

TORINO PROCESS REGIONAL OVERVIEW SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN



A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a white lab coat over a grey sweater, is focused on his work. He is standing at a large industrial sewing machine, which is a light-colored metal frame with a needle and foot. He is holding a blue pen in his right hand and is about to draw on a piece of grey fabric that is laid out on a large yellow ruler. The ruler is placed on a white surface. In the background, there are various sewing supplies, including spools of thread in different colors (red, brown, black) and other pieces of fabric. The overall setting appears to be a workshop or a factory floor.

SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Since the first round of the Torino Process in 2010, social, economic, demographic and political developments in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean have placed VET at the forefront of the policy agenda in most countries. VET can play an important role in combating youth unemployment - the main challenge for countries in the region – besides contributing to social inclusion and cohesion.

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REGIONAL CONTEXT AND RESULTS



Reform efforts have been hampered by a number of factors: the unstable political environment in the region, conflict in Siria and Libya, which has created huge refugee flows in the region and beyond, and low economic growth in most countries since 2011, which has only recently started pick up.

The 2016 Torino Process reports show that, with the exception of Israel, youth unemployment continues to be a major challenge. The “youth bulge” in the Arab Mediterranean countries will continue to put pressure on both education systems and labour markets over for the next two decades, though the trend will gradually ease off. The influx of migrants and refugees, especially in Jordan and Lebanon, is having a growing impact on the labour market. The recent economic recovery in countries such as Morocco and Algeria has been largely jobless. The region’s business environment has also deteriorated in recent years, especially in Tunisia. In a region with a rich culture of entrepreneurship, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises remain the backbone of the economy, with limited scope for job growth. Moreover, in most countries, large informal economies, with predominantly poor quality jobs, continue to drive job creation.

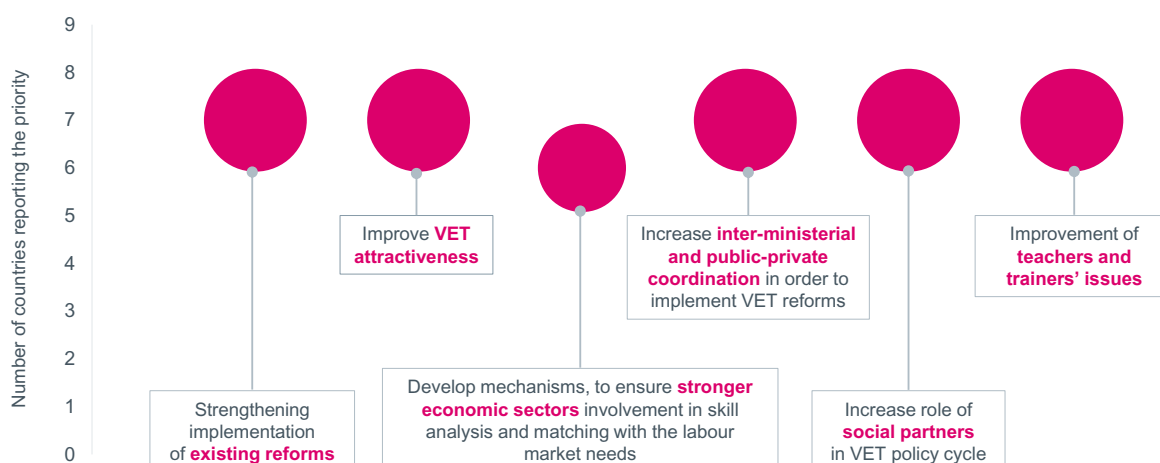
Activity rates in the Arab Mediterranean countries are among the lowest in the world, especially for young people and women. The situation has further deteriorated in comparison with the 2014 Torino Process, especially in Morocco, Egypt and Jordan.

Unemployment remains very high (except in Israel), although somewhat reduced since 2013, particularly in Israel, Tunisia and Egypt. Unemployment affects first job seekers worst, which points to difficult transitions from education to work, as do the large number of NEETs (young people, especially women, not in education, training nor in employment).

