Context

Unemployment among young graduates, particularly in interior regions, is the central problem of Tunisia after the revolution. In addition to the unemployment issue, there is a regional imbalance in terms of economic, social and environmental development.

(12) L'OIT en action: la Tunisie développe son économie sociale et solidaire - YouTube

The Tunisian Government and its partners regard the creation of decent jobs, in particular for young men and women in disadvantaged regions, as a central priority and engine of economic growth and development, as well as social peace.

However, economic difficulties and the slowing down of the production apparatus have considerably reduced the capacity of the private sector to create new employment opportunities. In this situation, the promotion of self-employment through individual or collective entrepreneurship has a potential to significantly reduce unemployment among young people, including in the informal economy.

It is in this context that the social and solidarity economy (SSE) has been identified by the Tunisian government and the social partners as a sector with significant potential for reducing social inequalities, promoting inclusion, creating jobs, wealth
and a path to the formal economy.

**Achievements:**

Tunisia is the first country where the ILO began implementing SSE (Social and Solidarity Economy) programs. These programs, supported by donors such as the European Union and the governments of Canada and the Netherlands, aim to create conditions for a favorable and attractive SSE environment.

JEUN'ESS is one of the ILO projects working on the Social and Solidarity Economy in Tunisia. They focus on optimizing the "solidarity chain" to enable greater added value for Tunisian products. They support SSE entities, such as cooperatives, to strengthen their production, transform and diversify their products, and access markets through better marketing and certification strategies.
These projects concentrate on creating the first generation of SSE entities in Tunisia following the adoption of the law in 2020. The Social Innovation Fund was thus created to select over 100 SSE new projects. They are currently for a period of six months, resulting in legal establishment and providing technical and financial support to beneficiaries. In less than two years, 42 SSE organizations have already benefited from technical and financial support to develop their activities.

At the strategic level, the ILO office in Tunis is the main partner of the Ministry of Economy and Planning in the Social and Solidarity Economy portfolio. It supported the establishment of a commission and provided experts who developed the SSE 2035 vision as part of Tunisia's 2023-2025 Development Plan. The Ministry also receives support for mapping social entrepreneurship initiatives in Tunisia, their evaluation for capitalization and scaling up. This study aims to lead to a National policy for economic empowerment.

The "Community Fund" also provides support to local communities and social partners for the development of SSE projects. An SSE guide for local communities has been developed to allow greater capitalization and coordination of SSE action at the local level.
The LIMITL'ESS clubs are another initiative of these projects. In partnership with the international organization ENACTUS, ENACTUS LIMITL'ESS clubs have been established alongside the LIMITL'ESS Generation clubs within youth and cultural centers in Tunisia. Their aim is to raise awareness among young people about the values, principles, and opportunities promoted by SSE (Social and Solidarity Economy).
Finally, the Market Fund will serve as the tool for capitalization and sustainability of the JEUN'ESS initiative. In the context of the challenges mentioned earlier, it is crucial to provide direct support to these entities to enhance their capacity to follow a complete process in their value chain. Support for strengthening their production capacity, diversification and/or transformation of their products, and the improvement of their governance systems would be insufficient unless we move towards systemic change aimed at improving the business environment and support programs for market access.

Marketing in the context of the Social and Solidarity Economy encompasses several key points:

- Moving towards local markets at the national or international level.
- Drawing inspiration from the proximity between producers and consumers to develop a relationship of trust that fosters customer loyalty and economic development.
- Valuing local raw materials through natural products and traditional local craftsmanship. The product primarily tells a story that will be valued to attract consumers.
- Emphasizing transparency so that consumers can have detailed information about the product they are purchasing, including the source of raw materials, the techniques used, and the names of the producers.
Part of the ILO staff in Tunisia has also been trained in ILO SSE tools such as My.Coop, Think.Coop, Start.Coop, and Generate your social enterprises ideas for youth. These tools will benefit many partners in the field to multiply the knowledge and skills of the ILO.

These initiatives are delivered in collaboration with the daily support of the ILO COOP unit in Geneva.

