POLICIES FOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

LEBANON

AN ETF **TORINO PROCESS** ASSESSMENT

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PREAMBLE

The European Training Foundation (ETF) assessment provides an external, forward-looking analysis of the country's human capital development issues and VET policy responses in a lifelong learning perspective. It identifies challenges related to education and training policy and practice that hinder the development and use of human capital. It takes stock of these challenges and puts forward recommendations on possible solutions to address them.

These assessments are a key deliverable of the Torino Process, an initiative launched by the ETF in 2010 aimed at providing a periodic review of vocational education and training (VET) systems in the wider context of human capital development and inclusive economic growth. In providing a high-quality assessment of VET policy from a lifelong learning perspective, the process builds on four key principles: ownership, participation, holistic and evidence-based analysis.

For the ETF, human capital development is about supporting countries to create lifelong learning systems, providing opportunities and incentives for people to develop their knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes throughout their lives to help them find employment, realise their potential and contribute to prosperous, innovative and inclusive societies.

The main purpose of these assessments is to provide a reliable source of information to enable the planning and monitoring of national education and training policies with respect to human capital development, as well as offering a foundation for programming and policy dialogue in support of these policies by the European Union and other donors.

The ETF assessments rely on evidence from the countries, collected through a standardised reporting template (national reporting framework – NRF) through a participatory process involving a wide variety of actors with a high degree of ownership by the country. The findings and recommendations of the ETF assessment have been shared and discussed with national authorities and beneficiaries. The assessment report starts with a brief description of Lebanon's strategic plans and national policy priorities (Chapter 1). It then presents an overview of issues related to the development and use of human capital in the country (Chapter 2), before moving on to an in-depth discussion of problems in this area that, in the view of the ETF, require immediate attention (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 provides the overall conclusions of the analysis.

The annexes provide additional information: a summary of the recommendations in the report (Annex 1) and an overview of the education and training system in Lebanon (Annex 2). The National Torino Process Report compiled by the country itself can be found here: https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/trp/torino-process-2018-2020-lebanon-national-report.

This report was prepared by Abdelaziz Jaouani, ETF senior expert on human capital development, based on the national Torino process report and consultations with Lebanese stakeholders, including active international organisations and donors. ETF thanks all those who contributed to this consultation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ETF Torino Process assessment[1] provides an external, forward-looking analysis of the country's human capital development issues and VET policy responses from a lifelong learning perspective. Given the very limited official and comparable data, the primary source of this assessment analysis is the National Torino Process report for Lebanon (ETF, 2020), compiled using a standardised questionnaire (National Reporting Framework – NRF), and the related working group consultations organised between July 2018 and February 2020 with national and international stakeholders in a highly participatory process. The secondary sources of information include international data and publications (see References).

At the time the current report was being finalised, the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) made available the preliminary key findings of the Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey (LFHLCS, conducted in 2019). However, the COVID-19 health crisis and its possible consequences for the socio-economic context, labour market perspectives and key HCD issues are not included in the analysis. The impact of the health crisis will certainly make the current socio-economic situation even worse, while new opportunities could emerge to secure and accelerate system change.

Lebanon has been in the grip of a series of protests since October 2019, the aim of which is to bring down the country's sectarian political system, which has so far failed to provide the most basic services. This report has been compiled at an important point in the political and strategic development of the country and is expected to complement and support the positive trends for reform by setting up priorities for action for national policy makers, including the private sector, the European Union (EU) and international organisations.

Context

Lebanon is characterised by its unique political structure, which was put in place after independence in 1943 to guarantee a balance of powers among the different religious groups. Although this special arrangement has so far guaranteed a certain stability, the balance remains very delicate and the current tensions in the region place the country's security and socio-political stability at risk. In addition, the need to always guarantee the representation and involvement of all religious groups at all levels slows down the decision-making process. The abolition of this sectarian governance system is the main demand of the ongoing protests known as 'the revolution'.

The Lebanese economic landscape has been facing severe challenges throughout the last decade: GDP growth plummeted to 0.2% in 2018[2], exacerbated by a high and growing public debt[3] coupled with a significant decrease in foreign direct investment inflows[4]. Nevertheless, the Lebanese economy remains resilient despite the very challenging socio-economic situation. The government favours a strong role for the private sector through a free-market economy and a strong 'laissez-faire' commercial tradition. Lebanon is an upper-middle-income economy with one of the highest GDPs per

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[1] The complete list of references can be found in the 'References' section.
[2] World Bank and OECD National Accounts data.
[3] McKinsey & Company, Lebanon Economic Vision, Report, 2018.
[4] International Monetary Fund, Balance of Payment Database.

capita in the region ($13 058 GDP PPP per capita in 2018[5]). However, one-third of its population lives below the poverty line[6], on less than $3.84 a day, notably 69% of the Syrians refugees, 65% of the Palestinians and 89% of Syrian Palestinians. The conflict in Syria has massively contributed to this situation by adding 1.5 million registered Syrians to the existing 450 000 Palestinian refugees, making Lebanon the country with the highest number of refugees per capita in the world (about 30% of its population[7]).

The labour market is characterised by low employment rates (43.3%), generally limited labour force participation (48.8%), especially in terms of young people aged 15–24 (39.2%) and women (29.3%, as opposed to 70.4% of men), as well as an increasingly large informal sector (55% of total employment)[8], a high influx of foreign workers and refugees and a significant number of skilled Lebanese choosing to work abroad. This situation is inflated by inadequate or obsolete policies to address these socio-economic issues, a lack of mechanisms to anticipate and bridge the skills mismatch, weak public employment services (PESs) and active labour market policies (ALMPs), as well as the absence of a labour market information system (LMIS).

Traditionally, Lebanon had an advanced education structure, and well-trained technicians and engineers. Indeed, Beirut used to serve as an education centre for the region. However, a substantial part of this human capital was lost during the 1975–1990 conflict, and the educational system and infrastructure suffered significant damage and lack of investment. In spite of the turmoil, the national educational system has survived and is still highly valued by the Lebanese. One characteristic of the education and training system in Lebanon is the high proportion of private providers. The share of private enrolment in general education and VET is relatively high and remains above 50%[9]. Fifty-four per cent of the country's schools are privately run, while in higher education there is only one public university and 47 private ones.

The current strategic context is characterised, first of all, by the ongoing protests combining political and economic grievances and demanding the end of the country's sectarian political system. The so-called 'revolution' started in October 2019; three weeks later the government resigned and a new government has just been formed that has won the confidence of the Parliament (February 2020).

Other positive strategic initiatives are taking place in the country, including:

- The recent Government's economic vision, developed through the McKinsey study carried out in 2018, aims at increasing economic growth and reducing fiscal deficit and unemployment through 'quick win' actions.
- The National Strategic Framework for TVET (NSF 2018–2022) was endorsed after a wide range of consultations led by UNICEF-ILO.
- The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2017–2020, supported by the international community, aims at broadening educational opportunities for refugees and displaced persons, as well as encompassing other initiatives on education and training, notably those assigned within the framework of the European Union (EU) association agreement.

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[5] World Bank, World Development Indicators Database.

[6] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 21 Sept. 2018.

[7] UN Population Division (2019), UNHCR (2018), UNRWA (2019).

[8] *The Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey* (LFHLCS) 2018–2019, CAS, 18th Dec. 2019.

[9] General Directorate for Vocational and Technical Education and Brite Indicators and Trends, 2019.

Findings on human capital

Some of the key indicators available on human capital and the outcomes of the Torino Process national report, suggest that human capital is the main asset of the country but also subject to many challenges. The availability and utilisation of human capital is affected by many adverse factors, amongst which sectarian governance, political conflicts and unrest, demographic transformation, and lack of data are the most common. More specifically, human capital development is hampered by low levels of job creation, skills gaps and mismatch, weak public employment services, and limited access to lifelong learning (LLL), as well as a restricted institutional capacity for reform.

The analysis of socio-demographic and economic developments points to four main issues affecting the development and use of human capital in the country.

