

2019

Youth insertion  
in the Mediterranean:  
a priority, an urgency,  
an opportunity



**MedNC**  
Network

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The background is a solid blue color. It features two large, overlapping circles composed of many thin, concentric white lines. A third, solid white circle is positioned on the right side of the image, partially overlapping the other two. Inside this white circle, there is text in blue and black.

The **Mediterranean  
New Chance Network**  
is committed to act for  
the socio-professional insertion  
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# The Mediterranean New Chance Network is committed to act for the socio-professional insertion of the youth in difficulty


Youth socio-professional integration stands as a priority in Mediterranean countries, especially in views of the significance of that age segment versus the total population. This is indeed the case for the southern Mediterranean countries where the high demographic pressure means that **300 million young people will enter the labour market** in the MENA<sup>1</sup> region between today and 2050 (according to the World Bank's projections<sup>2</sup>).

What should be an amazing development opportunity for these countries could turn out into a dire situation considering the **youth unemployment rates which may reach up to 30% in numerous MENA countries or southern European countries**. Given the aforementioned World Bank forecasts and since such unemployment rates are unlikely to diminish, nearly 100 million of young people of the MENA region could be unemployed in 2050.

Some trends must be reversed urgently: having 3 times more risk to be unemployed than your elders (25 year-old and older in Morocco, Italy, Egypt, Algeria); to live in the region where the youth unemployment rate is the highest in the world (in North Africa according to the ILO); having almost one young person in two unemployed (Spain).

This situation is especially important since such figures do not take into account young people who do not claim to be unemployed (inactive, non students), unlike the NEETs indicator<sup>3</sup> which further worsens the situation: as an example, it should be noted that one youth in four (15-to-24 y.o. age bracket), was neither employed nor undergoing training in Egypt in 2017.

Yet, access to education has been generalized in the region, even though the youth school dropping out rate is still high, especially in the case of children from poor households. This is especially the case in the southern Mediterranean countries. In 2013, in Tunisia, **almost 1 young person in 2 left school before reaching the secondary level**. In some northern Mediterranean countries, the rate of early leavers is higher than the European average, the main reasons being **the wish to work, a lack of interest in education or school difficulties**.

- 
- > Having 3 times more risk to be unemployed than your elders (25 year-old and older in Morocco, Italy, Egypt, Algeria)
  - > To live in the region where the youth unemployment rate is the highest in the world (in North Africa according to the ILO)
  - > having almost one young person in two unemployed (Spain)

**Trends to reverse urgently !**

In the South, trends show that **unemployment and inactivity affect women more than men**. In 2017, in Algeria, young women were three times more likely to be NEETs than men, and were twice more likely to be unemployed than men in 2016. In countries of the northern shore, the unemployment rates of youth and young NEETs are fairly close in both genders.

In order to provide solutions to overcome these challenges, various insertion-support mechanisms designed by the civil society were developed locally on both shores of the Mediterranean. These mechanisms foster employability of young people removed from work or in school dropout situation. Such structures yield excellent insertion results (beyond 60% of positive outcomes in northern Mediterranean countries), yet due to the lack of institutional and financial supports they face difficulties to ramp up to a higher level.

The objective of the Mediterranean New Chance Network (MedNC) is to federate these players in order to overcome the huge challenges. The network makes it possible

to leverage their action capabilities and to reinforce their impact by uniting their strengths and expertise through trainings and good practice exchanges. Moreover, the network helps improving their action and gaining support from public authorities. Today, the network comprises more than **26,000 youth and 100 partner centers** from 9 Mediterranean countries. One key objective is to establish solid partnerships with the world of business and with institutional players. The network is a UfM-labelled project and is cofinanced by the French Development Agency, the Drosos Foundation and the European Union via the ERASMUS+ programme.

**Do you wish to know more about the network and its membership criteria?**

Visit our site: [www.iecd.org/iecd2/le-reseau-mediterranee-nouvelle-chance/](http://www.iecd.org/iecd2/le-reseau-mediterranee-nouvelle-chance/) or contact Mrs. Astrid Desjober: [astrid.desjober@iecd.org](mailto:astrid.desjober@iecd.org)



<sup>1</sup> MENA: acronym for Middle East and North Africa

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, press release 01/04/2019: <https://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/news/press-release/2019/03/27/continued-reforms-needed-in-middle-east-and-north-africa-to-increase-labor-productivity-and-boost-growth>

<sup>3</sup> NEET: acronym for Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training

# The Mediterranean youth: an urgent matter

This review was conducted jointly by the IECD (Astrid Desjobert and Cécile Allain) and an economist statistician expert (Michèle Mansuy), with the AFD contribution and the support of the partners of the Mediterranean New Chance Network: the French Development Agency, the Drosos Foundation, the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Union through the Erasmus+ program.

Countries of the Mediterranean basin face several similar challenges among which youth employability, access to jobs and socio-professional insertion. These are indeed worrisome challenges since informal employment and unpaid employment (particularly in rural areas) are frequent for the youth<sup>4</sup>.

