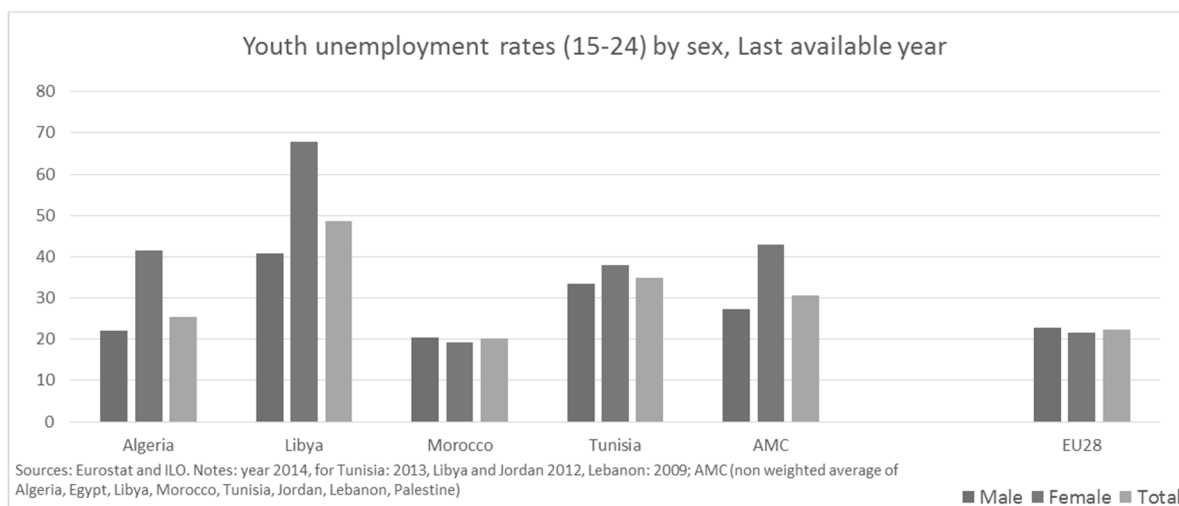


Draft note

Towards increased youth employability in the Maghreb¹: more and better work based learning opportunities

Over the last years, a new impetus to political and socio-economic changes has been given in the region. Despite some progress in the last three years in the field of youth employability and VET reforms, the socio-economic situation in the Maghreb region remains challenging, highly volatile and instable. Progress has been hampered by a combination of weak economic growth and inadequate availability and creation of jobs. Economic growth is heavily affected by the situation in the region and the crisis in Europe, with a decrease in tourism revenues, a slow-down of foreign investment and exports, and a decrease in remittances. With an average growth of 3% in 2013-14², the trend towards moderate growth is very recent and the foundations are still shaky given the persistent instability in the region.

Employment remains the highest priority. Overall employment rate remains low for the four Maghreb countries (on average around 40%) with important gender differences, female employment staying at around 20%. Youth unemployment is of great concern, with peaks above 35% in a demographic situation where 60% of population is under 30 years of age. Very high youth unemployment rates (15-24) are observed in Libya and Tunisia (48,7% and 34,7%) while lower rates are reported for Algeria (25,2%) and Morocco (20%)³. The majority of unemployed are first job-seekers with no previous work experience and most of them end up finding jobs in the informal economy. Female youth unemployment rates are particularly high in Algeria and Libya.



Young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) are estimated at 21,5% of the population aged 15-29 in Algeria and 25,4% in Tunisia⁴ (ETF, 2015) and are particularly