1. Inefficiencies in human capital utilisation due to low levels of job creation and skills mismatch

The Lebanese economy has traditionally focused on non-productive services' sub-sectors, such as real estate and banking. However, these occupations do not generate enough jobs to meet the huge demand in the labour market. In addition, during the last decade there has been a substantial economic regression. This, paired with the absence of skills anticipation and matching mechanisms, weak public employment services, and issues related to VET governance, financing and provision, creates a high risk of skills falling out of step with future changes in the job market.

2. Limited institutional capacity and resources for policy reform and ownership, leading to inequity and the disconnection of VET from labour market requirements

The country's limited institutional capacity and resources, together with a serious lack of data, are issues which not only hamper policy making and reform but also impact on the question of ownership, and thus the continuity and sustainability of any national or donor-led reform initiatives. In the skills development sector, this situation has reinforced inequity in education and the labour market, and is one of the main reasons for the long-lasting and significant disconnection of the VET sector from labour market needs.

3. Human capital development under pressure because of demographic transformations placing a burden on the education and training sector

Lebanon's total population has increased by 45% over the last decade, rising from 4.7 million in 2008 to over 6.8 million in 2018[10]. The influx of an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees since 2011, in addition to the presence of Palestinian refugees, has placed a great strain on public finances, infrastructure and service delivery. On the other hand, the country is experiencing a high level of emigration of its labour force (generally the young and educated). This demographic transition has exerted considerable pressure on the labour market and the education sector, to the detriment of their outcomes.

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[10] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, UNDESA World Population Prospects Database.

4.   Sustainable development goals review highlights issues in the public education sector and youth employment

The main priorities identified in the Lebanon Voluntary National Review of Sustainable Development Goals (2018) are poverty eradication, upgrading public sector education, reducing unemployment (especially amongst young people), enhancing the critical infrastructures, conserving natural resources, and addressing the impacts of the Syrian crisis on sustainable development. Education and training institutions are reporting to this monitoring exercise although they are facing significant development challenges.

These four human capital issues are described in Chapter 2 and the analysis of the related policy answers, gaps and recommendations are dealt with in Chapter 3. While this report focuses on the first two human capital issues, the recommendations cover, by extension, the other two, broader, issues (demographic transformation and sustainable development).

Recommendations for action

The first series of recommendations refers mainly to the issue of inefficiencies in human capital utilisation and calls for various concrete ways to accelerate current efforts in addressing skills gaps and mismatch. We believe that this requires structuring reforms calling for a mix of investments, policies and actions, along with institutional capacity building for institutions and actors involved in VET policy design and delivery.

R.1.1 Create conducive conditions for the establishment of a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance ecosystem

It is widely recognised that centralised governance is one the main factors that hampers the effectiveness of VET in Lebanon. This issue covers the national, sectoral and local levels and impedes both VET's effectiveness and its attractiveness to learners and employers. The current recommendation proposes a comprehensive and coherent approach to addressing this urgent issue by fostering the conditions conducive to a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance ecosystem that can steer skills development to respond effectively to the country's socio-economic needs.

- **National:** Reactivate and operationalise the Higher Council for VET and foster all kinds of PPP;
- **Sectoral:** Set up skills councils in priority/growing sectors;
- **Local:** Reinforce schools' autonomy and integration with their environment.

R.1.2 Improve VET provision for better responsiveness to labour market needs

The Torino Process National Report (ETF, 2020) and other studies have pointed to the problems of VET provision in the country, discussed in section 3.1.1. These issues call for a revision of the uneven distribution of students, teachers and schools, updating the curricula, further professional development for teachers, with a revision of their status and mode of recruitment, the upgrading of infrastructure and equipment, and the expansion of career guidance services, etc.

The National Strategic Framework also specifies detailed actions that should be undertaken to improve VET provision. The current recommendations have multiple aspects and focus on the main provision issues that need to be tackled as a matter of priority to achieve better responsiveness to labour market needs.

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- Improve the teaching and learning environment for effective VET provision;
- Mainstreaming key competences with a focus on digitalisation and entrepreneurship.

R.1.3 Create the conditions for an ecosystem easing the school- and work-to-work transition

The issues of education, training and employment are currently considered as part of a single process, the school-to-work transition, defined typically as the period between the end of compulsory schooling and the attainment of full-time, stable employment. In the case of Lebanon, this transition can be painful for VET graduates due to the gaps between education and training supply and labour market needs, among other issues. Professional mobility and work-to-work transition is also difficult due to limited or inadequate policies and the weak institutional capacity for reform, notably in the areas of labour market measures, career guidance services, work-based learning and apprenticeship, etc.

- Review and consolidate a comprehensive and more effective career guidance system;
- Reinforce the role of the National Employment Office (NEO) to fully accomplish its role of labour market intermediation;
- Regulate and extend work-based learning for more effective and faster transition into employment.

R.1.4 Developing a QA framework and completing the NQF project for greater quality, transparency and mobility of qualifications and recognition of prior learning

In the effort to bridge the gap of skills mismatch and improve employability, the completion and institutionalisation of previous endeavours to develop frameworks, such us Quality Assurance (QA), the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or the Validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) should be considered. These frameworks, if implemented, would also confer benefits on vulnerable populations such us migrants, NEETs (people aged 15–24 who are Not in Education, Employment or Training), women and those with a low level of education.

- Develop a quality assurance framework (QAF);
- Complete and formalise the National Qualifications Framework (NQF);
- Set up a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL).

The second series of recommendations focuses on policy-making capacity and the reinforcement of institutional arrangements and organisational settings in order to **ensure more policy coherence, consolidation and ownership**. The momentum created around the national VET strategic framework and the prospective political transition could present an opportunity to put the agreed measures into action, avoiding past mistakes and political constraints. The National Strategic Framework (NSF) defines the mission of VET reform in the following terms: '*... The VET system in Lebanon will be tripartite-led, fit for purpose and inclusive. It will provide competencies and life skills to meet the skills demand in the labour market, forming part of a larger education system with multiple pathways to encourage lifelong learning.*'

R.2.5 Create the conditions to gradually establish a national labour market information system (LMIS)

An efficient and coherent LMIS system has to rely on the institutional arrangements and procedures that coordinate the collection, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination of labour market information. As there is no general blueprint for a single and effective LMIS, a first step would be to

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define the aim, scope (education, employment, economy, etc.) and level (national, regional, sectoral) of the most-needed analysis. The VET system is an important part of an LMIS and should build its own information system. The main purpose of data collection and analysis should be to provide labour market actors with the necessary information to bridge skills gaps and any labour/job market mismatches in general, but it also needs to support career guidance services and adapt ALMPs to skills requirements in specific sectors. This requires a substantial reinforcement of capacity building and high levels of cooperation with the private sector, CAS, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) and the NEO.

R.2.6 Diversifying the financial mechanisms to address policy priorities, further engage the private sector and ensure greater sustainability

A shared governance approach to addressing policy priorities should also cover VET financing and the diversification of its sources. The ETF recommends initiating this reform through a review of the current budget formation and allocation procedure and VET providers' efficiency in providing the right skills. This should lead to:

- Developing an agreed costing methodology to ensure accurate and sustainable budget formation and execution;
- Diversifying funding sources and increasing the share of non-state resources to implement the current ambitious strategy and engage the private sector in practical ways.
- Moving towards a more performance-oriented approach to resource allocation. Currently, the budget is determined by a simple historic incremental approach.
- Give more management and financial autonomy to VET schools so that they can respond to local labour market needs and promote innovation.

Policy planning should take into account the various sources of funding, both public and private (including private VET providers and donors' contributions), in order to bridge the current gap between strategies and actual achievements, while ensuring greater visibility and transparency and making the policy more credible.

R.2.7 Ensure a progressive transition from donor- to country-led VET planning, implementation and monitoring

This is a generic and important recommendation for policy makers to ensure greater relevance, coherence and sustainability in the field of skills development in Lebanon. Policy makers should gradually take the helm in terms of VET planning, implementation and monitoring. This will require organisational and capacity review and reinforcement.