The region’s workforce is more educated than in 2010. Educational attainment among adults (+25 years) has steadily increased in most countries, with fewer adults having low or no education and more attaining higher levels. However, this does not translate into greater employability, revealing a serious mismatch between the skills developed by the education and training systems and those required by the labour market. In many countries, there is an inverse correlation between educational attainment and employment, with high levels of educated unemployment. A clear message here is the need for education and training systems to adjust their outputs better to the needs of employers.

The Arab Mediterranean countries generally rank low in the PISA¹ international comparison, suggesting there is still work to be done on basic skills (literacy, numeracy, science) as a foundation for students’ subsequent education - whether general or VET - or employment. There is broad consensus on the need to increase the quality and relevance of education and training.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES



¹ OECD’s Programme for International Students Assessment at the age of 15

² This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual position of the Member States on this issue.

PROGRESS IN VET SYSTEM REFORMS



The countries have made an important effort since the 2010 Torino Process to increase access to VET. While participation in VET remains low (with the exception of Egypt, where it reaches 50%), most countries report rising enrolments. Access must be linked to increased attractiveness, quality and employment opportunities for VET graduates.

Compared to the 2010, the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries are more aware of the need for greater investment in VET. Some countries, such as Israel and Morocco, report increases in the 2016 round, but it is still insufficient to meet growing demand. Others, like Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan, have set ambitious reform agendas that will require major investment. Countries like Palestine² advocate increasing national capacity to cost reforms. In most countries, there is wide recognition of the need to develop mechanisms guaranteeing more effective and efficient use of existing resources.

Since the first round of the Torino Process in 2010, the countries of the region, in particular the Arab Mediterranean ones, have undergone significant and often convulsive political, social, demographic and economic changes. These have pushed Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to the top of the policy agendas everywhere, as a response to huge challenges such as youth unemployment, social cohesion and economic competitiveness. At the same time, in some countries, the unstable environment has created difficult conditions for the implementation of reforms. When comparing to the 2014 round, it is difficult to identify real progress in some areas in some countries. However, in the broader perspective of comparison with the 2010 round, progress is visible across countries in most areas analysed.

“There is overall progress in the development of a vision for TVET, but the real challenge is implementation and results achievement”

In the first round of the Torino Process in 2010, very few countries had developed national visions for VET. Nowadays, we see the formulation of strategies (with or without action plans, depending on the country)

that position VET in the wider framework of Human Resources Development and in closer connection with strategic developments in other domains such as general education, employment and economic growth.

The key challenge countries now face, is not vision building, but the slow pace of reforms: how to put strategies into practice, how to move from the formulation of a vision to actual delivery. Governance, in particular participation and coordination of stakeholders, has been identified by the countries as key to addressing this challenge.

Two other key elements in this picture are the insufficient evidence produced and used for policy-making decisions in most countries and the shortage of monitoring and evaluation systems that can be used to feed back into the decision-making process.

“Countries have made progress since TRP 2014 and invested in policy solutions and tools for achieving a higher external efficiency, but impact is still difficult to measure.”

The 2016 Torino Process again confirms the top priority for most countries in the region, especially



the Mediterranean Arab ones, as combatting youth unemployment. This was already identified as a priority in the 2012 round, and confirmed in 2014, with VET as a key instrument. During this period, numerous pilot projects, programmes and active labour market policies have been deployed, and major investments have been made. However, the impact of these measures has not yet fed into higher activity rates or lower unemployment. In the 2016 round, countries have argued that there is a shortage of data and evidence testifying to the impact and contribution of VET to labour market trends, and few indicators or studies showing the progress of VET graduates through their working lives.

The main priority in this field is data and labour market information systems. The lack of updated data, the absence of integrated systems and the fragmentation of tools and methods are some of the challenges that countries are trying to address by setting up labour market observatories at national, regional and sectoral level. Information is indispensable for establishing skills matching mechanisms.

Another challenge is transition from education to work. Career guidance schemes and tracer studies are seen as the main tools in which further investment is needed across the countries of the region.

“Moving from pilots to systems: VET attractiveness remains an issue in a region where VET needs to respond to the needs of multiple beneficiary groups”

Since the 2010 round of the Torino Process, increasing access to VET and improving its attractiveness are key issues on the agenda of VET policy makers in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. While there has been progress in this area, VET in most countries is still a second choice for those who do not make it into general education. This exemplifies the powerful social aspiration towards higher education in the region.