**More details**

**Institutional partners**

- Ministry of Development, Investment and International Cooperation (MDiCI) (Main partner)
- Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries (MARHP)
- Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment (MFPE)
- Ministry of Social Affairs (MAS)
- Social partners: Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA); Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT); and Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries (UTAP)

**Goals**

**Development objective:**
The promotion of decent work for young people through the SSE.

**Specific objectives:**

1. Improvement of knowledge on the SSE value chains and the characteristics of the informal economy at regional level
2. Capacity building of SSE support organizations
3. Creation of decent jobs at local level through the SSE in six governorates
4. Improving the working conditions of workers in the informal economy through the SSE

**Ultimate beneficiaries**

- Young people in the project intervention area
- SSE organizations
- Support and accompaniment structures for SSE organizations

**Expected results**

- Survey on informality carried out in the target governorates
- Local economic opportunities in the SSE and value chains identified
- Results of the survey and studies utilized
- Project monitoring and evaluation system developed
- Regional SSE support structures identified
- Capacities of SSE support structures improved
- Operational SSE clubs within professional training centres established
- Operational and transparent SSE funding systems established
- Individual self-entrepreneurs organized into SSE groups
- Income of self-entrepreneurs sensitized to the SSE improved thanks to better access to markets

In this context, JEUN'ESS must enable beneficiary entities to reach higher levels of marketing, which will result in access to larger markets. Development is possible if these entities match their competitors by seeking the necessary certifications, standards, and labeling. It is in this direction that sustainable job creation is possible, and the JEUN'ESS initiative will translate into actions.

**Re-Fund Challenge**
Starting in August 2021, the JEUN’ESS team embarked on the development of the Terms of Reference for the official launch of the Re-Fund Challenge, with explicit steps outlining the process and the objective of selecting existing SSE structures as beneficiary entities.

A timeline (below) was established to organize the entire selection phase, culminating in the presentation of the selected projects to a jury composed of representatives from all major stakeholders in the JEUN’ESS project, including the Delegation of the European Union, institutional partners, social partners, civil society actors in Social and Solidarity Economy, and representatives from other ILO projects.
Following the call for applications, 14 information sessions were organized in the 7 regions to raise awareness among potential applicants, with 250 participants in attendance. The JEUN’ESS project leader also traveled to the 7 regions during the application phase to meet with governors, regional directors, and social partners to ensure their seamless contribution to the project's success. Furthermore, more than 350 questions were received throughout the application process, with detailed responses provided by the project team.

During the initial selection phase, the JEUN’ESS team focused on the completeness of administrative files. It was observed that out of the 138 applications submitted, only 84 provided complete documentation. This unfortunate fact led to the consideration of involving public support structures from the outset to assist
The second step involved reviewing the business continuity plans presented by the candidates. The project team took an indulgent approach during this phase, recognizing that candidates may not have the necessary expertise to develop brilliant continuity plans. Therefore, the goal was to identify potential areas for support to help them improve their continuity plans. As a result, this phase allowed 72 applications to move forward. It should be noted that during these first two selection phases, the JEUN'ESS team was supported by two experts, one of whom represented the Delegation of the European Union.

The third step focused on the personalities of the remaining 72 representatives of entities. A four-day tour across the 7 regions allowed for meetings with all applicants to assess their suitability and scientifically analyze the alignment of their personalities with the values of Social and Solidarity Economy promoted by the JEUN'ESS project. To optimize the mission, the team was accompanied by two consultants in human resources and profiling. Following this phase, 51 applicants were selected for on-site visits.
Between October 19 and October 29, 2021, regional coordinators conducted physical visits to the 51 selected entities to ensure the accuracy of the information and documentation provided by all candidates. In this context, an evaluation grid was developed to determine the effectiveness of each visit. As a result of this stage, coordinators expressed reservations about 4 entities and requested their exclusion.

It is important to note that in all cases of rejection, the JEUN'ESS team took care to inform the unsuccessful candidates by addressing all their questions and providing all necessary justifications to avoid leaving them in doubt. This transparency was appreciated by the majority of participants.