- Full ownership would require a broader base of stakeholder commitment and collaboration.
- Policy uptake and ownership means also having the financial capacity and autonomy to support reforms.
- A monitoring and evaluation system needs to be established to assess the progress of policy implementation.

Lebanon remains in need of extensive support from the international community because of its limited capacity and resources, as well as its substantial deficits in the area of human capital development and use. Current and upcoming development and aid support should clearly anticipate the need for appropriation activities as well as an exit strategy so that the outcomes can be sustained.

R.2.8 Give more policy attention to Lebanese emigrants, including those in the pre-departure stage, the diaspora and returnees

Emigration is a key aspect of Lebanese history and its present socio-economic situation, but its potential has not been sufficiently exploited in relation to local development and job creation. Further investment should be dedicated to supporting Lebanese emigrants, including those in the pre-departure stage, the diaspora and returnees. Investment, particularly in promoting the employability of emigrants, can positively impact on the development of both the receiving countries and Lebanon, yielding economic returns that could potentially be much higher than the initial investment (ETF, 2017b). Incentives and new schemes for remittances could also be created to redirect such sums away from consumption and towards productive activities that could generate jobs and increase the amount of migrant inward investment, which has decreased from 18% of GDP in 2010 to 12.5% in 2019[11].

This calls for more engagement on the part of the international private sector, in particular the Lebanese diaspora, to generate social, cultural and economic benefits in Lebanon. This could include activities such as:

- Mapping the profile of Lebanese emigrants (including returnees);
- Exchange programmes for Lebanese nationals studying and working abroad to attract them back to the country (even temporarily);
- Business management and entrepreneurship training for returnees;
- Micro-credit schemes;
- Remittance schemes for investing in productive activities in Lebanon, including components such as skills development[12].

R.2.9 The potential of the private sector should be more effectively tapped and anchored in policy making and reform of the skills system

The private sector is a strong asset in Lebanon that should be given more space in national policy making and socio-economic development and monitoring. If it were fully involved in the policy cycle, as proposed by almost all the recommendations of this analysis, the private sector could play a more prominent role in improving employability and reducing skills gaps and mismatch at both the national and international (see R.2.8) levels. This involvement could range from contributing to VET governance and financing to the amelioration and reinforcement of skills provision and monitoring.

R.2.10 Reinforce adult education and training from a lifelong learning perspective to improve employability, close mismatch gaps and ensure greater equity

The NRF confirms the absence of regulations related to lifelong learning (LLL) and the detachment of VET authorities and public providers from adult education and training (AET). This has obvious and negative consequences for human capital development and utilisation, such as exclusion, unemployment and skills mismatch, and affects economic productivity and competitiveness in general. In addition, the situation of young people remains problematic in Lebanon, with persistently high numbers of NEETs and refugees. In order to moderate this negative impact, the ETF recommends

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[11] World Bank estimates based on IMF balance of payments data and OECD GDP estimates.

[12] Recommendations of the ETF, Migrant Support Measures from an Employment and Skills Perspective (MISMES): Lebanon report, September 2017.

that the authorities should urgently develop a lifelong learning policy aimed at improving knowledge, skills and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons. Lifelong learning is a conceptual and policy approach that optimises formal, non-formal and informal learning on a continuous basis throughout the life course.

Conclusion

This report appears at a turning point in Lebanon political history. There is some hope that long-awaited change will now take place, including the much-needed reforms proposed in this report and others, to capitalise on the huge human capital potential of the country. In the complex Lebanese governance setting, reforms have always been difficult to achieve and fragmented in nature. One example of this disjointed approach is the running of pilot schemes that never lead to real reforms. Instead of fostering a silo mentality, what is needed is a comprehensive and coherent reform process linking policy actions to an effective monitoring and evaluation system. This is universally true but nowhere more so than in the context of human capital development.

More specifically, reform in the area of skills development needs to start with a more open, shared and multilevel governance structure that actively involves social partners and other actors in the design, implementation and monitoring of skills policy priorities.

To this end, the government has to send a clear public signal that it is serious about the reform process through the allocation of attention and resources. In parallel, the private sector must make a greater effort to cooperate with government; otherwise, the mistrust between government and the private sector will remain and the reforms won't be achieved. However, it is the responsibility of the government to break this vicious cycle.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 About this assessment

This ETF assessment provides an analysis based on the outcomes of the National Torino Process report of Lebanon (ETF, 2020) and other secondary sources from national and international literature. The national report was compiled under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and endorsed by the national stakeholders. A written consultation was organised in June 2020, involving Lebanese stakeholders and international donors and organisations active in VET in Lebanon.

The assessment summarises the main challenges for the development and use of human capital in the country and discusses how education (in particular VET) and labour market policies in the country are addressing them and can contribute to their resolution. The assessment process generated a high level of interest from national stakeholders as well as the international community active in skills development and employment. This augurs well for a high level of policy uptake and ownership of this analysis and related recommendations, notably potentially providing an impetus to the implementation of the National Strategic Framework and the post-2020 programming of the EU and other donors.

Within the regional policy dialogue, the findings and recommendations of the ETF Torino Process assessment provide elements to inform future regional initiatives within the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean area, as well as the ongoing discussions on post-2020 programming. The findings of this report will also feed into the current dialogue, led by the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Commission, on monitoring the progress of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour that underlines a range of issues, including the importance of reforming education and training systems in a way that responds to the challenges presented by ensuring employment, employability, and decent work[13]. A cross-country report will consolidate all the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Torino process assessments' outcomes and will contribute to the monitoring and evaluation framework intended to be developed as a concrete output of the Declaration[14].

Given the very limited official and comparable data, the primary source of this assessment analysis is the Torino Process national report, using a standardised questionnaire (National Reporting Framework – NRF) and the related working groups' consultations, including national and international stakeholders, organised between July 2019 and February 2020. The secondary sources of information drawn upon are international data and publications (see the References). At the time the current report was being finalised, the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) made available the preliminary key findings of the Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey (LFHLCS; conducted in 2018/2019 with the support of the ILO and the EU Delegation) on the labour market situation. These statistics have been incorporated here to complement the analysis. However, the COVID-19 health

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[13] For the importance of investment in education, higher education and training systems, including vocational education and training (VET), as well as lifelong reskilling and upskilling of workers to prepare them for constant changes in the world of work, see Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour, April 2019, p. 4.

[14] The labour Ministers asked the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat to coordinate, with the contribution of volunteering countries, the setting up of a framework for national monitoring processes, notably by organising meetings, providing relevant information, contact making and networking, as well as cooperating with countries' stakeholders and international organisations. The Ministers invited the European Commission and the relevant EU agencies, in particular the European Training Foundation, to provide relevant expertise to this work. See the Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour, paragraph 29, April 2019.

crisis and its possible consequences for the socio-economic context, labour market perspectives and key HCD issues are not included in the analysis. The impact of the health crisis will certainly make the current socio-economic situation even worse, while new opportunities could emerge to secure and accelerate system change.

The assessment process included an extensive phase of desk research based on responses to a standardised questionnaire (the NRF), analysis of other relevant studies, and the preparation of an issue paper containing an overview of themes to be discussed in the present report, which were then finalised in consultation with the ETF country and thematic teams responsible for Lebanon.

As with other ETF assessments, this paper is not meant to be exhaustive. The national report for Lebanon covers a broad selection of problems around human capital development and use, while the focus here is on the challenges that the ETF recommends addressing as a matter of priority.

1.2   Country overview

Lebanon is characterised by its unique political structure, which was put in place after independence in 1943 to guarantee a balance of powers among the different religious groups. Although this special arrangement has guaranteed a certain general stability over the years, the balance remains very delicate and the current tensions in the region place the country's security and socio-political stability at risk. In addition, the need to always guarantee the representation and involvement of all religious groups at all levels slows down or even blocks the decision-making process. The abolition of this sectarian governance system is the main demand of the ongoing protests.

