MIGRANT SUPPORT MEASURES FROM AN EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS PERSPECTIVE (MISMES)

LEBANON

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In previous years, the ETF has conducted studies on migration and skills focusing on specific countries neighbouring the EU. This earlier research provided evidence about the skills of migrants and the extent to which they are underutilised abroad and upon return. It also showed the need to develop policy measures to support migrants in order to improve job and skills matching for the benefit of the receiving countries, the countries of origin and the migrants themselves. This is the so-called win-win-win effect.

MISMES aim at improving the labour market integration of immigrant and emigrant workers, refugees and returnees by facilitating decent work, labour mobility, job matching, livelihood and employment skills, as well as access to labour market information and the protection of migrant workers' and refugees' rights. They also aim at reducing the underutilisation of migrants' skills and improving skills matching more generally through skills development, work-based learning, career guidance and counselling, and the recognition and validation of skills. Measures are considered to be 'good practice' when they not only cover skills and employment training and job matching, but also seek to strengthen social cohesion.

MISMES are defined as specific policy interventions in all phases of the migration cycle. In the case of Lebanon, all emigrants, foreign labour immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are covered. To qualify as MISMES, policy interventions should mobilise specific budget resources (regardless of who funds or implements the action) to achieve labour market integration or skills utilisation or enhancement goals, usually over a decade (between 2006 and 2016).

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INTRODUCTION

Lebanon has a unique socio-political setting as a result of its confessionalist political system and its challenging geopolitical environment. Despite the country's fragile internal political situation and its position at the centre of strong international tensions, Lebanon has largely succeeded in preserving democracy, while continuing to combine an extremely flexible, open-minded and entrepreneurial population and a challenging political environment. It is also a country characterised by high migration flows, both emigration of Lebanese citizens and immigration of foreign workers (mainly temporary) and refugees, since 1948 from Palestine and more recently from Syria.

ECONOMY

Lebanon is a middle-income country with an open and largely service-oriented economy. It has a strong commercial tradition of domestic free trade and investment policies. The services sector accounts for 73.8% of the country's GDP, followed by industry (20.7%) and agriculture (5.6%). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) remain the main form of business organisation, particularly micro and small enterprises. There is also a large informal sector in the country, which accounted for 30% of GDP in 2008 and 66.9% of total employment in 2011. Economic growth was high during the past decade (as high as 8–9%, although this was mostly a jobless recovery), but has dropped significantly since 2011, and the forecast for the near future is not promising (1.5% in 2015, according to the World Bank). In fact, economic growth is still slow owing to political instability, the global financial crisis, the regional political situation and the impact of the ongoing conflict in neighbouring Syria. Factors that influence this limited growth are also linked to limited public and private investment, particularly in the productive sectors, and to limited international and domestic competitiveness.

LABOUR MARKET

The Lebanese labour market is characterised by low activity and employment rates, a low contribution by women to economic life, a large informal sector, a high influx of foreign workers and a large number of skilled Lebanese individuals seeking employment abroad. According to Eurostat, in 2012 employment was mostly concentrated in services (76.3%), followed by industry (19.3%) and agriculture (4.5%). The most recent national official labour market data are from 2009, as no regular labour force survey (LFS) is conducted. An initiative to conduct a new LFS in Lebanon started in 2016, financed by the EU and implemented by CAS with the technical support of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The results of this new LFS should be available in 2018, and will clarify the employment situation in the country.

MIGRATION POLICIES

Despite the fact that Lebanon has always been a country of emigration and immigration, migration has not been an issue for government institutions and policy makers. Migration to, from and through Lebanon has mainly been based on individual decisions taken under the pressure of poverty, political turmoil or military conflict in the country, the region and elsewhere. The absence of an explicit public migration policy is partly explained by the regional context in which Lebanon has developed as a nation. The wars and conflicts taking place all around have not helped. As a result of this context, migration policies have not been developed or updated, and there is an absence of new legislation relating to migration flows. Therefore, overall strategies are needed for three diverse migrant groups: emigrants, foreign immigrant labour as well as refugees and asylum seekers.

MIGRATION IN LEBANON

Lebanon has historically been a migration country, and diversity is one of its main characteristics. Movement of people, both in and out of the country is and has been the norm for both socio-economic and political reasons. Migration flows were mainly from Syria in the 1960s, mostly in agriculture and construction, and from Egypt, Asia and Africa in the 1980s, with a prominent feminisation of migration. In addition, Lebanon has received refugees such as Armenians from Turkey, Palestinians, Iraqis and, more recently, Syrians.

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SPECIFIC MIGRANT GROUPS

There are three main migrants groups in Lebanon: Expatriates and returnees; foreign labour immigrants and refugees asylum seekers.

Experts estimate that between 1975 and 1990, around 900 000 Lebanese people left to settle abroad. This is usually as an immediate response to political insecurity and deteriorating socioeconomic realities. Of the 15 000–20 000 Lebanese who emigrate every year, most go to the Gulf Countries (27%) and North America and Australia (46%), and are in the age range 15–34 (76%).