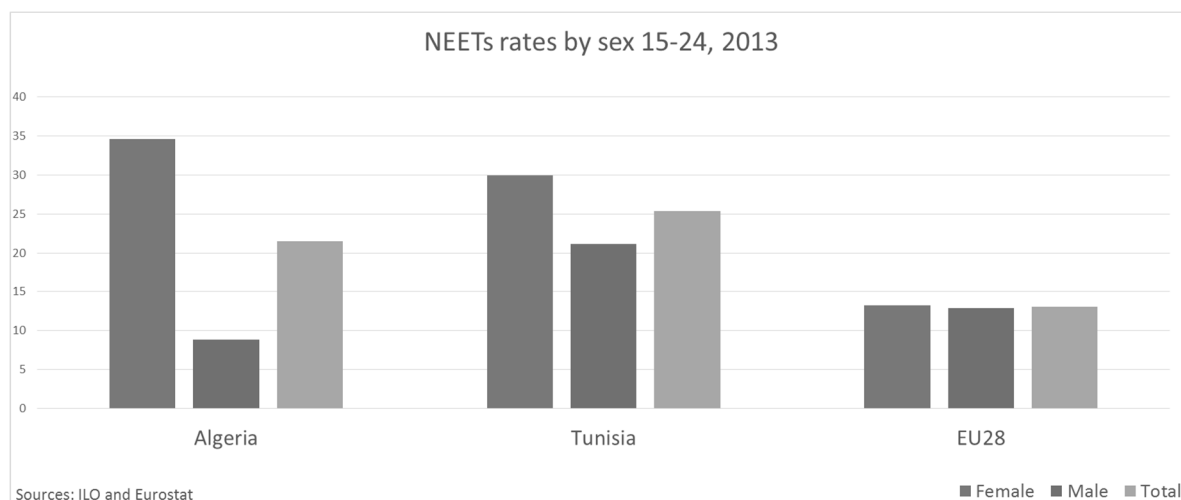
¹ For the purpose of this note, the countries covered under the Maghreb region are Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia

² Libya is not included in this calculation, given its extreme specificity (-24% GDP growth in 2014, OECD).

³ Source: National Labour Force Surveys. 2013 data for Libya and Tunisia (latest available); 2014 data for Morocco and Algeria

⁴ Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), An overview in ETF Partner Countries, 2015. For Morocco, the ETF 2014 Torino process report, estimates at 38% the number of youth 15-34 (31% for age group 15-24) that are not in

vulnerable to social exclusion. This **'youth employment gap'** represents a waste of human capital and educational investment, a devalorisation of national human resources, and leads to an increased risk of social instability and high levels of emigration.



Against this panorama of high youth unemployment and high levels of NEETs, the skills paradox is that employers in the region consider as one of the major constraint for growth an inadequately educated workforce

	Skills gaps (%)	Year
Algeria	36.8	2007
Morocco	31.8	2013
Tunisia	29.1	2013

Source: OECD

High level policy makers remain highly committed to find solutions to this paradox and common challenge: Ministers of Education, VET and Labour met annually since 2012⁵ at the ETF high level policy fora, reaffirming that skills are at the heart of economic development and job creation strategies and are a fundamental part of social cohesion, peace and democracy. This commitment has been translated in **development of visions for skills** to promote their drive towards economic competitiveness and inclusive growth. In this framework, VET is seen as a tool to serve the needs and aspirations of individuals, and enterprises, and the development of societies based on respect and democratic citizenship.

Developments have reinforced the trend towards **greater participation of social partners and civil society** in policy making and implementation so as to develop future oriented skills policies which anticipate the needs of society and the economy over the mid-term. Such policies, building on more intense education-business cooperation, should guide the investment strategies at national and local levels and attract foreign incoming investment.

Increasing the **local or territorial dimension of skills** is seen as key for addressing the specific needs of target groups. Closer link with local levels also helps to ensure that policies are converted

employment nor in formal education or VET (this %, therefore, does not cover the totality of the NEETs group as defined by Eurostat)..