Countries are now aware of the need to make progress not only in access, but also in improving the quality and relevance of VET, as well as of the potential role of the private sector in this respect.



A key tool for increasing attractiveness is to create horizontal and vertical pathways between VET and the rest of the education system, including higher education. Different approaches are being tested nationally, though it is challenging to mainstream such pilot initiatives at system level.

An emergent theme in the 2016 Torino Process is the need to diversify VET provision to target the needs of different beneficiary groups, which should also be included in needs identification.

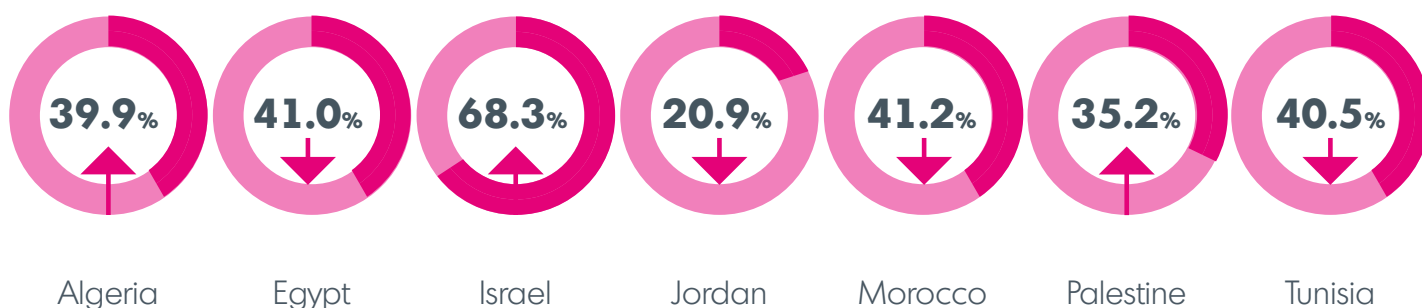
All countries underline the role that VET can play in improving social and territorial cohesion. However, much still needs to be done to implement this in practice. Most actions targeting people with special needs or disadvantaged or marginalised groups, such as women, NEETs, disabled people or remote rural regions, are effective only at the pilot stage. With few exceptions, they are not yet mainstreamed in the system. One of the key findings of the 2016 round is the growing impact of refugees, particularly in host countries, and its consequences for both education and VET and the labour market, which call for emergency measures and a long-term strategy to respond to the crisis.



Southern and Eastern Mediterranean

**Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon,
Morocco, Palestine*, Tunisia**

Employment rates and trends vary across the region.
In 2015, they stood at:



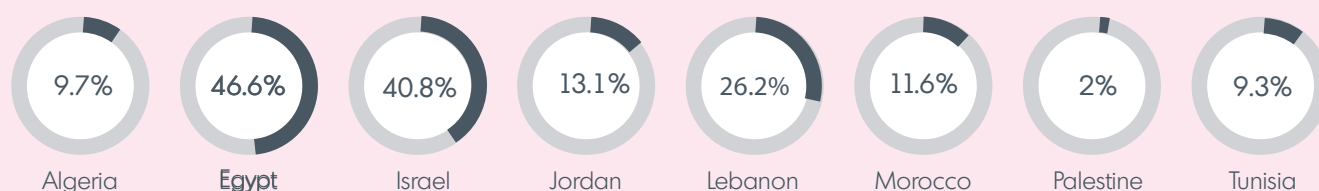
Since 2010
unemployment
rates have
increased.



from 13% to 15% of
the active population



VET's lack of attractiveness is a key issue in the region. Since 2010 there has been a **decrease or stagnation in VET enrolment**



Percentage of total upper secondary students in vocational programmes

**Fewer adults have low or no education at all
More are attaining higher levels of education**

Young adults attaining a higher education degree:



But despite the higher level of skills, the region suffers from a large proportion of **NEETs** (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

In Morocco, Egypt, Palestine and Tunisia...



"If quality of provision is not addressed, results will not show: this is time for action for internal efficiency"

Since the 2010 round of the Torino Process, and particularly since 2014, internal efficiency has been a main focus for VET stakeholders in the region. Numerous activities, projects and initiatives are ongoing in all countries aimed at improving the quality of VET. However, their systemic impact is generally less than expected, while the pace of reform remains on the whole slow. The size of the VET sector in some countries, the cost of such reforms, political instability and the absence of indicators to measure progress are among the reasons put forward for this slow progress. However, all countries in the region are aware of the need to improve the quality of VET provision and the efficient use of resources in order to match the expectations of citizens and businesses.