In its 2016 study "Society at a Glance" that covers only the OECD member states (36 countries in North and South America, in Europe, Asia-Pacific), the OECD underlines the durable negative effects that inactivity and unemployment periods can inflict on individuals at the beginning of their adult lives, including:

- **poor employment prospects and lower incomes**
- **inability to leave the parental household or to start their own family**

The OECD insists on the impact of such phenomena on poverty in countries, particularly where there is no suitable public aid. A certain number of young persons are thus unable to achieve their own autonomy, besides employment, social and community insertion.


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In addition to the long term consequences of these difficulties on the life of individuals, the impacts on society as a whole at the economic, social and political level can also be stressed.

## **Strong social and political consequences**

The societal impacts are also significant. The European foundation for the improvement of life and labour conditions demonstrates in a study conducted in 2012 that in Europe, "the level of institutional trust among NEETs is considerably lower than the rest of the young population"<sup>5</sup>. The level of political commitment leads to the same trends according to this study, which specifies that generally in Europe the young NEETs - the indicator that designates individuals not in employment, education or training (box 2, p18) - "present an even lower level of engagement"<sup>7</sup> of the youth in general than that of the other age groups. The

study shows also that in some southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus), the unemployed youth are more likely to get involved in politics than employed youth.



Youth unemployment and inactivity may also fuel very strong frustrations and loss of confidence towards the existing political systems. In Tunisia, numerous researchers insist on the importance of the economic causes and of the fate of unemployment as felt by the youth of the inland Governorates in the upheaval of the 2011 revolution. Moreover, the Tunisian Institut national de la statistique underlines that employment was the first cause of immigration of Tunisians in 2014 (73.4% of the total number of immigrants)<sup>8</sup>.

## **Heavy economic impacts**

In its aforementioned study, the OECD indicates that the high number of young NEETs induces "significant opportunity costs"<sup>9</sup> for the economies of the member states, in as much as "young people's time and skills go unused". It gives estimates of these costs by defining the cost of NEETs as the "gross labour income" that such young persons could claim if they had a job, measured as the net labour cost (including social contributions). Thus, the cost of unemployed or school dropout youth is estimated to have reached US\$560 Billion (point estimate<sup>10</sup>) in the OECD in 2014 that is between 0.9 and 1.5% of the OECD GDP.

The OECD emphasizes the approximate nature of this instrument, particularly since it does not allow extracting from this population the NEETs who chose not to work. Moreover, it is also stressed that these estimates do not take into account the social contributions paid to some of the young NEETs, and do not make it possible to assess the cost associated with the degradation of the health status or the rise in crime.

<sup>4</sup> For the Marrakech region and for Tunisia, cf. Mansuy M. & Werquin P, "Jeunes salariés au Maghreb, souvent sans contrat même dans le secteur formel", Océano-débats n° 8, 2016

<sup>5</sup> Society at a Glance: OECD social indicators, OECD, 2016 - <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264261488-en>

<sup>6</sup> NEETs, *Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*, European Foundation for the improvement of Living and Working conditions, 2012, p94

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p99 "In this context, NEETs present an even lower level of engagement."

<sup>8</sup> Tunisian Institut national de la statistique, "Flash n°3 : Statistiques Tunisie : Flash migration", <http://www.ins.nat.tn/fr/publication/bulletin-n%C2%80-3-flash-migration>

<sup>9</sup> The opportunity cost of an action or of an economic decision is the measure of the value of each of the other actions or decisions to which one renounces. When we need to compromise or make choices, the most rational decision is the decision the opportunity cost of which (subjectively evaluated) was the lowest.

<sup>10</sup> Point estimate takes into account the fact that unemployed youth are likely to have an income lower than that of the other youth and that those young persons are more likely to have family obligations.

The study carried out in 2012 by the *European foundation for the improvement of life and labour conditions*<sup>11</sup> proposes another estimate of this economic loss due to the exclusion of a portion of the youth (15-to-29 age group) from the labour market and the education system, carried out in the 26 member states of the European Union in 2011. The study compares the cost of the social benefits a young NEET receives against the amount this individual would have contributed to society should he have had a job (income tax and social contributions). In 2011, the loss incurred to the 26 OECD member states amounted to €153 Billion, i.e. more than **1.2% of the GDP in Europe**<sup>12</sup>, as a comparison with a situation where these young persons would not be NEETs. We could assume that since 2011 the situation has been further degraded.



This literature review wishes to give elements of understanding at the regional level within the Mediterranean basin, owing to the quantified data. The purpose is to fuel the reflexions and deployment of solutions for the players who work to foster the insertion of youth in difficult situations.

<sup>11</sup> *NEETs, Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*, European Foundation for the improvement of Living and Working conditions, 2012

<sup>12</sup> This cost is measured by comparing the excess of amount of social contributions to which the young NEET has access versus the amount the young person would have contributed to society if he had not been NEETs (income tax and social contributions).

## A / A LARGE YOUNG POPULATION

In the countries of the Mediterranean basin, the 15-to-29 year-old youth accounts for a major age group of the population. In 2015, they represented one quarter of the total population in the Maghreb countries and in Egypt. In Lebanon, the ratio is close to 30% (table 1). Table 1 below shows also the figures for instance in Egypt the youth population was close to 25 million in 2015.