Between June and July 2022, 48 coaching sessions were conducted with the aim of consolidating and improving the business plans of the selected entities. This work was followed by a workshop on the continuity plans and business plans organized
by the JEUN’ESS team in July, with the following main activities:

- Presentation of the process for revising and consolidating 42 business plans.
- Presentation of the accompaniment plans.
- Discussion and validation of 42 business plans.
- Discussion and validation of 42 business plans.
- Presentation of the schedule for implementing the technical and financial support of the Re-Fund.

Following the field visits, the 47 selected candidates were invited to a hotel for an intensive incubation from November 28 to December 1, 2021, in preparation for the final selection stage in front of the juries. During these days (and nights), candidates had the opportunity to work with a dedicated team of coaches to review and optimize their continuity plans at all levels (financial, communication, HR, administrative, governance, strategy, etc.). Other coaches were also present to support the candidates in preparing their oral presentations to the jury members.

They also had the opportunity to meet with representatives of organizations from all over Tunisia, thereby expanding their networks and opportunities for synergies. This was an exposure to an external environment with which they were not very familiar. As explained earlier, December 2nd was dedicated to the Re-Fund Challenge juries to select the entities to be funded definitively. An evaluation grid was established for the jury members to determine the type of funding to be awarded to the applicants. The grid was based on the following levels:

- Between 0 and 20: No funding
- Between 20 and 40: Minimum funding
• Between 40 and 60: Partial funding
• Above 60: Full funding

The results of the jury, following the oral presentation phase of the continuity plans, resulted in 36 entities receiving partial funding and 7 entities receiving full funding. No entity was considered undeserving of funding or eligible for only minimum funding. It is also worth noting that 45 out of the 47 invited entities participated in the incubation phase. At the end, 42 beneficiaries were involved to the next step.

Pitching phase

These results were presented, as planned, on December 3, 2021, during a grant award ceremony as part of the Re-Fund Challenge, attended by guests such as the Minister of Economy and Planning, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tunisia, the Head of Governance Section at the EU Delegation, the Director of the ILO Office for Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, and Tunisia, as well as senior representatives of employers' and workers’ organizations. All stakeholders commended the work done in recent months as part of the Re-Fund Challenge and emphasized the importance of continuing to rigorously support the entities and monitor them during the funding phase scheduled for March 2022.
Following the grant award ceremony and the final selection of 42 beneficiary entities, the JEUN’ESS team initiated the development of terms of reference for the recruitment of a financial implementing agency to disburse the Re-Fund Challenge grants for the implementation of the continuity plans of the selected entities.

In parallel, with the aim of ensuring greater involvement of SSE entities in the regional ecosystem, the JEUN’ESS team took advantage of the steering committee’s organization to introduce the beneficiary entities to the regional support committees in the seven governorates.
A partner financial institution was recruited with the aim of:

- Managing the disbursement of grants totaling €490,000 for the implementation of business plans of the selected SSE entities.
- Reviewing and providing a final proposal for the business plans for the 43 entities within the overall budget, considering feasibility, impact, sustainability, and job creation.
- Defining and proposing precise monitoring indicators and an objectives-based disbursement plan for each of the 42 entities. This will involve custom grids for each entity in close collaboration with the project team.
- Defining a disbursement schedule based on impact indicators, as mentioned earlier.
- Proposing and implementing a strategy for optimizing the execution of the definitively validated business plans.
- Developing proposals for complementary loans and support after the fund's completion. Commitment to credit facilities afterward (1st year) is desired.
- Defining the modalities for monitoring beneficiary files.
- Defining the modalities for establishing an emergency fund that can be used for entities in need and deserving of additional funding. Criteria will need to be established in this regard.
- Sending periodic progress and monitoring reports to be validated by the project team.

In addition to these responsibilities, the financial institution must also:

- Procure and install equipment and infrastructure for the beneficiary SSE entities and manage other expenses outlined in the continuity and development plan.
- Ensure compliance with equipment purchase and order deadlines.
- Ensure compliance with all purchases and closely follow up on financing files with the administrative and financial manager of the JEUN'ESS project.

In May, the JEUN'ESS team, accompanied by regional coordinators, conducted a tour of the 7 regions to present the selected financial institution and address various questions.
Following these days, experts supported by regional coordinators began providing technical support to the beneficiary entities, following this order:

- Revision and consolidation of business plans:

  This period was dedicated to the final revision of the business plans. It led to the elimination of only one entity (due to attendance reasons), and the process continued with 42 entities. This phase took place from June 15 to July 15, 2022. The revision of the business plans was followed by coaching sessions to refine the marketing and financial approach.

