

Youth NEETs in the Southern Neighbourhood



International
Labour
Organization



Funded by
the European Union

Key facts

- **Project budget:** € 3 million
- **Timeline:** 3 years (2024-2026)
- **Geographical scope:** Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Tunisia.
- **Resource partner:** European Commission (DG NEAR)
- **Main objective:** The regional project aims to improve the situation of young NEETs in the region by making public policies, practices and services more effective and responsive to their needs.

The challenge

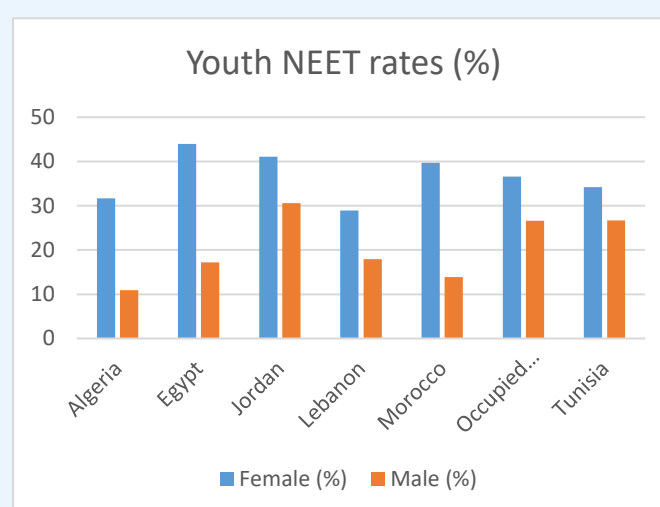
Over half of the population in the MENA region is under 24 years old and a quarter of young people in the labour force are unemployed. The share of young people aged 15-24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) is over 30 per cent in most countries in the region. Amongst young women, NEET rates are from 10 to over 20 percentage points higher than for young men (figure 1).

The high NEET rates among MENA youth stem from challenges on both the demand and supply sides of the labour market. The limited availability of decent employment opportunities for youth is exacerbated by the inability of educational and training systems to provide appropriate skills.

While various employment policies exist in the region which aim to address these challenges, such programmes in most countries are usually aimed at young graduates and not NEETs or other vulnerable groups. In the MENA region, education and skills development systems are insufficiently connected to the demands in the labour market leading to higher unemployment rates amongst the graduates in the countries of the region. In terms of employment policies, currently, four countries (Occupied Palestinian Territory, Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan) in the MENA region have a national employment policy or strategy.

All these factors point to the need to reinforce relevant policies, programmes and systems in the MENA region, with the aim to provide young NEETs with the right skills and opportunities for successful integration in labour markets.

Figure 1: Share of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) in MENA countries



Source: ILO-Stat

As highlighted in the [Union for the Mediterranean \(UfM\) Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour of 18 May 2022 \(Marrakech\)](#), the MENA partners have the political will to continue and scale up the policy reforms. A major focus of these reforms has been to improve the

effectiveness of active labour market policies targeting youth and to actively involve them in the decision-making process, through meaningful youth engagement.

Project strategy

The long-term objective of the project is to improve the situation of the region's young NEET population by increasing employment and training opportunities. This will be achieved by making public policies and practices more effective and responsive to the needs of young NEETs.

► Textbox 1: The European Union Youth Guarantee Scheme

A key inspiration for the project is the EU Youth Guarantee Scheme (YGS). The YGS is a broad-based and integrated youth employment and activation policy which goes beyond traditional active labour market interventions. With the Youth Guarantee, the EU Member States commit to provide young people with a quality offer of employment, education or training within four months of registering in employment services.

Given the socio-economic and political contexts in the MENA region, and the difference in scale of the youth employment challenges, the project strategy will use the YGS as an inspiration and practice on how to improve public policy on youth employment by focusing on outreach, activation and service delivery to NEET populations.

The European Commission and ILO are partnering to establish a YGS in the Western Balkans. In 2021, the EC, together with ILO, European Training Foundation (ETF) as well as the representatives from the Western Balkans launched the preparation of YG Implementation Plans and a Western Balkans Technical Assistance Facility to support this process.

Public employment services (PES) play a significant role in the implementation of employment policies in general and active labour market policies in particular. The project will support public employment services and other employment service providers by strengthening their capacities, service offer and delivery mechanisms to ensure a holistic approach to tackling labour market and social barriers to integration of young NEETs. Likewise and more broadly, the project will aim to strengthen coordination mechanisms between Ministries in charge of employment, education and vocational training and

include representatives of employers and workers and youth or youth organizations.