In his survey "Formation et emploi des jeunes dans les pays méditerranéens"<sup>13</sup>, Y. Kocoglu stresses the strong demographic growth that southern Mediterranean countries

have been experiencing for the last 30 years, even if a slight drop has been observed in recent years. Over three decades, the 15-to-29 age group has increased by a 1.3 factor in Morocco and in Tunisia, 1.6 in Algeria, 1.8 in Egypt, 2.3 in Lebanon (partly due to the influx of young migrants in the latter case). In northern Mediterranean countries, the 15-to-29 age group is decreasing versus 1986: minus 11% in France, minus 29% in Spain and Portugal and minus 35% in Italy (graph 1 / p13). This age group accounts for about 15% of the total population in Italy, Portugal, and Spain and almost 18% in France.

**Table 1** - Share of the 15-to-29 age group in the total population (%) and effective numbers (in thousands) in 1986 and 2015

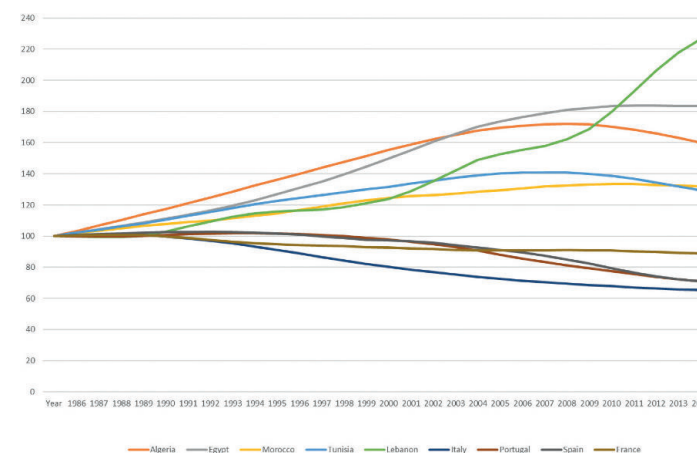
Youth	Algeria	Egypt	Morocco	Tunisia	Lebanon	Italy	Portugal	Spain	France
Effective 1986	6492	13 494	6811	2133	744	13 396	2342	9602	12 831
Share 1986	27.9	26.1	29.6	28.4	27.8	23.5	23.5	24.6	23.0
Effective 2015	10 387	24 775	8987	2762	1683	8750	1663	6809	11420
Share 2015	26.1	26.4	25.8	24.5	28.8	14.7	16.0	14.7	17.7

Source: UNO, population census reviewed in 2017

Reading: In Algeria, the 15-29 age group were 10,387,000 in 2015, i.e. 26.1% of the total population. In 1986, the figure was 6,492,000, i.e. 27.9% of the total population.

<sup>13</sup> Kocoglu Y., "Formation et emploi des jeunes dans les pays méditerranéens", OCEMO report 2014 <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Etude-OCEMO.pdf>

**Graphique 1** - Evolution of the 15-29 age group in the last 30 years (1986-2015, in % of total population 1986)



Source: UNO, population census reviewed in 2017  
Reading: In Morocco, in 2015, the 15-29 age group was 1.3 times higher than it was in 1986.

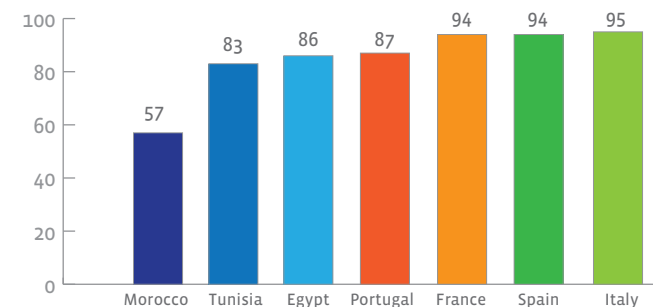
## B / BETTER ACCESS TO EDUCATION, BUT ALARMING NUMBERS OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

### Access to education becomes widespread

Cojointly with demographic evolution, access to education has increased. Primary education is now general: in 2016, the net school enrolment rate (Box 1 / p14) in primary education exceeds 94%, except in Lebanon where it stands at 82%, whereas

this rate was only 76% in Morocco. Access to the lower cycle secondary school also increased in southern Mediterranean (cf. graph2). Morocco is lagging behind with a school enrolment rate of 57% in the same cycle in 2016, even though the enrolment rate has been increasing significantly (this rate was of 26% in 2000).

**Graph 2** - Net lower cycle secondary education school enrolment rate in 2016 (% of the corresponding age group)



Source: Unesco, UIS data base. Data from Algeria and Lebanon is not available. Data from Tunisia concerns 2015.  
Reading: in 2016 in Egypt, the school enrolment rate in the lower cycle of the secondary education was 86% of the age group that in theory corresponds to this cycle.  
Reading: In 2016, in Tunisia the net school enrolment rate (see definition in Box 1) in the lower cycle of the secondary education was 83%.



However, as indicated in **Box 1**, although school statistics enable to observe progress made in the access to education, they do not make it possible to assess the number of young early school leavers.