Lebanese economic growth has decreased significantly in the last 10 years. The country's GDP fell from an average of 9.2% in 2007–2010 to 0.2% in 2018 (2.0% in 2011–2014, 0.7% in 2015–2018)[15]. Moreover, the precarious context is exacerbated by a high and growing public debt[16], coupled with a significant decrease in foreign direct investment inflows[17].

FIGURE 1: GDP ANNUAL % GROWTH
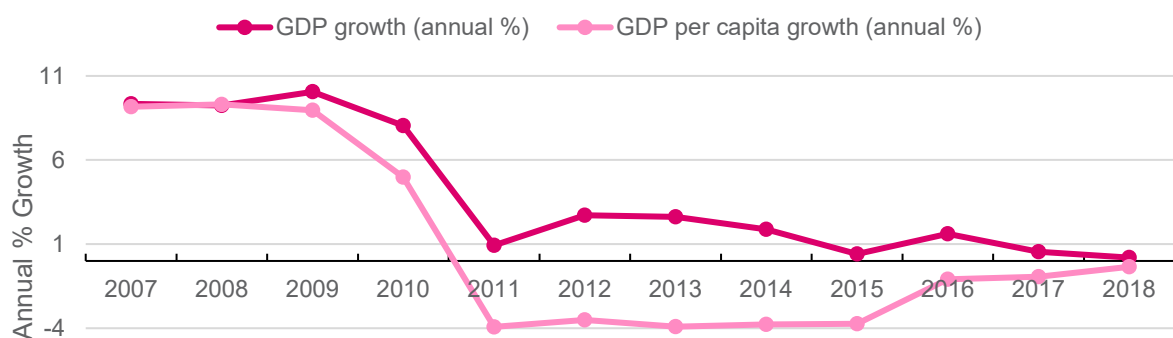
Source: World Bank and OECD National Accounts data.

Nevertheless, Lebanon's economy remains resilient despite periods of political, demographic and socio-economic turbulence. The government favours a strong role for the private sector through a free-market economy and the country has a strong laissez-faire commercial tradition. There are no restrictions on the movement of capital and goods by residents or non-residents, including on firms'

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[15] World Bank and OECD National Accounts data.

[16] McKinsey & Company, Lebanon Economic Vision Report, 2018

[17] International Monetary Fund, Balance of Payment Database.

entry or exit, or on access to foreign exchange, which makes Lebanon a supportive system for private sector development. In addition to the free-market and liberal financial environment, the population is well educated and possesses a strong entrepreneurial drive, which has helped the economy to weather the frequent political upheavals.

Lebanon is an upper-middle-income economy with one of the highest rates of GDP per capita in the region ($13 058 GDP per capita in 2018[18]). At the same time, one-third of its population is considered poor[19], living below the poverty line on less than $3.84 a day[20], that is a situation which disproportionately affects immigrant groups: 69% of the displaced Syrians; 65% of the Palestinians and 89% of Syrian Palestinians. Regional/territorial disparities are also a striking feature, with most of the poor living in areas outside of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. These regions are significantly lagging behind the national average, with much lower labour force participation, higher unemployment, and greater reliance on self-employment.

The conflict in Syria has massively contributed to this situation by adding 1.5 million registered Syrians to the existing population of 490 000 Palestinian[21] refugees, making Lebanon the country with the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, at an estimated 30% of the population[22] (see Figure 8).

The sectoral gross value added expressed as a percentage of GDP highlights the vital and increasing role of the banking and service sector in the Lebanese economy (75% of GDP in 2018), to the detriment of both industry and agriculture, which have both seen a steady decrease in value over the last decade, and in 2018 comprised only 14% and 3% of GDP respectively[23].

FIGURE 2: SECTOR'S GROSS VALUE ADDED AS % OF GDP
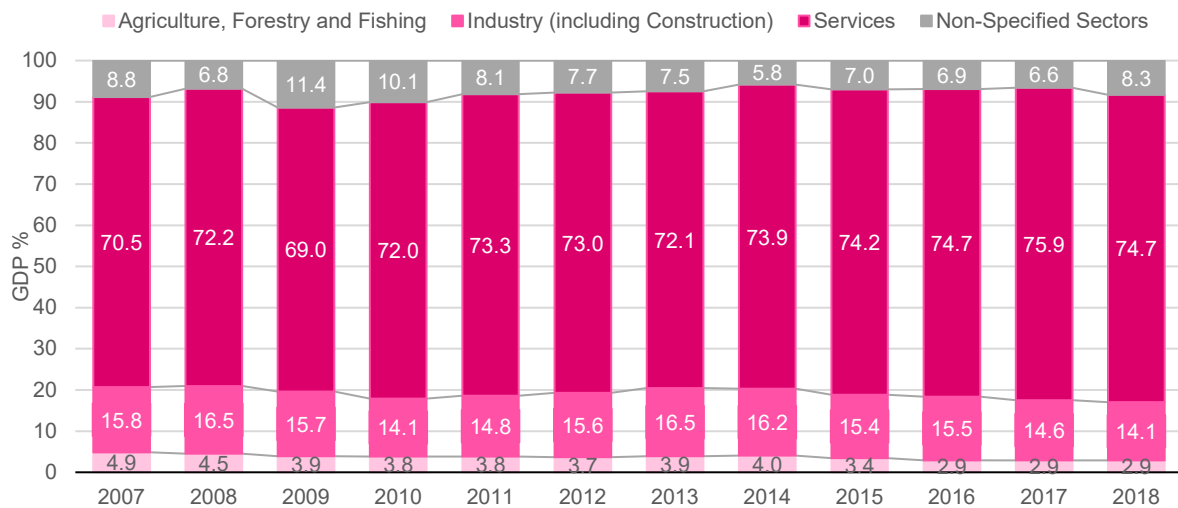
Source: World Bank and OECD National Accounts data.

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[18] World Bank, WDI Database.

[19] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 21 Sept. 2018.

[20] UNRWA, Protection in Lebanon, Update 2019: https://www.unrwa.org/activity/protection-lebanon

[21] UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees 2019.

[22] UN Population Division (2019), UNHCR (2018), UNRWA (2019).

[23] World Bank and OECD National Accounts data.

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The tourism, agriculture and health sectors have potential for growth, which could lead to the creation of hundreds of jobs if appropriate policy measures are designed and implemented, notably in the areas of enterprise growth and support for start-ups. The oil and gas sector is a promising sector for development in Lebanon. Projections show a high reserve of gas in the offshore area, and this is expected to create about 5 000 new jobs, mainly for medium-skilled employees (ETF, 2015a).

The labour market is characterised by low employment rates (43.3%), a limited overall labour force participation rate (48.8%), especially for young people aged 15–24 (39.2%) and women (29.3%, as opposed to 70.4% for men), as well as an increasingly large informal sector (55% of total employment) (CAS, 2019), a high influx of foreign workers and refugees, and a significant number of skilled Lebanese workers finding employment abroad. This situation is inflated by poor or obsolete policies addressing the country's socio-economic issues, a lack of mechanisms to anticipate and bridge any skills gaps and mismatch, weak public employment services and active labour market policies (ALMPs), and the absence of an LMIS.

Traditionally, Lebanon had an advanced education structure, and well-trained technicians and engineers. Beirut used to serve as an education centre for the region. However, a substantial part of this human capital was lost during the 1975–1990 conflict, and the educational system and infrastructure suffered significant damage and lack of investment. However, in spite of such turmoil, the national educational system has survived and is still highly valued by the Lebanese. The Constitution attributes a key role to education in the country's socio-economic development, stating that '…*the even development among regions on the educational, social, and economic levels shall be a basic pillar of the unity of the state and the stability of the system'*.

One distinctive characteristic of the education and training system in Lebanon is the high proportion of private providers. The share of private enrolment in general education is relatively high and always above 50% (see Figure 3). Private education also accounts for 54% of the total number of schools, while in higher education there is only one public university and 47 private ones.