Most graduates in the fields of electricity, gas and water supply emigrate (85%), as do those in the field of transportation and communication (57%) and in the medical sector. Lebanese migrants hail from various social, cultural, geographical and confessional backgrounds and their education levels are generally medium to high. This produces an ageing resident population and exacerbates the brain drain.

Remittances continue to represent an essential part of the country's GDP, reaching 16.2% of GDP in 2014. Nevertheless, the difficulty of reaching consensus on national priorities means that there is no coherent policy for Lebanese emigrants.

Low-skilled labourers make up a large proportion of the foreign labour immigrants in the country. They come mainly from the Middle East, Asia and Africa and tend to have low levels of education.

Most foreign workers are employed in construction, agriculture and domestic work (mostly women), often informally and with very precarious working conditions.

Although legislation on the entry, stay and exist of foreign national was adopted as long ago as 1962, a lack of official data makes it difficult to enforce. Migrant domestic workers, for example, are excluded from Lebanese labour law, and many are victims of human trafficking. Furthermore, different treatments apply to different nationalities, which increases ethnicisation among migrants.

Lebanon is currently home to a huge number of refugees mostly from neighbouring Syria and Palestine*. Estimates put these figures at 1.6 million and 460,000 respectively, which represents a third of the total population of resident and non-resident Lebanese - the highest concentration of refugees in the world.

The educational attainment of Syrian refugees is generally low, with high illiteracy rates. Employment and economic activity rates in both formal and informal work is also low and any employment tends to be in low-skilled occupations that provide little income, social protection or job security, such as agriculture or domestic service. Women, on the whole, tend to be outside the labour market, which exacerbates the low employment rate.

Palestinian refugees, although having a longer history in the country, do not fare much better. Unemployment is high and incomes and working conditions are poor.

CURRENT POLICIES AND FUTURE SOLUTIONS

There is an absence of an institutional, strategic and legal framework for migration, both for emigrants and immigrants. By launching a national policy dialogue on emigration to provide support to emigrants throughout the migration cycle, and by adopting a clear policy framework on inward migration including dedicated migrant support services, Lebanon could make real progress in getting the best out of migration.

A clear policy is also needed for refugees. This would allow national institutions to acquire greater ownership over the management of refugees and this would eventually lead to an improvement in the coordination of interventions and division of labour.

At present responsibility for refugees is fragmented and Palestinians benefit from a separate system all together (UNRWA). Nevertheless, UNRWA has developed some examples of good practice for training refugees and integrating them into the labour market and these could be mainstreamed so that all refugees in the country can benefit.

MISMES

Migrant support measures from an employment and skills perspective (MISMES) in the Lebanese context include measures designed to develop, promote and make efficient use of migrants' skills, as well as measures designed to facilitate job matching and employment rights of migrants and/or to improve their labour market conditions. Other programmes that may contribute to the social inclusion of migrants include social programmes, legal protection schemes, life-skills programmes for under 18's, financial programmes as well as bilateral labour agreements.

2
Overview of MISMES mapped in Lebanon

17
MISMES IN LEBANON BETWEEN 2006 AND 2016

Most of the 17 MISMES implemented in Lebanon in the 10 years from 2006 were funded by international donors or organisations and implemented by both local and international organisations. Although the research targeted all three groups of migrants, it was found that while refugees are the focus of most measures, few apply specifically to emigrants or returnees, and very few apply to immigrants to the country.

Lebanon provides very little support **emigrants**, be they potential migrants, expatriates or returnees. Lebanese migrants tend to use their personal and family links rather than institutional support to enhance their skills and employability. Nevertheless, possibly due to the generally high skills levels of Lebanese migrants, this process works smoothly. Moreover, as many expatriates complete their academic careers outside the country, this facilitates their stay abroad. On the other hand, many expatriates seem to feel that given the necessary support, they would prefer to return to Lebanon although this is impeded by a lack of job opportunities and the perception that financing productive activities is difficult, if not impossible.

Despite their generally low skill levels, foreign labour **immigrants** in the country have very limited opportunities to improve their skills and employability. Reasons may include a lack of interest on the part of the government, scheduling issues, costs and the perceived lack of benefits for companies. Foreign immigrant workers are often exposed to low pay and poor working conditions and often lack awareness of what constitutes decent working conditions or lack basic skills (such as language).

Most initiatives in this area target **refugees and asylum seekers** in Lebanon. Over the years, UNRWA has developed a number of measures specifically to enhance the skills and employability of Palestinian refugees. However, as a result of the Syrian crisis, more recently there has been an emphasis on actions that help to alleviate the conditions of Syrians who have fled to Lebanon to escape the war. Although most measures are devoted to humanitarian assistance, many initiatives aim to improve the skills of refugees to enable them to integrate into the labour market (whether in Lebanon, in third countries or eventually back home).

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

As far as **emigrants** are concerned, greater support could ease the migration cycle and support returns. Specific counselling mechanisms could be a long-term objective, while in the short and medium term, pre-departure information and e-tools could improve access to jobs abroad. Furthermore, tapping into the extensive Lebanese diaspora through specific global platforms could lead to social, cultural and economic benefits. New incentives and schemes could be developed to redirect the high levels of remittances towards productive activities and could be used to fund both economic activities and skills development initiatives.