### The rate of early school leavers remains high

This assessment is possible for the three southern Mediterranean countries which completed the insertion surveys within the framework of the ILO SWTS programme<sup>14</sup> for

which we have more precise information (**Table 2 / p15**). In these three countries, a significant minority of the 15-to-29 age group (from 31% who completed their studies in Lebanon to more than 48% in Tunisia) did not achieve secondary school graduation and are therefore early leavers (**table 2 / p15**). Among young Egyptian and Tunisian there are more females early school leavers than male ones, but in Lebanon it is the opposite as the number of male school leavers is twice that of female ones.

#### BOX 1: EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS DIFFICULT TO SURVEY

Early school leavers are individuals who leave school before receiving a diploma in secondary, general or professional education<sup>15</sup>. By definition, since school leavers are not recorded by the schooling institutions, it is difficult to assess their precise numbers.

The net school enrolment rate (share of the number of registered individuals within a cycle and concerning an age group concerned theoretically) demonstrates the school enrolment rate progress. Yet the balance to 100% does not measure school dropout, due to repeated years, reorientations, and students ahead of the theoretical age. This is why we decided to indicate this rate only for the primary education and for the secondary school lower cycles, before the possible branching off between fields open a gap between the theoretical age of the classes and the effective age of the students. Early drop-out numbers can only be measured by direct interviews within representative statistical surveys. This is the case for the insertion investigation surveys completed within the framework of the ILO SWTS programme and for the European surveys on labour forces.

Note that we observe a higher proportion of early leavers in the 25-to-29 age group than in the 20-to-24 age group, since schooling expansion has continued since then.

**Table 2 - Education level of the 15-to-29 age group who completed their studies (% of total)**

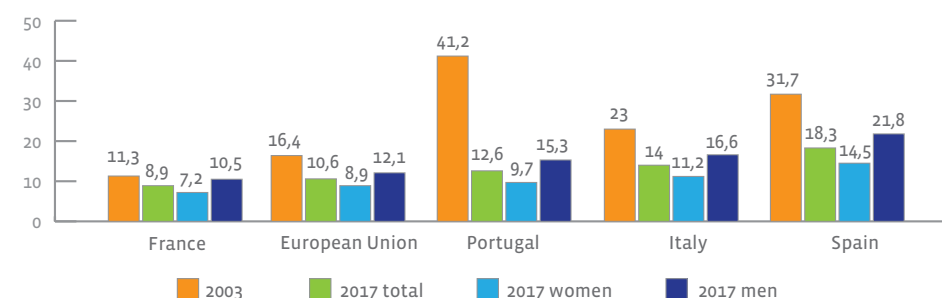
	Egypt	Lebanon	Tunisia
Less than primary school	18.3	0.6	3.7
Primary	22	30.4	44.7
Early school leavers	40,3 (37,7M and 42,2W)	31 (39,2M and 20,7W)	48,4 (47,9M and 48,7W)
Secondary professional	37.4	10.9	11.7
Secondary general	1.9	22.6	22.8
Post-secondary professional	3.7	5.4	-
Higher	16.7	30	17.2
Total	100	100	100

Source: ILO SWTS insertion surveys; data from Egypt concerns 2014; data from Lebanon concerns 2014-2015; data from Tunisia concerns 2013. Reading: 31% of Lebanese aged 15 to 29 ended their studies without achieving secondary education graduation.

In northern Mediterranean countries, the proportion of early leavers seems lower than that in the South. It has dropped significantly, in Portugal notably (**graph 3**). It remains nevertheless a challenge and is higher than the European average in Portugal (12.6%)<sup>16</sup>, in Italy (14%) and mainly in Spain where slightly more than 18%

of the 18-to-24 age group do not receive any diploma or certificate in secondary education<sup>17</sup>. In northern Mediterranean countries, young males leave the education system more often (21.8% versus 14.5% of young females in Spain in 2017, as an example), which matches the European average values.

**Graph 3 - Early leavers in several countries in southern Europe, in 2003 and 2017 < (in % of total 18-to-24 age group)**



Eurostat, Enquêtes sur les forces de travail et Insee, Bilan formation-emploi. Reading: In 2017, 12.6% of Portugueses in the 18-to-24 age group left education without secondary school diploma, versus 41.2% in 2003."

<sup>14</sup> School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS) : unique survey instrument that generates relevant labour market information on young people aged 15 to 29 years. The SWTS thus serves as a unique tool for demonstrating the increasingly tentative and indirect paths to decent and productive employment. [https://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/work-for-youth/WCMS\\_191853/lang-fr/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/work-for-youth/WCMS_191853/lang-fr/index.htm)

<sup>15</sup> Refers to the "CITE 0 to 2" in the Unesco classification

<sup>16</sup> The high secondary education expansion in Portugal over the same period could explain the significant gap between the share of 18-24 year-old early school leavers in 2003 and in 2007 in that country. The 2005 education pushed to 18 the mandatory school age and this has facilitated the bridges between domains.

<sup>17</sup> Figures in graph 3 and in table 2 are not directly comparable, since the age groups and the years of assessment concerned are different.



