members of civil society organisations increase their influence and scope. An additional, often overlooked, option is to ensure in national youth laws/strategies that give youth work/youth centres an official role in career guidance; this way there is stable budget for important work of "outreach" to young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), money NGOs/CSOs can access for community work etc. making them more stable partners for public employment services.
Scope of Engagement	Lack of strategic involvement of civil society by government: The ability of civil society players to interact concurrently at the national, sectoral, and local levels may be hampered by a lack of resources and capability. Effectiveness may also be harmed by effort fragmentation and duplication among various organisations.	Governmental organisations, partners, and members of civil society can work together to coordinate efforts in order to maximise impact and optimise resources. Creating networks and alliances to pool resources, knowledge, and experience can bolster group efforts in a variety of contexts and industries. National youth counsels, representing youth organisations, other CSOs and NGOs should be represented in a national lifelong guidance forum/work group
Engagement in Community Outreach Programs <sup>113</sup>	Lack of sustainability after donor projects: The effectiveness of outreach attempts by civil society groups may be hindered by competing goals and resource restrictions. A lack of cooperation and coordination amongst stakeholders may cause efforts to be dispersed or overlapped.	Using current connections and alliances can help outreach programs reach a wider audience and have a greater effect. It is possible to guarantee that outreach initiatives are focused, well-thought-out, and mutually beneficial by collaborating with authorities, academic institutions, businesses, and community organisations/CSOs/NGOs, and social partners, especially trade unions to reach adult workers.
Accessibility	employees may lack knowledge about available career development services, especially in remote or underserved areas. Cultural norms and language limitations can also impact service acceptance.	supportive government initiatives, public-private partnerships, the mobilisation of foreign donors, and the creation of networks allowing the pooling of resources, knowledge and experience can help civil society organisations in facilitating participation and increasing their influence. Furthermore, community engagement, outreach campaigns, and collaborations with local leaders can increase awareness and encourage the use of career development services and help individuals develop career management skills. Besides, customising offerings to specific demographic segments can improve accessibility and relevance. To sum up, stakeholders can optimise their influence and advance employability by cultivating

<sup>112</sup> Djebali, N., & Mohr, A. (2019). The role of civil society in promoting employability in Tunisia. *Journal of North African Studies*, 24(2), 330-349.

<sup>113</sup> Rekik, S., & Zouari-Hadji, R. (2020). Promoting employability through multi-stakeholder collaboration in Tunisia. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 44(1/2), 113-128.

	<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Facilitators</b>
		cooperation, advocating for diversity, and funding capacity-building programs.

# ACRONYMS

ANETI	National Agency for Employment and Independent Work
ATCT	Tunisian Technical Cooperation Agency
ATFP	Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training
CI	Information and Guidance Counsellors
CNFCPP	National Center of Continual Training and Professional Promotion
CNTE	National Center for Educational Technologies
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INS	National Institute of Statistics
ITCEQ	Tunisian institute of competitiveness and quantitative studies
ITES	Tunisian Institute of Strategic Studies
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
ME	Ministry of Education
MEFP	Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
ONEQ	National Observatory for Employment and Qualifications
RTMC	Tunisian Skills and Professions Repository
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMI	Small and Medium Industries
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy

TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UVT	Virtual University of Tunis
VET	Vocational education and training
VSEs	Very Small Enterprises
WB	World Bank

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