- Development of a Business Plan:

  Identifying the different key implementation steps of the fund with each entity was developed, including:

  - The training to be provided.
  - Individual and personalized coaching sessions.
  - The main stages of fund disbursement.
  - Different stages of monitoring and evaluation.

The business plans were complemented by a capacity-building plan submitted for approval by the JEUN’ESS team. This allowed for identifying and mobilizing the necessary resources to effectively support the entity’s development.
Between June and July 2022, 48 coaching sessions were conducted with the goal of strengthening and improving the continuity plans of the selected entities. This work was followed by a workshop to discuss the continuity plans and support plans organized by the JEUN'ESS team in July, with the following main activities:

- Presenting the process of revising and consolidating the 42 business plans.
- Presenting the 42 business plans.
- Discussion and validation of the plans.
- Presenting the schedule for implementing the technical and financial support of the Re-Fund.

Implementation of several specific training programs for the beneficiaries:

- **Financial Education Training** Based on Cost Calculation: 21 days were scheduled to conduct financial education training in all 7 regions for the benefit of the members of the 42 beneficiary entities of the Re-Fund support. This financial education training lasted for 3 days and reached 84 members of the entities, with two representatives per entity. The goal was to develop the entities' financial education skills.
• **Administrative and Financial Management Training:** The objective of this training was to teach representatives of the entities basic concepts and adopt best practices in administrative and financial management. 21 days of administrative management training were scheduled and carried out in the 7 regions. The content of the training was carefully tailored to the specificity of SSE organizations, including the composition of their boards of directors, decision-making processes involving members, etc.

The issue of surplus distribution and the participation of each member in the operation of the entity were also addressed by the trainers.

Following the diagnosis conducted with the 42 beneficiary entities, the findings
revealed:

- The need to intervene in optimizing the solidarity value chain because many entities are often unaware of the numerous opportunities associated with the potential derivatives of their products.
- The need to intervene in improving the governance of the entities by establishing a participatory and democratic approach to ensure the sustainability and prosperity of SSE structures.

To address these needs, two training programs were scheduled by the JEUN'ESS team in October 2022:

- **Governance Training**: The objective of this training was to enable participants to understand the importance of good governance practices and develop their capacity to effectively manage their organizations and better manage shared resources.

- **Marketing Support Training**: This training, held in October 2022, aimed to assist the 42 representatives of SSE entities benefiting from Re-Fund support in understanding the issues related to marketing services and identifying appropriate responses. The module was divided into three subsections covering the following themes: Market Research, Strategic Marketing, and Operational Marketing.
Support for Participation in Trade Fairs and Events:

Throughout the year, to support beneficiary entities in better marketing their products and services, the JEUN'ESS project financed the participation of these entities in national and regional trade fairs and events.
**Financial Support:**

The purchase of equipment, computer and office materials, raw materials, and expertise has been carried out to a 90% completion rate as of now.
The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) aims to promote the emergence of a decentralized Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) ecosystem that promotes principles of social innovation and fair trade.

In order to create the ecosystem for managing the fund, the JEUN’ESS team has developed a completely new and innovative approach, relying on a sustainable ecosystem as implementation partners for the SIF.
To achieve this, the JEUN'ESS project aims to establish consortiums consisting of the following actors:

- **Incubation structures**: with the logistical, human, and technical capabilities to provide optimal services to beneficiaries.
- **Local associations**: with strong local roots and the capacity to expand and provide assistance to beneficiaries.
- **Public support structures**: located in the regions and having a significant network that can facilitate and assist beneficiaries in their various procedures and interactions with the administration.
- **Financial institutions**: with the necessary capabilities for granting subsidies to beneficiaries in addition to JEUN'ESS's contribution.

All these actors will work with beneficiaries to provide them with technical and financial assistance. This ecosystem will, among other things, strengthen the capacities of each actor through networking and the exchange of skills and best practices among participants. Local anchoring through associations and public structures is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of interventions.