FIGURE 3: PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE SCHOOLS ENROLMENT, 2018
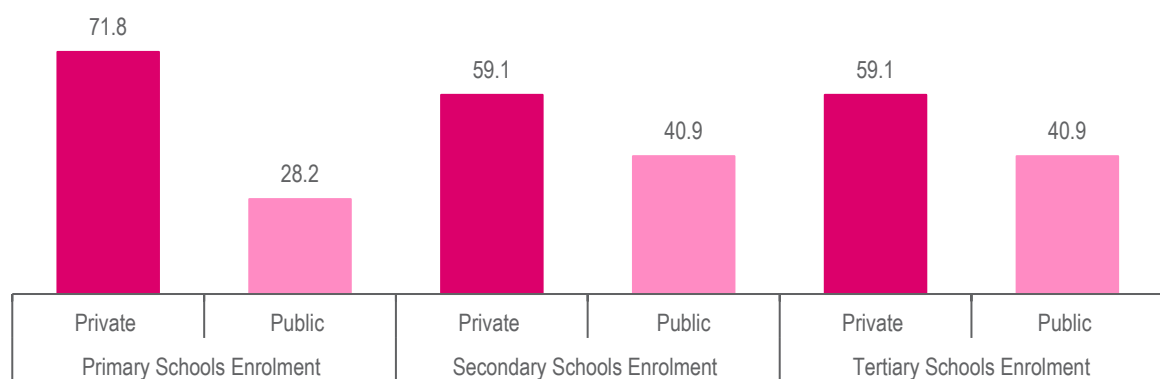
Source: UNESCO, UIS Database.

The VET sector follows the same trend, with roughly 60% of its schools privately run[24]. There are two types of VET private providers, non-profit and for-profit. The non-profit private VET schools are mainly run by charitable and social work NGOs. These NGOs are mostly community-based, with strong regional and religious ties. NGOs have been the developers of this sector since the 1950s, even

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[24] General Directorate for Vocational and Technical Education and Brite Indicators and Trends, 2019.

before the creation of the Directorate General for VTE in Lebanon; DGVTE. The larger for-profit private VET schools are concentrated around the major cities and population centres, and offer highly competitive training. Some belong to European or North American networks and provide internationally recognised degrees and certificates guaranteed by accredited quality-control systems and credentials.

**FIGURE 4: VET INSTITUTIONS AND VET PROVIDERS**
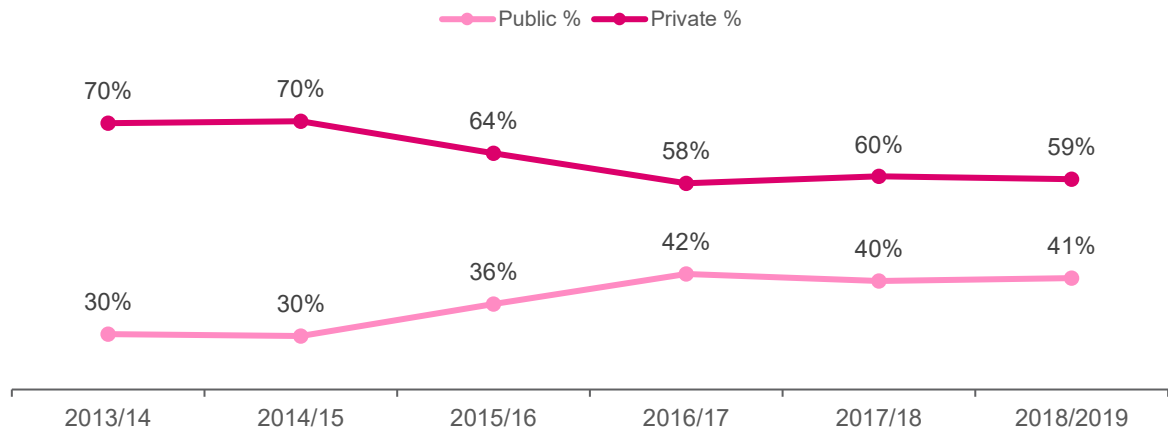
Source: General Directorate for Vocational and Technical Education and Brite Indicators and Trends (2019).

Thus, private spending on education is high and far exceeds public spending. Typically, household spending on education surpasses 10% of the household's total expenditure. This compensates for low government spending, but is contingent on families' ability to pay. The country's rising poverty rates could explain the increase in public VET provision at the expense of private schools over the past decade, as shown in Figure 4.

Conversely, public expenditure on education is not only low, but is also highly dependent on external donor funding (BankMed, 2014). While general and higher education have been the focus of attention and regarded as a priority, VET has remained historically isolated from the other parts of the education system and attracts much lower student numbers: only 15.5% of all secondary education pupils were enrolled in a vocational programme in 2018[25].

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[25] UNESCO, UIS Database.

FIGURE 5: SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION STUDENTS: TOTAL, LOWER AND UPPER
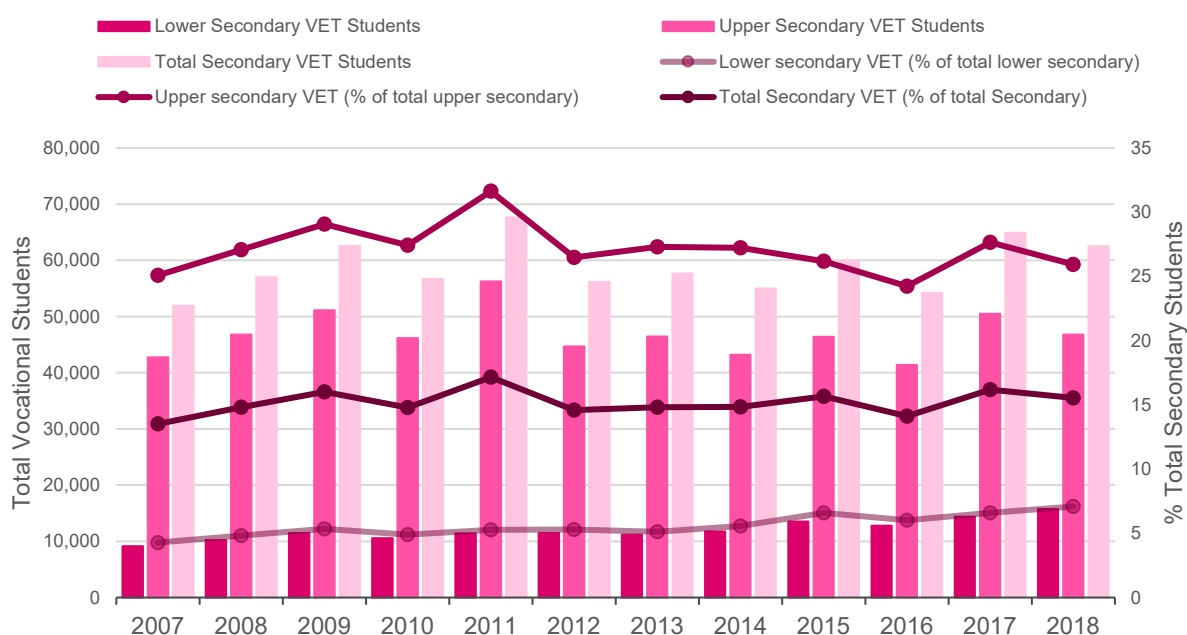
Source: UNESCO, UIS Database.

VET in Lebanon dates back to 1863 when a religious mission established the first vocational school, and since then new technical schools have been built in many regions. In 1993, a dedicated Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education was established for the first time. Following a further reorganization in 2000, all education streams are now administered under a single Ministry of Education and Higher Education, with responsibility for VET being assigned to a Directorate General for Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE). By law, the public administration is supported by a Higher Council for VET, headed by the Minister of Education and Higher Education with representatives from other ministries, public administration bodies, and the private sectors ,as well as public VET schools, private VET schools and the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD). Until recently, this Council has not been operational.