Early education termination is closely linked with the **household income** on both shores of the Mediterranean. According to the insertion surveys completed within the framework of the ILO SWTS programme, in Egypt, the share of youth from low income families who do not complete primary education (34%) is twice that of youth from higher income families (13%) (and 18% on average for all households). In Tunisia, this ratio is three times that value, since 7% of youth who live in poor households did not complete primary education, versus 2% of youth in higher income households (almost 4% for all households). In the northern Mediterranean countries, it has also been observed that this concerns the poorest families in the least favoured zones. For instance, in France, in 2013, 14% of school dropout youth had no diploma, but the

figure was 26% for young persons living in an "urban policy" districts and 18% for children from managerial-class backgrounds versus 2% for children of workers.<sup>18</sup>

Several reasons explain why early leavers quit studying, and these reasons can also be gender-differentiated (table 3). For example, in Lebanon, early education termination by men is explained by the lack of interest (29%) and by examination failure (17%). Young women stop mainly to start working (42%) or because of family pressure or marital status evolution (27%). In Tunisia, examination failure is the first cause of school dropout both for men and women (31% and 35% respectively), followed by lack of interest and financial constraints (between 21 and 24% of cases).

Tableau 3 - Reasons for education termination of early leavers (per genders, in %)

REASONS	Lebanon		Tunisia	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Examination failure	15	17	35	31
Bored with studies	23	29	24	24
Work	42	8	14	8
Mariage	27	0	5	0
Parents opposed to further studies	1	3	1	5
Financial resources	15	10	21	22
No schools near by	0	1	1	2
Other reasons	3	6	5	3

Source: ILO, SWTS insertion surveys; data from Egypt not available; data from Lebanon Concerns 2014-2015; data for Tunisia concerns 2013.

<sup>18</sup> "Génération 2013" survey, Cereq, young persons interviewed in 2017, "When school is over".

Concerning the **European countries**, data is differentiated according to the stage at which youth interrupted their studies. The reason for the education termination of these early leavers is different as a function of this above-mentioned stage (table 4). For those who entered a secondary education senior cycle, the main reason is the wish to

work. For those who left earlier, the lack of interest and school difficulties are the main criteria. For those who are the first to leave school, usually the most vulnerable ones, education lacks interest and they received no support to overcome their schooling problems.

Table 4 - Reasons for education termination of early leavers in the European Mediterranean countries in 2016 (%)

REASONS	Started the high school senior cycle				Did not start the high school senior cycle			
	Spain	France	Italy	Portugal	Spain	France	Italy	Portugal
Finances	2	-	5	-	-	-	2	-
School difficulties	4	-	5	-	18	19	16	27
Level required reached	2	-	14	-	-	-	-	-
Wish to work	44	-	40	47	22	20	21	27
Lack of interest	25	-	20	-	37	26	42	-
Family, health and other reasons	22	-	16	28	22	32	19	29

Source: Eurostat, youth employment module complementary to labour force surveys. French data only concerns youth who did not start the senior secondary education. Reading: 44% of 18-to-24 age group Spanish who started the senior secondary cycle and did not receive a diploma stopped their schooling to start working.

Moreover, besides the proportions of early leavers from the education system, Y. Kocoglu (2014) underlines two problems for southern Mediterranean countries in his study<sup>19</sup>. First, the rate of repeated school year in primary and secondary education is higher than the world average (7 to 8% in Lebanon and in Tunisia, more than 10% in Morocco). According to the studies available<sup>20</sup>, repeated school year tends to

lower the motivation of the students and can become a driver for early termination of education. Second, southern Mediterranean countries exhibit schooling results lower than the international average measured in international evaluations on students' acquired knowledge (this is the case for Tunisia for Pisa, of Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco for TIMSS).

<sup>19</sup> Kocoglu Y., « Formation et emploi des jeunes dans les pays méditerranéens », OCEMO report 2014 <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Etude-OCEMO.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> For France, see CNESCO (National council for school system evaluation) "conférence de consensus : lutter contre les difficultés scolaires : le redoublement et ses alternatives", Summary dossier, 27-28 January 2015.

## C / DIFFICULT EMPLOYMENT INSERTION

Regardless of the progress achieved in the domain of education, youth access to the labour market in the Mediterranean countries remains difficult, as shown by various indicators.

### BOX 2: UNEMPLOYED AND INACTIVE INDIVIDUALS

The term **active** designates persons who are either employed as well as those who are unemployed. The ILO standard definition applies to unemployed persons, who are actively seeking a job and who are available to take it.

**Unemployment rate** is the share of the unemployed group among the active population. For the youth – of which a large segment is composed of full time students and categorized as inactive – unemployment rate is noticeably higher than the share of unemployed within the age group.

In the SWTS surveys, the ILO uses the wider definition of unemployment since job seeking is not necessarily active and therefore **discouraged unemployed** are included in this wider definition of unemployed individuals.

The term **discouraged unemployed** designates working-age individuals who, during a given reference period, were unemployed and available for work, but who declare that they no longer seek employment as they consider that the chances of getting a job are too thin.

An international comparison shows that the national education characteristics (possible strong presence of apprenticeship, general education level), and that of social legislation (unemployment compensation notably), somewhat renders the reading of youth unemployment complex.