Foreign labour **immigrants** could be supported by dedicated services to help them enter the Lebanese labour market and avoid exploitation and abusive conduct. Skills development and job placement programmes could be scaled up and take place both in Lebanon and in the sending countries. At the same time, public campaigns to prevent abusive working conditions and racism can help against stigmatisation and segregation.

Similar measures could also be of benefit to **refugees and asylum seekers**. In particular, their integration into the national vocational education and training system, along with basic entrepreneurship training, advice and follow up would help social cohesion. Identifying the skills and potential of this group and engaging them in formalised activities would also support their integration in to the labour market in the sectors in which they are allowed to work.
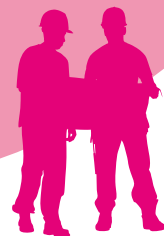
GOOD PRACTICE

Three case studies out of the 17 MISMES identified in Lebanon were selected as examples of good practice. They were chosen on the basis of existing reports and the recommendations of various international agencies.

3

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

SUPPORT OF MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS AND VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING (AMEL)

This programme, designed with the needs of its target audience in mind, provides course on languages, computing, fashion design and beauty as well as psychological therapy and emotional empowerment. Courses are provided free of charge to the beneficiaries.

As a result participants feel more confident and better able to express themselves. Furthermore, it is not only the migrants who benefit as employers and school children are also involved and this is having a positive effect on working relationships.

Looking to the future, it is important that new, non-traditional activities that are needed in Lebanon are also considered including child care, elderly care, home care, modern energy and agribusiness. Training in these areas will dramatically improve migrants' skills and offer pathways for transition between different types of work.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING, CAREER GUIDANCE, EMPLOYMENT SERVICE CENTRES (UNRWA)

The UNRWA TVET programme in Lebanon comprises a vocational training centre, which has two campuses, a career guidance and orientation unit, and employment service centres. Covering the whole cycle from education right through to integration into the labour market, they aim to improve employability, contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty, assist individuals to achieve a decent standard of living, and collaborate to achieve the objectives of UNRWA's overall TVET strategy.

The programme has the following key strengths: it is flexible in the subjects offered and the duration of courses; it is learner-centred; it ensures strong links with employers and alignment of curricula with labour market needs; it has a strong practical orientation and caters for both sexes.

Alongside the typical challenges facing VET, the programme struggles with the lack of reliable labour maket data and the challeges of keeping curricula and equipment up to date with labour market needs. Nevertheless, the centres are oversubscribed.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME (MAKHZOUMI FOUNDATION)

With funding from UNICEF, UNDP, EU (Mada Fund) and RDPP, this programme has workked with UNHCR offering short eight-week curse to refugess in Lebanon. The subjects covered include IT, languages, beauty courses, making the most of opportunities on the labour market, entrepreneurial skills, identifying cultural difference and communicating across cultures all adapted to the needs of the labour market. The courses are open to over 14 year olds and about 4500 people are trained annually, mostly women.

Evidence show that the courses have improved the incomes of the beneficiaries and have offered them new career pathways. Hand-on, practical knowldge is taught, certificates are recognised nationally and links are made with employers. Nevertheless, a focus on less traditional subjects and better career guidance could enhance the programme further.

ETF
Working together
Learning for life

HOW THINGS ARE NOW

· Lots of international attention paid to the migration issue, especially for refugees
· Stakeholder commitment to streamlining assistance and better coordination
· No overall/comprehensive institutional, strategic and legal framework for migration (emigrants and immigrants)
· Just a small number of MISMES beneficiaries and high operational costs
· Difficulty in assessing sustainability of MISMES
· Very limited impact assessment of implemented measures

Leb

Outward migration

Very limited MISMES for Lebanese emigrants

810,900 (2013) 18%

emmigrants

of the total population

50% of emigrants have secondary education or higher

LOOKING FORWARD.....

· Improve the generation, analysis and dissemination of inf
· Coordination different initiatives more effectively
· Develop programmes that enable the recognition of non
· Support programmes that target the population as a wh

WHAT NEXT?

Outward migration
Launch a national policy dialogue on emigration to provide support to emigrants throughout the migration cycle

Inward migration: foreign labour immigrants
Adopt a clear strategy/policy framework on inward migration

Inward migration: refugees and asylum seekers
Elaborate a clear national policy on refugees
Promote UNRWA good practices in VET and employment

Inward migration

Very limited MISMES for foreign immigrant labour

Increase in the number of MISMES for refugees, especially Syrians (total estimated **1.6m**), almost all funded by international donors, with more and more of them linking assistance to development

Most immigrants are low skilled and only 3% of Syrians and 6% of Palestinians have tertiary education

anon

1,586,000 foreign workers

Countries of origin
Bangladesh, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Syria

Work Sectors
Construction, Agriculture, Domestic work

2,062,000
refugees & asylum seekers
(2015/2016)

...formation on migrants and refugees

...-formal and informal learning
...ole, without discrimination based on nationality