Currently, the VET system remains highly centralised, with little autonomy given to the schools or the organisations involved in shaping the system. The main challenges to the effectiveness and development of the VET sector in Lebanon are its governance, financing and institutional arrangements, as well as coordination of the relevant actors.

1.3   Strategic context

The government's recent economic vision, developed through the McKinsey study carried out in 2018 (Middle East Consultancy, 2018), aims at increasing economic growth and reducing fiscal deficit and unemployment through 'quick wins', such as developing an investment banking hub, establishing a construction zone for pre-fabricated housing, and providing support for tourism and industrial zones as well as agriculture, through legalising cannabis and investing in the pharmaceutical sector.

In a parallel process, the VET sector for the first time endorsed a National Strategic Framework for TVET (NSF 2018–2022) through a wide range of consultations with key VET stakeholders led by UNICEF-ILO. These sessions involved an extensive array of stakeholders, including the Ministry of

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Education and Higher Education (MEHE), the Ministry of Labour (MOL), the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), the National Employment Office (NEO), the National Vocational Training Centre (NVTC), private sector representatives and NGOs. The NSF is intended to pave the way for a common roadmap and action plans for the VET sector in the coming years.

So far, there has been no specific employment strategy or action plan for employment in Lebanon. The Ministry of Labour has issued a kind of strategy document called 'Decent work country program for Lebanon 2017–2020' that sets three main priorities for employment with the cooperation of social partners and the ILO: (i) improving labour governance; (ii) enhancing productive employment; and (iii) increasing social security provision. The latest developments in the country might result in pushing the national authorities towards a more strategic approach, leading to an employment strategy that is aligned with the relevant education policies and frameworks, including the NSF for VET.

The government has also requested support from the international community, notably to address young people's aspirations and enhance equality of opportunity. Both the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2017–2020 and the government's presentations at the Brussels Conferences in April 2017, April 2018 and March 2019 emphasised the importance of broadening educational opportunities for refugees and displaced persons. To this end, the LCRP supports the development of competency-based approach and apprenticeships in non-formal settings. The LCRP also prioritises modernising VET curricula and enhancing linkages with the private sector. In parallel, the government is also developing a youth strategy that includes a vocational training component, targeting 500 000 at-risk young people (UNICEF-ILO, 2018).

In line with these priorities and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, adopted in 2016 as part of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (the 'Madad Fund') pools an increasing share of the EU's aid to Lebanon. The Fund primarily addresses the educational, economic and social needs of Syrian refugees, while also supporting overstretched local communities and their administrations. This important initiative also contributes to Lebanon's investments in education and training, job creation and the integration of jobseekers into the labour market, for both local communities and refugees, especially with regard to vulnerable groups such as women and young people.

Furthermore, education and training are assigned a major role in the realisation of the European Union (EU) association agreement. Currently, an EU-funded project on work-based learning (ProVET) and career guidance is being implemented by GIZ. The EU has also funded the first Labour Force Survey (LFS) in the country, with the support of the ILO and CAS. The preliminary results of this survey were made available at the end of 2019.

The ongoing protests in the country combine political and economic grievances and seek to bring down the country's sectarian political system, which has failed to provide the most basic of services, while economic growth has decreased significantly over the last 10 years (GDP dropped from an average of 9.2% in 2007–2010 to 0.2% in 2018[26]). This report appears at an important point in the political and strategic development of the country and is expected to complement and support these positive trends for reform by setting out priorities for action for national policy makers, the EU and international organisations.

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[26] World Bank and OECD National Accounts data

2. HUMAN CAPITAL: DEVELOPMENT AND CHALLENGES

Overview and data

As noted in the Preamble of this report, human capital development is about supporting countries to create lifelong learning systems which will provide opportunities and incentives for people to develop their knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes throughout their lives, helping them to find employment, realise their potential, and contribute to prosperous, innovative and inclusive societies. The value of human capital for individuals, economies and societies depends on how well it is developed, and on the extent to which it is then available and used.

In Lebanon, human capital is both the country's main asset and a challenge for its socio-economic development. Some of the key indicators available on human capital, and those seen in the national report outcomes, suggest that there are many challenges at different levels and stages. The availability and utilisation of human capital is affected by many factors, amongst which sectarian governance, political conflicts and upheavals, demographic transformation, and lack of data are the most common.

More specifically, human capital development is hampered by low levels of job creation, skills mismatch, weak public employment services, and limited access to LLL and adult learning, as well as the inadequate capacity of public authorities for undertaking reform.

TABLE 1. SELECTED INDICATORS OF HUMAN CAPITAL, LEBANON

Indicator		Year	Value
(1) Population structure (%)			
	0–24		45.7
	25–64	2015	48.0
	65+		6.3
	0–24		37.7
	25–64	2025	52.9
	65+		9.4
(2) Average years of schooling		2018	NA (8.7 IN 2017)
(3) Expected years of schooling		2018	11.3 (12.5 IN 2017)
(4) Learning-adjusted years of schooling		2017	6.8
(5) Adult literacy		2018e	95.1
(6) Global Innovation Index Rank (x/126)		2019	88
(7) Global Competitiveness Index Rank (x/137)		2019	88
(8) Digital Readiness Index Rank (x/118)		2019	na
(9) Networked Readiness Index Rank (x/139)		2016	88
(10) occupational mismatch index		2016	na

Sources: (1) UN Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019 revision; (2) UNESCO UIS database; (3) and (4) World Bank HCI; (5) UNESCO, UIS database; (6) WEF, Global Innovation Index, 2019; (7) WEF,

Global Competitiveness Index 4.0, 2019; (8) Cisco, Country Digital Readiness, 2019; (9) WEF, Networked Readiness Index, 2016; (10) ETF, Skills mismatch in ETF partner countries, 2016.

The population structure of Lebanese residents shows a clear trend towards an aging population, as the age group 0–24 is set to decrease from 45.7% to 37.7% of the population, and the 65+ group increase from 6.3% to 9.4% between 2015 and 2025. This will have an obvious impact on the education and labour market sectors. The country's low ranking in the global innovation, competitiveness and networked readiness indexes are also linked with human capital development and use in Lebanon, as we will see in the analysis below and in Chapter 3. Other international human capital indicators, such as average years of schooling, digital readiness index and occupational mismatch index, are not available for Lebanon.

The following sections provide an analysis of the main human capital development challenges that hamper the country's socio-economic development and need to be addressed as a priority.

2.1 Issue N° 1: Inefficiencies in human capital utilisation due to low levels of job creation and skills mismatch

The Lebanese economy has faced severe challenges throughout the last decade: GDP growth plummeted to 0.2% in 2018[27], while the precarious economic context of the past decade has been exacerbated by a high and growing public debt (an average debt-to-GDP ratio of 149% in 2010–2017[28], among the highest in the world), as well as a worsening international business environment, characterised by a significant decrease in foreign direct investment inflows (down from 13.3% of GDP in 2007–2010 to a mere 4.8% in 2015–2018)[29].

FIGURE 6: FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT: INFLOWS VS. OUTFLOWS
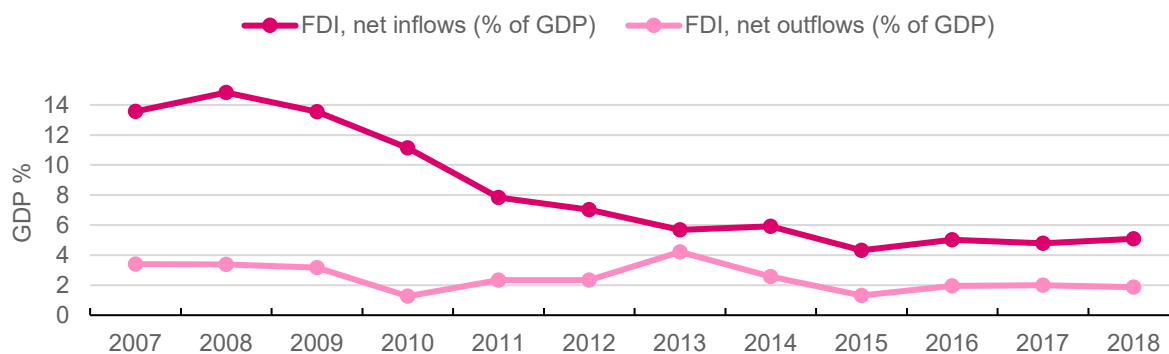
Source: International Monetary Fund, IMF Balance of Payments Statistics Database.

