

Work-based learning and circular mobility in the Maghreb countries

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The Delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries and the Arab Maghreb Union and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament is organising an exchange of views on “Work-based learning and circular mobility in the Maghreb countries”, with the participation of the three Maghreb countries representatives (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), as well as representatives of the European Commission and the European Training Foundation. The countries will be represented by the State Secretary for Training and Private Initiative from the Tunisian Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, the President of the Training Commission from the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises, and the Vice-Director for Pedagogical Organisation and Monitoring from the Algerian Ministry of Vocational Education and Training.

The current situation in these countries with regard to employment is characterised by a significant youth unemployment rate reaching an average higher than 25% together with a high number of youth neither in education nor in employment. The latter category represents more than 30% in all three Maghreb countries. Moreover, unemployment in these countries affects higher education graduates more than those coming from vocational education and training (VET). However, the participation in VET barely exceeds 10% of youth enrolled in secondary education.

In addition, the employability of those enrolled in VET could be enhanced. Experience from European countries showed that training methods that involve both business sectors and training centres, commonly called work-based learning, represent an efficient means to develop the skills needed for the labour market, including the non-technical ones, which are applicable to a large variety of working environments. It is particularly for this reason that the Ministers in charge of the development of vocational education and training of all EU member states, Candidates Countries, and the European Economic Area Countries, as well as the European social partners, at their meeting in Riga in June 2015, considered that work-based learning is one of the “five Mid-Term Deliverables in the field of VET”. These five MTDs represent the foundation of the European Programme for the modernisation of VET during the period 2015-2020.

In the Maghreb region, work-based Learning is well-developed in quantitative terms. It represents over 80% of the training offer in Tunisia and it reaches around 50% in Algeria and Morocco. However, the increasing relevance of vocational education and training with respect to the needs of the labour markets in these countries suggests that an effort should be made to improve the quality of the work-based learning. A more extensive and effective involvement of the business sector seems more necessary than ever.

Work-based learning entails a certain level of mobility in order to engage not only the companies in the community where the school operates, but also companies from other parts of the country, and of course those from other countries. In this context, the discussion will be focused on the cooperation of countries both of the Maghreb and of the EU, to strengthen vocational education and training, in particular work-based learning in support of mobility. How do we improve the quality of work-based learning? How it contributes to increasing the employability of young people? How it promotes internal, South-South, South-North and North-South mobility?

These are the issues that will be addressed during this meeting.