Teachers and trainers (their career, recruitment, numbers, qualifications, salaries, training and retraining) emerge as the most problematic area. Few systemic reforms have taken place since the 2010 Torino Process. There has been little progress in developing quality assurance beyond a mere control system since the 2014 round. However, if we take 2010 as the benchmark, we can see a number of key systemic changes, particularly in countries that have set up dedicated quality assurance institutions. The development of curricula and processes are not yet systematically linked to labour market needs, although many countries are gradually moving toward competency based models.

Practical training or work based learning is one area in which the countries of the region have been more active since the 2010 Torino Process. Many models have been piloted with considerable success, but the main difficulty remains mainstreaming them nationally. The structure of businesses in the region, most of which are micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, does not favour their active involvement in learning approaches.

All Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries have shown an interest in establishing national qualification frameworks and most of them have approved their design and implementation. Progress is slow, however. By their nature, national

qualification frameworks affect all parts of the VET and education system, and have implications for governance. Some countries are actively engaged in implementing qualification frameworks for VET.

"Less fragmentation and centralisation, more coordination for higher transparency and accountability: from piloting to system reforms"

The countries of the region, especially the Arab Mediterranean ones, have experienced considerable changes in their institutional culture as regards governance since the 2010 Torino Process. Awareness of the importance of governance for success in implementing VET reforms is now very high. The 2014 round already highlighted two main areas of progress: fighting fragmentation and increasing decentralisation, and these have been confirmed in the 2016 round.

In the first area, countries are trying different formulas for improving coordination among key stakeholders at national level and report considerable changes since 2014. In the second, progress in devolving powers to the regional and local level is more pronounced in countries where decentralisation is a national policy objective. Progress in increasing the autonomy of VET institutions is generally limited, except in some countries.

The need for greater participation of social partners and civil society, especially employers, has come increasingly to the fore since the 2010 Torino Process. This is a growing trend in the region, though more at the level of design than concrete implementation. There remain questions as to the institutional capacity of social partners to play a more active role in most countries of the region.

Change in financing and funding mechanisms has been slow since 2010, both for initial VET and, especially, for continuing VET. This remains an area for further action in most countries.

The real change since 2010 is an emerging awareness of the need to evolve towards a "culture of results". Accountability and transparency, information and indicators to measure progress are essential ingredients in this process.