In addition, the Lebanese economy has traditionally focused on non-productive service sub-sectors (in particular real estate and banking), whereas the contribution of manufacturing to GDP in 2018 was merely 7.8% (only 15.6% of which was driven by medium- and high-tech industries[30]). The McKinsey Report (2018) estimated that productive sectors contributed 16% of the country's GDP in 2016, as opposed to 20% in Jordan and 32% in Morocco. The result of the current stagnating economic context

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[27] World Bank and OECD National Accounts data.

[28] McKinsey & Company, 'Lebanon Economic Vision' Report, 2018.

[29] International Monetary Fund, IMF Balance of Payment Database.

[30] UNIDO, Competitive Industrial Performance (CIP) database, 2019.

is a limited expansion of enterprises and job creation, with the domestic labour market unable to absorb the huge number of existing and new jobseekers, particularly women and young people. Additionally, the informal sector is substantial: according to CAS (2019), the overall share of employees who have make no social security contributions is 55%, while according to McKinsey (2018), the figure is as high as 92% for agricultural workers.

The horizontal and vertical skills mismatch is reported as very important due to the structure of the country's enterprises (around 73% are classified as micro, with fewer than 10 employees[31]) and their limited capacity to anticipate skills needs. This mismatch is exacerbated by weak public employment services and lack of career guidance and counselling. Competition for jobs from Syrian refugees who accept lower wages and no social benefits has deepened the issue of mismatch and undermined the employability of Lebanese youth: 32% of those working in informal employment are university graduates (McKinsey, 2018).

Other fundamental problems pertaining to unemployment are the length of time spent searching for jobs by those who want to enter the labour market for the first time and the challenges related to permanent work and fair wages. The average duration of unemployment is estimated to be close to one year, and the youth (15–24) unemployment rate in 2018 was more than double the national (15+) average, namely 23.3% vs. 11.4% (CAS, 2019). (According to a previous estimate, in 2017 the unemployment rates were even larger: with 25% the national average; 37% for young people aged under 35, and 18% for women[32].)

FIGURE 7: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY EDUCATION LEVEL, 2018–2019
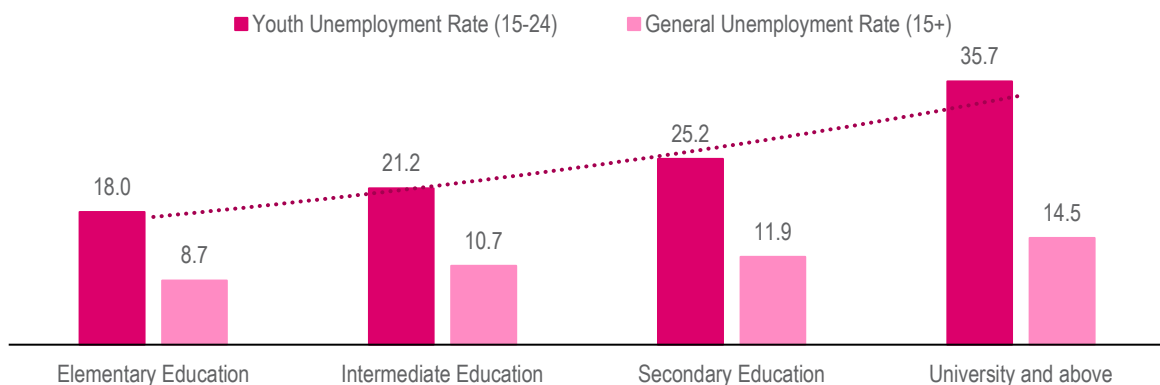
Source: CAS (2019)

Moreover, the existence of a skills mismatch issue for young jobseekers is highlighted by the fact that the higher their educational attainment, the higher their chances of being unemployed, with youth unemployment rates for university graduates as high as 35.7%, compared to 18.0% for young people with only primary education (CAS, 2019). VET graduates in the age-range 15–24 fall within the secondary education level, which shows an unemployment rate of more than 25%. Longer transition periods for the better educated may also be an indication of their higher expectations regarding their first job or that they can afford to wait because they come from better-off families.

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[31] *Lebanon SME Strategy: a roadmap to 2020*, Ministry of Economy and Trade, November 2014.

[32] Arab Weekly Digest, 'Interview with the Minister of Labour', Beirut, August 2017.

This paradox, consisting of a lack of a mid-range technical workforce combined with a high level of unemployment, can be explained by many factors, ranging from the reluctance of graduates to accept inferior quality and low-wage jobs to issues related to the unattractiveness of the VET system (with its generally perceived low social value and poor quality of provision), the scarcity of data regarding work in general and skills needs in particular, weak inter-institutional cooperation and the reluctance of employers to be involved in the policy cycle due to a lack of trust in public services.

The above issues, paired with an absence of skills anticipation mechanisms and the lack of continuous training initiatives and deficient LLL policy in general, make the risk of a lack of synchronisation between skills and future changes in the job market very high.

2.2 Issue N° 2: Limited institutional capacity and resources for policy reform and ownership, leading to inequity and the disconnection of VET from labour market requirements

Lebanon suffers from a serious lack of data at all levels. Labour market information and figures are scarce, incomplete, outdated and in some cases contradictory. The last official census was in 1932. Other unofficial censuses have been conducted, for instance in 1956, but the results were not published to preserve the fragile political consensus among the country's different religious groups.

The preliminary results of the first Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey launched by the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) were published at the end of 2019, just as this report was being finalised. CAS made the preliminary key findings from the LFHLCS available for inclusion in this assessment.

Currently, Lebanon has no LMIS, and the National Employment Office (NEO) still lacks the full financial and human resources capacity to collect data on jobseekers, vacancies and labour market absorption, or even to register jobseekers. A systematic data collection process to analyse labour market trends and track its absorption capacity would allow a better matching of employers' demands with the supply of graduates, thereby making it possible to effectively address skills shortages and mismatch, to guide VET curricula according to labour market needs and to ease the school- and work-to-work transition.

Similarly, the shortage and inaccuracy of data in the VET sector present a barrier to policy planning and the implementation and monitoring of policies and measures. The Torino Process national report underlines the absence of skills anticipation tools, national tracer studies or any other ways of monitoring graduates' placement in work or business creation, not to mention the lack of even basic data giving official statistics for enrolment, success rates, etc.

This, combined with the weak institutional, manpower and financial capacities of VET authorities to lead structural reforms, the highly centralised governance setting and the limited involvement of employers in the policy cycle, make it difficult to evaluate the skills mismatch in Lebanon and to anticipate and respond to its labour market needs. Even more importantly, this weak institutional capacity limits the appropriation and ownership of the national and donor-led reform initiatives.

2.3 Issue N°3: Human capital development under pressure because of demographic transformations placing a burden on the education and training sector

Lebanon's total population has increased by 45% throughout the last decade, rising from 4.7 million in 2008 to over 6.8 million in 2018. The influx of an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees since 2011, in addition to the presence of Palestinian refugees caught in a protracted displacement situation

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(487 270 according to the latest UNRWA estimate in 2019[33]), has placed a major strain on public finances, infrastructure and service delivery.