In the framework of the selection of the implementation ecosystem of the Social Innovation Fund, the following process was put in place:

**Selection of Incubation Consortia**

To select incubation consortia (incubation structures and local associations) responsible for implementing the incubation component of the Social Innovation Fund in the project’s intervention governorates, the following process was implemented:

- Launching a call for expressions of interest to select consortia.
- Organizing an information workshop on the call for expressions of interest for incubation structures and local associations.

*Preselecting incubation structures following the call for expressions of interest*

- Sharing the Terms of Reference (TDRs) related to the selection of incubation consortia with the preselected incubation structures.
- Organizing a workshop to provide information on the incubation TDRs.

*Selecting incubation consortia in the project’s 7 intervention governorates*

In July 2022, a workshop to optimize the incubation process was organized. In this context:

- The SIF management guide was optimized and standardized in collaboration with the selected consortia and the Tunisian Solidarity Bank.
- Procedures and rules from the ILO and the EU regarding fund management were communicated to the participants.
- A coordination and sharing network between incubation structures, local associations, and local public support structures was initiated.
Sharing of best practices between incubation structures and local associations was initiated.

**Organization of the SIF KICK OFF Workshop**

After optimizing the incubation component of the Social Innovation Fund, the SIF KICK OFF workshop was organized. The workshop brought together teams from incubation structures and local associations responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the incubation component of the SIF in the 7 governorates. This workshop allowed:

- Presenting the optimized and updated incubation process and the SIF management guide.
- Presenting the progress deliverables forms (technical progress report, financial progress report, tracking tools).
- Presenting the communication guide and charter related to the implementation of the incubation component of the SIF.
- Presenting the administrative, financial, technical, and reporting procedures and guidelines of the ILO and the EU, as well as the specificities of the SIF

**Capacity Building for Public Support Structures**

As part of the capacity building for members of the implementation ecosystem of the incubation component of the Social Innovation Fund, a training-action session was organized in September 2022 for public support structures. Participants in the training session included representatives of public support structures (regional development directorates, entrepreneurship centers, business centers, regional agricultural development commissions, regional craft development commissions, development offices, regional women's commissions, tourism commissions, etc.). This workshop resulted in:
- Developing support tools for SSE projects (Business Model Canvas, business plans).
- Strengthening the capacities of public support structures in supporting SSE projects.
- Ensuring the active involvement of public support structures in the incubation and support process for SSE projects created and consolidated under the JEUN'ESS project.
- Promoting the role of public support structures in supporting SSE projects.

Development of the Call for Projects, Evaluation Grid, and Monitoring Tools for the SIF

In consultation with incubation structures, the project developed and validated the project selection tools for the SIF (call for projects document and evaluation grid). The project team also established several planning and monitoring tools for the SIF:

- The SIF document.
- The SIF indicators table.
- SIF monitoring tables.

Launch of Incubation Component Activities of the SIF

The call for applications to apply for the SIF was officially launched by all the consortia between November 1, 2022, and December 31, 2022. During this phase, regional workshops were organized with the participation of regional and local authorities, technical and social partners, and local associations. A total of 87 information days were organized in numerous municipalities at the regional level to explain the call for applications in detail and address questions.
As of December 31, 2022, thanks to the significant mobilization in the regions, the JEUN'ESS team received 1,234 applications from nearly 3,500 vulnerable young individuals involved. In total, 765 young people were selected for the incubation phase in the 7 governorates, the majority of whom are women. Following the jury phase, the JEUN'ESS project organized a workshop for the final selection of youth projects, in coordination with incubation structures. After the first 3-month incubation phase, 137 projects were selected for the final acceleration phase, which aims to legally establish the entity and provide financial support with the public financial implementation partner, the Tunisian Solidarity Bank.
Creation of the Brand: "LIMITL'ESS"

To ensure good visibility and identification of the clubs within their ecosystem, the project chose to create a brand and a graphic charter. Based on its belief that these young people are change-makers in their communities and that their creativity and enthusiasm have no limits, the project chose the name "LIMITL'ESS." It's a play on words combining the term "limit" with the acronym ESS for Social and Solidarity Economy, resulting in the word "LIMITL'ESS."