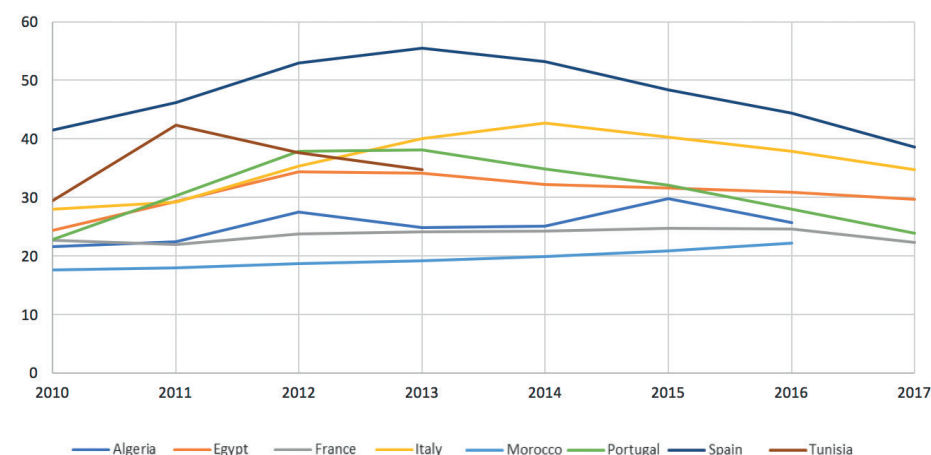
Another indicator of tensions on the youth labour market – the rate of youth Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training (NEET) – has been created. This corresponds to the proportion, within an age group (15-to-24 for the European reference indicators), of those who do not have a job and are not undergoing training. Young NEETs include unemployed persons in the broad meaning of the word (including discouraged unemployed) and the inactive non-students persons. This group is rather heterogeneous, since the inactive non-students do not seek jobs. According to Elder's recommendations (2016)<sup>21</sup> these individuals should be subdivided in two subgroups (unemployed and inactive non-students) as shown in graph 8 to analyse the results.

### Young people are more impacted by unemployment

Thus, the **unemployment rate** in the 15-to-24 age group is very high in the region (graph 4). In 2017, this rate was close to 12% in the area, but close to 40% in Spain, 35% in Italy and higher than 20% in France and in Portugal. In southern Mediterranean countries, this rate was for instance close to 30% in Egypt. Moreover, in its latest report<sup>22</sup> the ILO states that in 2019 the youth unemployment rate (15-to-24 age range) in northern Africa will exceed 30%, a region of the world where the unemployment rate is the highest<sup>23</sup>. Many of these young unemployed persons feel discouraged: they were 188,000 in Algeria (2017), 154,000 in Egypt (2016) or 27,000 in France.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, young individuals are more exposed to unemployment than the older age groups: depending on the countries, youth unemployment is 2.5 times higher than that of age groups over 25 and up, to four times higher in Egypt (table 5 / p20). The same observation applies to Arab countries<sup>25</sup>, where unemployment concerns a disproportionate number of young people whose joblessness rate is 4 times that of adults in the same region. According to the ILO estimations, 3.5 times more young people are likely to be unemployed than their elders.

Graph 4 - 15-to-24 age group unemployment rate (in % of actives in the same age group)



Source: ILO, ILOSTAT base; data concerning Lebanon is not available.

Reading: In 2017, 29.6% of the 15-to-24 active Egyptians (employed or actively seeking a job) were unemployed.

<sup>21</sup> Elder S. "What does NEETs mean and why is the concept so easily misinterpreted?", W4Youth technical brief n°1.

<sup>22</sup> Report "World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2019", ILO, 2019 [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/dcomm/-/publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_670542.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/dcomm/-/publ/documents/publication/wcms_670542.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> According to the ILO definition, North Africa region gathers the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Western Sahara

<sup>24</sup> Source : ILO, ILOstat base

<sup>25</sup> According to the ILO definition, Arab states gathers the following countries: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

**Table 5 - Unemployment rate ratio versus the over 25 age group**

Algeria	Egypt	France	Italy	Morocco	Portugal	Spain
3.3	4.3	2.9	3.8	3.2	2.9	2.5

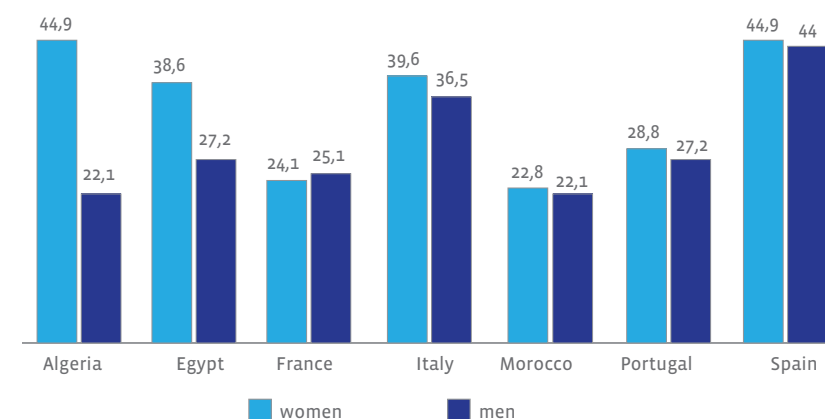
Source: ILO, ILOSTAT base; calculation from the authors, the Tunisian ratio was 2.8 in 2013.  
Reading: If the unemployment rate of Italians under 25 is 3.8 times higher than that of those over 25.