⁵ Algeria participated only in 2013

into timely action and result. A critical success factor is building capacity for all actors who have roles and responsibilities in policy design and implementation at all levels. The EU funded GEMM “*Governance for employability in the Mediterranean*” project has shown the value of support at local level and how the mobilisation of all partners at different levels and from different stakeholders groups is needed for balanced economic development and for social and territorial cohesion. More specifically, in Tunisia, as a response to high youth unemployment challenge and to demands for fighting regional inequities, ETF implemented a 4-year project (2012-2015) supporting efforts towards regionalisation of VET. Over the four years, a regional coordination platform has been established in the selected region, Medenine. The platform designed locally led initiatives (like alumni associations, annual employability forum); tools for mapping the VET provision against the labour market needs, and to identify skills gaps in priority sectors for the region. The learnings and tools have been captured in a “toolbox” that is now being used in other regions such as Gabès and will be used for the preparations of the 8 regions participating in the new EU VET funded project IRADA. In Morocco, a multilevel governance project was implemented in the region of Tanger-Tetouan. On similar basis, it sets a regional working group to pilot and explore possible ways for the regionalisation of VET. A thorough local skills needs analysis was carried out in two priority sectors for the region (automotive and tourism). The results of the project have informed the new VET national strategy. Both the Morocco and Tunisia actions demonstrated that VET regionalisation is feasible, and it works effectively when local actors have learned the new role.

All countries have started to work closer with businesses either at the level of policy discussions or in the delivery of training. Among the priorities, **widen access** to VET within and outside formal VET systems; flexibilising the offer to cater for different groups, including drop outs and NEETs; feature high, **Work-based learning (WBL) opportunities** being it as *formation en alternance* or apprenticeship is well developed in most Maghreb countries. In Algeria more than 51% of VET students follow apprenticeship training⁶. In Morocco⁷ several forms of work based learning co-exist. Apprenticeship caters for around 9% of the overall VET graduates, and focuses mainly on agriculture and handicrafts sectors. Most of the programmes delivered by the *Office formation professionnelle et promotion du travail* are delivered through *formation en alternance*. More recently, in 2014, the *baccalauréat professionnel* was launched. It is based on a very close public private partnership, aiming to integrate closer the world of work with the world of training, and VET with higher education. For the moment it is implemented in key sectors of the economy (e.g. industrial maintenance, industrial mechanics, aeronautics) and in selected locations. Programmes have been developed in close cooperation and agreement with business with 40% being delivered in training centres created in partnership State-business sector or in companies directly. In Tunisia,⁸ both *alternance* and apprenticeship are well developed. In 2014, the % of VET students following WBL was of 91% for those under the national agency of VET, 10% for those in agriculture and 100% for those in tourism.

In view of the figures above, **issues of both quantity and quality** seem to be at stake in the countries regarding WBL opportunities. The main obstacles to further develop a quality work-based learning should be explored, such as the reinforcement of intermediary bodies that can play an important role in the governance and quality assurance of WBL programmes, particularly at the regional and industry sector levels, the development of appropriate legal, regulatory and financial frameworks, and the more active involvement by industry associations, employer organisations and trade unions. Addressing those obstacles should ensure that more and better quality work based learning opportunities translate into a more relevant training that matches the needs of local businesses. The final aim being to increase employability of youngsters in the countries and to ensure that **every youngster has an opportunity to (re)engage in a relevant skills development path**: Effective work based learning could make learners more competent and better prepared for the world

⁶ 2012 national data – ETF document interne préparé par M B. Lakhdar sur la base du cadre analytique du Processus de Turin septembre 2014

⁷ ETF Morocco Torino process report 2014

⁸ ETF Tunisia Torino process report 2014 – Self assessment

of work A new way of learning that stimulates **innovation and entrepreneurship**, contributes as well to make VET more attractive .

The EU has committed to promote closer **cooperation with the Maghreb**. In the EU joint communication “Supporting closer cooperation and regional integration in the Maghreb” it is stated that more than in any region within the Arab world, the Maghreb countries have embarked on a long process of change and reform and that the EU has a major interest in the success of such democratisation and modernisation process.

The **revised European Neighbourhood Policy** sets a clear focus on Youth and on the need to improve the employability of the local workforce, this by developing skills and competences. Working on apprenticeships and work based training are specifically mentioned as tools to be explored. In this Policy framework, the **European Neighbourhood Instrument** is an opportunity to support the development of skills through innovative collaborative ways.