Revision of the Management and Animation Guide for "Limit'ESS" Clubs

In December 2020, the project recruited a national training and consulting firm (Maison de l'entreprise) to prepare a "Management and Animation Guide for ESS Clubs." The main objective of this guide is to transfer the necessary skills to club members for the popularization of key concepts of SSE (Social and Solidarity Economy) and to support them in its promotion. More specifically:
- Mastery of the SSE concept by Limit'ESS club facilitators.
- Understanding the role of Limit'ESS clubs in raising awareness among young people and promoting entrepreneurial culture and SSE.
- Mastery of tools for creating, animating, and managing Limit'ESS clubs by club facilitators.

On June 1, 2022, the JEUN'ESS project issued a call for applications to recruit a consultant to revise the already prepared guide, with the aim of adapting it to the new project's orientations as described in the revised logical framework. The goal is to promote economic integration, awareness, and social action among young people, making them effective agents of social transformation. It will also provide management and organization tools necessary for establishing, structuring, operating, and monitoring these clubs.

The work of the consultant hired for the consolidation and revision of the guide resulted in the production of the following documents:

- The revised Management and Animation Guide for Limit'ESS Clubs
- A descriptive document of the competition process
- A training program for Limit'ESS Club facilitators
- A call for expressions of interest for the implementation of Limit'ESS clubs
**General Approach to Establishing Clubs**

For the establishment and operationalization of "LIMITL'ESS" clubs, the JEUN'ESS project sought to collaborate with implementation partners to identify host structures for the clubs (public or associative structures frequented by young people) and to establish the clubs. This approach aimed to rely on partners to ensure good governance and the sustainability of created SSE clubs. The project received expressions of interest from existing student organizations during 2022 to cooperate in establishing the clubs, including Enactus Tunisia, JCI (Junior Chamber International), JET (Junior Enterprises Tunisia), Rotaract clubs, etc.

**Partnership with Enactus Tunisia**

The choice was made to collaborate with ENACTUS Tunisia, known in the student community for its specialization in social entrepreneurship, for the creation of new social and solidarity economy clubs in the 7 target governorates of the project. They are named "ENACTUS LIMITL'ESS." As of December 31, 2022, the ENACTUS LIMITL'ESS clubs have 20 teams spread across 20 academic and vocational training institutions located in all project governorates.
Launch Ceremony

A launch ceremony was organized on October 14, 2022, in the presence of the Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Fisheries and the Director-General of University Renewal within the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This event allowed for the presentation of:

- The JEUN'ESS project and ENACTUS Tunisia.
- The objectives and the process of establishing "Limit'ESS - Enactus" clubs.
- The Management and Animation Guide for Limit'ESS.

Organization of Road Shows in the 7 Governorates

Following the launch ceremony of the ENACTUS LIMIT'L'ESS clubs, the ENACTUS and JEUN'ESS teams embarked on a 5-day roadshow in the target governorates to mobilize and recruit students and learners and establish the first "Enactus Limit'ESS" teams.

After the roadshow in the governorates, Enactus Tunisia was able to establish 20 Enactus-Tunisia clubs in different academic institutions.
Following the formation of these first 20 ENACTUS LIMIT'ESS clubs, JEUN'ESS intervened to provide the necessary technical support for the training of educational advisors and team leaders as facilitators, as well as club members, through:

- The organization of a first boot camp for 50 facilitators (educational advisors) and team leaders to equip them with skills in management and member management. This included training on SSE principles and social enterprise fundamentals, team management and motivation, setting action plan objectives for their "Limit'E'SS" club, and effective delegation of tasks within the team.
- Support for clubs through ongoing coaching, including the recruitment of two permanent coaches.
- The organization of a second boot camp for 142 new members of ENACTUS LIMIT'E'SS clubs, accompanied by 14 educational advisors and the two coaches. The objective of this design thinking workshop was to train club members to identify social and environmental issues to address, develop identified social and/or environmental issues (BMC, data collection techniques).

It is worth noting that, in consultation with EU4Youth partners, the choice was made
to integrate the program of clubs in Siliana and Béja, which are under the authority of the University of Jendouba.