In southern Mediterranean countries, analysts emphasize the fact that the demand for skilled work did not follow the increase in education levels. The limited interest youth express for either professional careers or entrepreneurship is also emphasized. In northern Mediterranean countries, unqualified youth are severely impacted by unemployment. In Spain in 2017, the unemployment rate of youth with a basic education level - who did not achieve secondary education graduation (48,3%)<sup>26</sup> – is close to twice the number of youth with a high education level (graduated from higher education). In Tunisia and in Egypt, this ratio is reversed. The unemployment rate of high education youth is 3 times higher (53.7%) in Egypt and 2.5 times higher in Tunisia (67.5%) than that of young people who did not complete secondary education. It should be noted however that in southern Mediterranean countries, a significant

number of young people with no diploma have unpaid home help jobs or lowly paid informal jobs: they are not accounted for as unemployed individuals, they have low quality jobs.

Moreover, it is noted that unemployment does not impact equally young women and young men (graph 5 / 21). Young active women are usually more impacted than young active men. This is particularly true in Algeria and in Egypt. In 2018, according to the ILO, the women unemployment rate (20.7%) is twice higher than that of men (9.0%) in the north African region, as well as in the Arab countries. Forecasts seem to indicate that this trend will continue in the next two years in northern African countries, where only 16% of young women were active on the labour market (40% of the women were unemployed).

**Graph 5 - Men and women unemployment rate in 2016 (%)**



Source: ILO, ILOSTAT base  
Reading: In France, 24.1% of 15-to-24 active youth were unemployed in 2016 Young NEETs are numerous

### Young NEETs are numerous

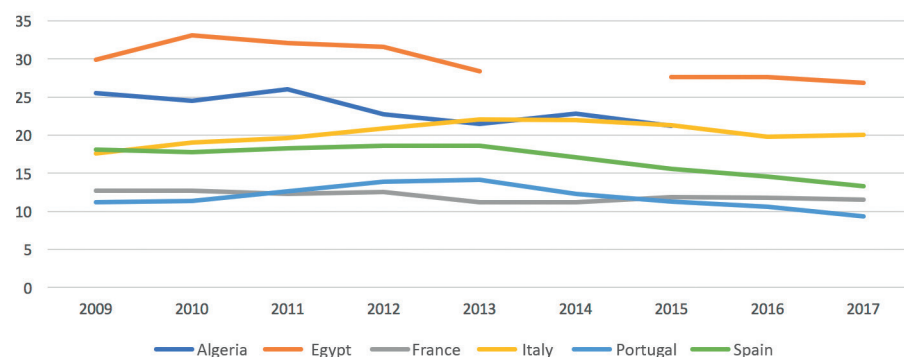
Although the unemployment rate is a valuable indicator to measure youth insertion, it is important to insist that it does not take into account the share of the population which no longer looks for a job. Moreover, according to the social legislation, youth tend more or less to declare themselves as unemployed rather than inactive. Finally, just as the proportion of student youth is different from one country to another, so is the proportion of active youth and the unemployment rates concern different groups of the youth. This renders international cooperation difficult.

For all these reasons, the NEET indicator (youth not in education or in employment, versus the all age group), is widely used, especially in Europe, even though this indicator is the cause of discussions (Box 2 / p18). It can be observed that the rate of young NEETs is high in the Mediterranean region (graph 6 / p22), notably in Egypt where more than a quarter of 15-to-24 youth are neither employed nor undergoing training in 2017. The rates are close to 20% in Algeria and in Italy, where they are slightly higher than those in Portugal and in France, where they are close to 10% (graph 6 / p22)<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Source: ILO, ILOSTAT base

<sup>27</sup> Data from Morocco is not available; the latest data for Lebanon dates back to 2007; data for Tunisia dates back to 2010.

**Graph 6 - Rate of 15-to-24 youth either unemployed or not undergoing training - NEET (%)**

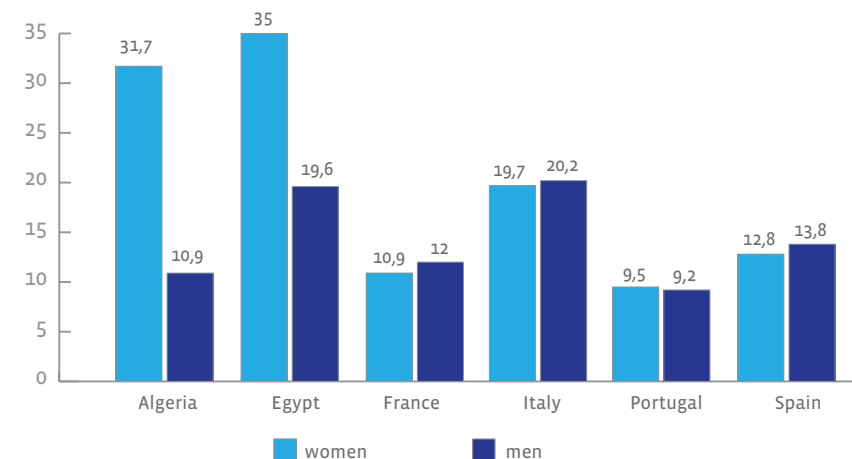


Source: ILO, ILOSTAT base; data for Lebanon and Morocco is missing; data for Tunisia concerns 2010 only (25%). 2016 value for Algeria and 2014 value for Egypt are missing.  
Reading: in 2017, 26.9% of the Egyptian 15-to-24 age group were either unemployed or not undergoing training.