The project will assist PES in expanding their coverage through local outreach strategies, including collaboration with other public and private providers and building on lessons from the YGS. This will include identification of gaps and elaboration of concrete action plans to address certain challenges, taking into account the local context.

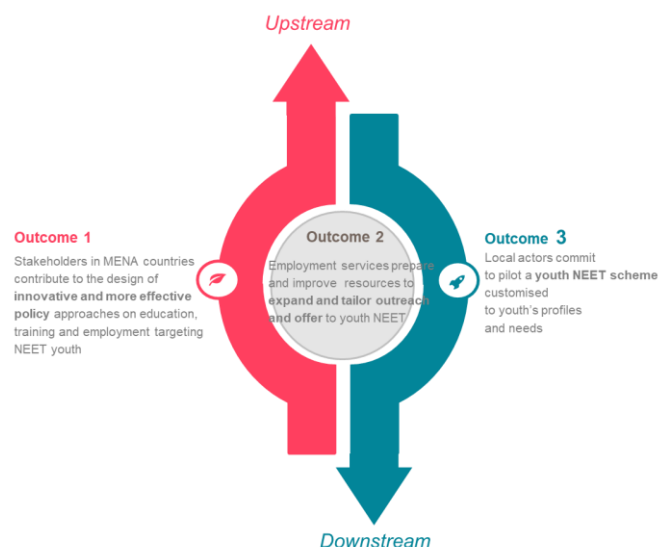
Based on a demand-driven approach, a Technical Assistance Facility will offer tailored support to partners in the region, in view of (re)engaging youth NEETs.

The project will establish a baseline framework, coordination mechanism and field testing, providing the basis for designing a long term and sustainable strategy to finance youth employment and NEET outreach. It will incorporate a regional dimension, supporting exchanges of best practices and peer learning between partners.

Main components

The project will concentrate on three main outcome areas (see the table) to achieve two major objectives: (1) improve knowledge and coordination; (2) reinforce and /or develop innovative approaches to reach and support young NEETs and (3) pilot adapted approaches in reaching out and providing relevant employment services for youth NEETs. The intervention will build on existing policies and initiatives, and will contribute to support, develop, enhance, coordinate, integrate and implement them.

Table 1: Outcome areas



ILO means of action

The ILO's approach to policy and programmatic design is to advocate for **comprehensive and gender-responsive youth employment strategies**, which draws on more than two decades in supporting the formulation and implementation of such policies.

This project will be working as a **Technical Assistance Facility (TAF)** to match the needs expressed by MENA partners in order to support decent education, training and work for youth NEETs, with a:

- Demand-driven approach;
- Gender-sensitive approach; and
- Focus on green and digital economic pathways, and community jobs in rural areas as potential areas for future employment opportunities.

The TAF's added value lies in its flexibility and tailored-made approach that is crucial for a gradual adjustment to local contexts while ensuring a shared direction of travel for the region. The TAF will offer **a menu of tools, diagnostics, guidance material and training services** (in collaboration with the ILO's International Training Centre in Turin) that will be adapted to partner-specific priorities.

The project also includes a **regional window** that will foster exchanges of best practices within the region, while drawing on global best practices in implementing Youth Guarantees and other youth-inclusion experiences in other middle-income countries (in particular the Youth Guarantee Scheme for the Western Balkans).

► Textbox 2: Technical assistance tools (indicative list)

- Young NEET statistical profiles
- Regional or local scoping/selection studies
- Youth employment policy reviews
- Review of legislation/regulation
- Capacity assessment of local service providers
- Set of learning packages/operational guidance
- Mapping service providers
- Design monitoring and tracking system
- Sensitization on youth guarantee/youth NEETs
- Review budget/expenditure
- Learning package/guidance for PES and partner staff: targeting, outreach, activation
- Implementation plan for pilot

Institutional framework

A **tripartite Project Advisory Committee (PAC)** will be established in the focus partner countries with the national partner institutions to provide country-specific overall and strategic guidance to the project, preferably within an existing national coordination mechanism ideally with tripartite social dialogue institutions. The EU Delegations will be invited to participate in all meetings of the national Project Advisory Committees.

At the regional level, the project will be guided by a **Project Steering Committee**, attended by the ILO, the European Commission and the EU Delegations, along with the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat and the European Training Foundation.

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