

Foreword

Four years after the start of the so called *Jasmine Revolution*, the Tunisian nation has been transformed, driven by the will for change of a whole generation of young Tunisians that took the streets to build a brighter future. The early results of this social and political metamorphosis, despite the costs, the pain and the risks that it implied, have been impressive.

By 2012, Tunisians had held successful democratic elections, passed a law on associations that triggered a blooming of non-governmental organisations and think-tanks, and approved another key law on access to information. These represent a significant step in the direction of increased transparency, while Tunisia's joining of the Open Government Partnership in early 2014 was another important signal. By early 2014, Tunisians had passed a new constitution, setting the course for the country's future, while parliamentary and Presidential elections were successfully held under this framework in late 2014. A great deal of these achievements can be attributed to Tunisian youth. Despite these encouraging achievements, there is no cause for complacency. There is still a lot to be done to build a strong, sustainable and inclusive Tunisian economy that offers the opportunities that the youth demand and deserve.

As confirmed by this OECD report, *Investing in Youth: Tunisia – Strengthening the Employability of Youth during the Transition to a Green Economy*, tackling youth labour market challenges remains urgent in Tunisia, and is indeed one of the country's top priorities. Some two out of five young Tunisians in the labour force are unemployed, and one in four youths are neither in employment, nor in education or training (NEET) – nearly twice the rate in most OECD countries. Some groups fare even worse, particularly women and those from the more deprived Centre West and Southern regions. Failure to tackle now the long-standing structural obstacles that prevent youth in Tunisia from gaining access to productive and rewarding jobs can undermine political support for the transition to a stable, fairer, and democratic society.

The report is the response to a request for collaboration made by the Tunisia Government to the OECD in May 2013. The OECD is proud to contribute to Tunisia's endeavour to design and execute a comprehensive approach for improving the employability of younger generations.

Investing in Youth: Tunisia puts forward specific policy options, based on the practices and reforms that have worked well in other countries. It provides an in-depth analysis of the obstacles to improve labour market outcomes in the formal sector for Tunisia's youth and discusses the most promising labour market and social policies to remove them. The report also proposes viable policy strategies for promoting employment and employability among those young people under-represented in the labour market, notably women. Furthermore, it identifies cost-effective policy options to strengthen the vocational education and training system and to move towards effective entrepreneurship support programmes. The report also lays the ground to support Tunisia's youth in the transition towards a green economy, which is a key priority for the country.

In 2013, the OECD launched the *OECD Action Plan for Youth*, which provides a new framework for consolidating its experience on youth issues by assessing youth challenges from a concerted strategic perspective to develop education systems and labour market arrangements that work together well. The OECD is working closely with countries to implement the comprehensive measures of the *Action Plan for Youth* in their national and local contexts and to provide peer-learning opportunities for countries to share their experience of policy measures to improve youth employment outcomes. *Investing in Youth: Tunisia* is the second report to extend the *Action Plan for Youth* to emerging economies, following Brazil.

The report has been prepared with financial support from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Transition Fund, which the OECD gratefully acknowledges. Several projects are being undertaken by the OECD to underpin the main objective of the MENA Transition Fund, which is to provide Arab countries in transition with a framework to strengthen governance for transparent, accountable governments and provide an economic framework for sustainable and inclusive growth. We look forward to continuing a fruitful collaboration with the MENA Transition Fund.

The OECD is ready to continue supporting the reform agenda of Tunisia, as well as that of the other MENA countries in transition, by helping design, develop and deliver “Better Policies for Better Lives”.

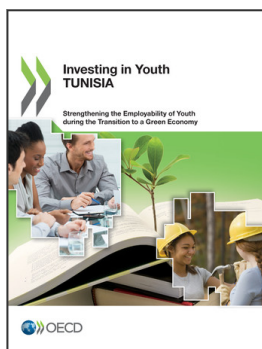


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