Noticeable differences between young women and men are once more observed (Graph 7 / p23). In Egypt and in Algeria, it can be stressed that in addition to high unemployment rates, rates of young women NEETs are very high, higher than 30% in 2017. Moreover, in its latest report the ILO indicates that young women correspond to the majority of youth who meet the NEET definition criteria in the northern African countries. The ILO shows that the labour access opportunities for women, including young ones, are lower, due to their involvement in household work and limited access to education and training. In France, Italy and Spain, the rate of young women NEETs is slightly lower than that of young men.

Moreover, it is noted that unemployment does not impact equally young women and young men (graphs / p25). Young active women are usually more impacted than young active men. This is particularly true in Algeria and in Egypt. In 2018, according to the ILO, the women unemployment rate (20,7%) is twice higher than that of men (9,0%) in the north African region, as well as in the Arab countries. Forecasts seem to indicate that this trend will continue in the next two years in northern African countries, where only 16% of young women were active on the labour market (40% of the women were unemployed).

**Graph 7 - Rate of 15-to-24 youth either unemployed or not undergoing training - NEET in 2017, per gender (%)**



Source: ILO, ILOSTAT base; data for Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia not available.  
Reading: in Algeria in 2017, 31.7% of 15-to-24 young women were neither employed nor undergoing training, versus 10.9% of young men.

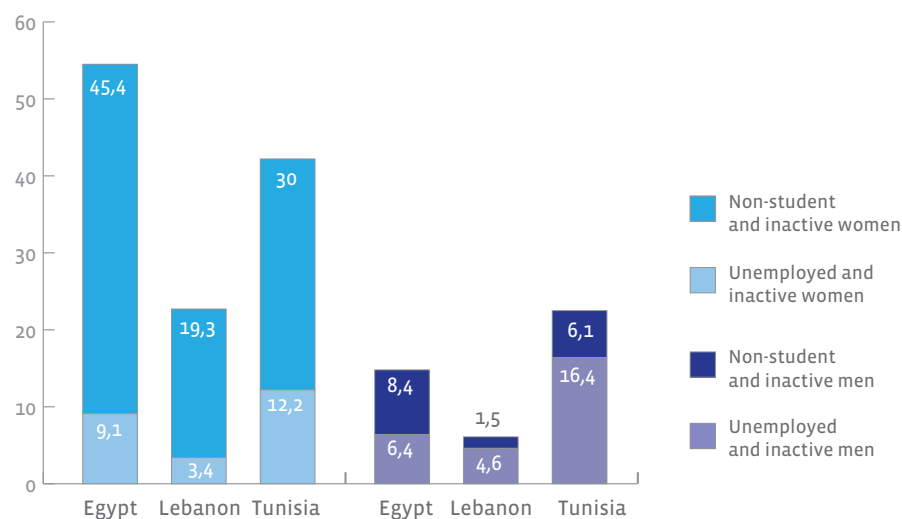
The insertion surveys completed within the framework of the ILO SWTS programme make it possible to establish a difference between the unemployed non-students and the inactive non-students among the young NEETs (graph 8 / p24). Young women are more frequently inactive (up to 45% on the 15-to-29 age group in Egypt, versus 8% for men), hence the higher proportions of young NEETs.

The results of the SWTS surveys also demonstrate that young persons from low income households are more exposed to the risk of no job and no training.

**According to the surveys conducted in the Mediterranean perimeter (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia) 44,4% of low income household youth are NEETs (versus 28.4% of high income household youth and 33.6% of the global households).**



Graph 8 - Proportion of 15-to-29 age group NEETS: unemployed or inactive(%)<sup>28</sup>



Source: BIT, SWTS surveys; NE unemployed: non student unemployed (broad definition); NE inactive: non student inactive. Reading: in Lebanon, in 2015, 3,4% of 15-to-29 age group women were unemployed and 19,3% were non-student inactive.

### Unequal quality of jobs

Besides the labour market insertion difficulties, it is important to underline the questions raised by the quality of the jobs held by the young people in the region, especially on the southern shore. According to the ILO, the informal sector amounts to 40% of non-agricultural jobs in northern Africa<sup>29</sup> and “the global evidence suggests that young people and young entrants to the labour market are more likely to face

informality and vulnerability” in the region. The ILO also considers that “Nearly two thirds of women across North Africa are in vulnerable employment, compared to one-third of men”. This figures reached 52.9% in Egypt, in 2017. This type of employment usually implies a lack of control for decent work conditions, no social benefits, the violation of labour law and of adequate work conditions.

### MORE INFORMATION

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- Details of the Excel data accessible on request

<sup>28</sup> Graphs 7 and 8 do not lend themselves to direct comparison: the age groups considered and the years are different.

<sup>29</sup> Conference paper « Youth and Employment in North Africa: A Regional Overview », prepared for the Conference on Youth and Employment in North Africa. ILO, 2017

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