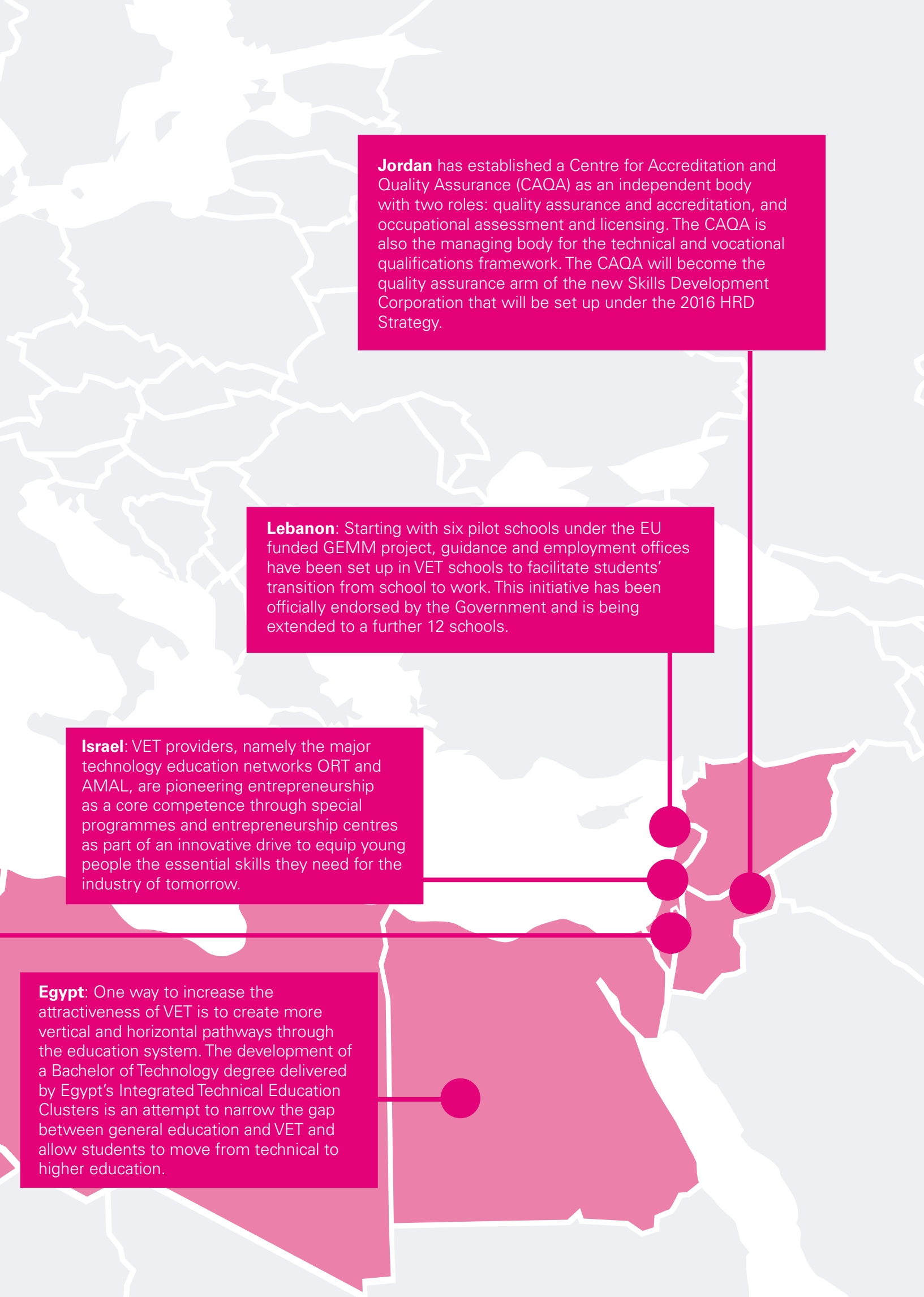
EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE



Tunisia has established multi stakeholder platforms in five pilot regions (Médenine, Gabès, Sfax, Kairouan and Mahdia). Having demonstrated their capacity to carry out VET functions in a decentralised way, they should be established on a permanent basis with well-defined roles, responsibilities and resources between the central and the regional level. This initiative will be extended to eight additional regions through the EU funded IRADA programme.

Palestine: In order to reinforce stakeholder cooperation, Palestine has established a Development Centre, under the revamped Higher Council for TVET, with a leading role in reviewing policy. All the key stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, will participate in thematic working groups aimed at coordinating the biggest donor interventions.

Morocco: The new VET strategy is the result of a large and extensive consultation. It is accompanied by agreements signed by all sectors of the economy in which the partners affirm their commitment, role, responsibilities and budget contribution to the reform. The strategy also foresees a multi-stakeholder body to steer and monitor progress in implementation.



Jordan has established a Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) as an independent body with two roles: quality assurance and accreditation, and occupational assessment and licensing. The CAQA is also the managing body for the technical and vocational qualifications framework. The CAQA will become the quality assurance arm of the new Skills Development Corporation that will be set up under the 2016 HRD Strategy.

Lebanon: Starting with six pilot schools under the EU funded GEMM project, guidance and employment offices have been set up in VET schools to facilitate students' transition from school to work. This initiative has been officially endorsed by the Government and is being extended to a further 12 schools.

Israel: VET providers, namely the major technology education networks ORT and AMAL, are pioneering entrepreneurship as a core competence through special programmes and entrepreneurship centres as part of an innovative drive to equip young people the essential skills they need for the industry of tomorrow.

Egypt: One way to increase the attractiveness of VET is to create more vertical and horizontal pathways through the education system. The development of a Bachelor of Technology degree delivered by Egypt's Integrated Technical Education Clusters is an attempt to narrow the gap between general education and VET and allow students to move from technical to higher education.



The ETF is an EU agency that helps transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy.

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