FIGURE 8: POPULATION, IMMIGRANT STOCK AND REFUGEES INFLOW
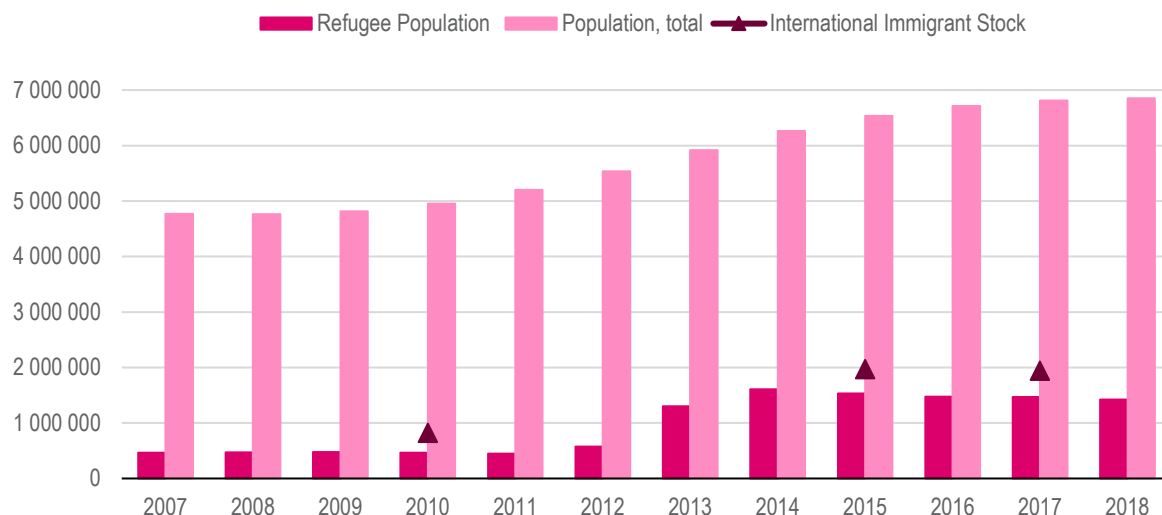
Sources: UN Population Division (2019), UNHCR (2018), UNRWA (2019).

On the other hand, the country has experienced high rates of emigration among the Lebanese labour force (generally young and educated people). There have been frequent attempts to assess the total number of people leaving the country, though such estimates are often politically driven (according to the UN Population Division, in 2019 the total number of Lebanese emigrants was 844 158, whereas the broader Lebanese diaspora is estimated at between four and 13 million) (Jaulin, 2006). The reasons behind emigration are linked to family, socio-political and economic factors, and there is a generally positive attitude (in society, the government and among politicians) towards Lebanese labour emigration because of the large amount of inward remittances it creates. The World Bank estimated the value of inward remittances at USD 7,313 million in 2019, representing 12.5% of GDP – the second highest percentage in the region after the West Bank and Gaza (World Bank, 2019)[34].

While it has been suggested that the influx of refugees has increased the flow of outward emigration, there is a lack of evidence concerning the exact relationship between the two phenomena. Likewise, the majority of refugees are young people and children with very low educational attainment, whereas 50% of the Lebanese emigrants have secondary-level education or higher (25% have tertiary credentials) (OECD, 2015).

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[33] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019) and UNRWA (2019).
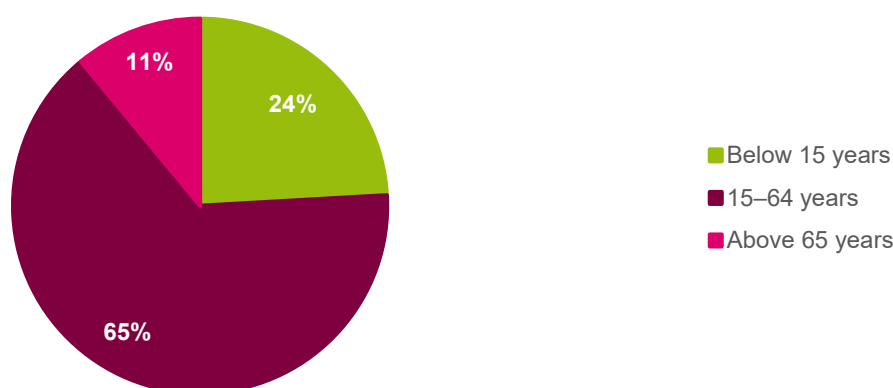
[34] The World Bank Migration and Remittances Data, Oct. 2019.

FIGURE 9: IMMIGRANT STOCK AGE STRUCTURE, 2017
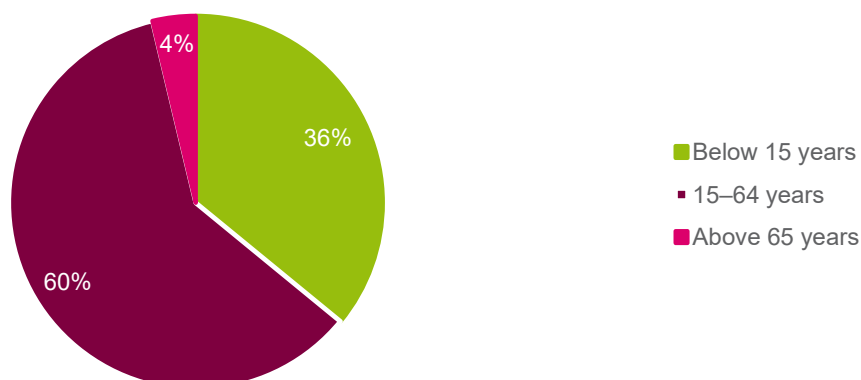
Source: UN Population Division Database.

FIGURE 10: LEBANESE POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE, 2017–2018

Source: CAS (2019).

These demographic transformations have a direct impact on employment and education in the country. Indeed, given the relatively low education levels of immigrants and refugees and the significant legal restrictions on the sectors and occupations where they are authorised to find employment, most refugees are forced to work irregularly in the informal economy, where they accept much lower wages than Lebanese citizens. On the education and training side, the international community provides support to expand the country's infrastructure and resources and accommodate some of the school-age refugees.

2.4 Issue N°4: Sustainable development goals review highlights issues in the public education sector and youth employment

In order to help address global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, the environment and prosperity and peace, starting from 2016, Lebanon has been strengthening its engagement with the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030[35]. Lebanon presented its first Voluntary

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[35] In September 2015, 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They committed to a set of goals (SDGs) that seek to eradicate all types of poverty and achieve a more sustainable world, addressing challenges ranging from governance to health, from women's empowerment to environmental sustainability. The SDGs build on the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and set out a vision for what world should look like in 2030.

National Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2018. Among the targets set, the country has achieved at least seven, showing notable progress in education and health, as well as a satisfactory performance in gender equality[36]. Overall, the government has taken major steps towards the implementation of the SDGs and has sought to send out a positive message about its commitment and determination to implement the 2030 Agenda.

FIGURE 11: NUMBER OF LEBANESE ORGANISATIONS THAT ARE REPORTING ON THE SDGS

SDG 1: No Poverty
SDG 2: Zero Hunger
SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being
SDG 4: Quality Education
SDG 5: Gender Equality
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
SDG 13: Climate Action
SDG 14: Life Below Water
SDG 15: Life on Land
SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Source: Global Compact Network Lebanon (2019).

However, Lebanon is facing significant development challenges, and its solidarity with global efforts to create a better environment for all have come at a high cost. The already-high poverty rates have worsened with the prolonged Syrian crisis, which has limited the resources available for public services, infrastructure and the social system, while the political instability in the country has had a negative impact on economic growth, marked by a decline in investors' confidence and the shutdown of traditional markets. In terms of income inequality, the Gini coefficient ranks Lebanon at 129 out of 141 countries[37], and economic exclusion is reflected in the high rates of informal employment, with

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[36] Lebanon Voluntary National Review of Sustainable Development Goals, 2018.
[37] UNDP and Republic of Lebanon Ministry of Finance (2017).

poor working conditions and limited decent employment opportunities. Hence, the remaining targets, in particular those related to poverty reduction, economic development and environmental sustainability, show mixed results and are not expected to be achieved on time. Lebanon's main strength is found in its human capital, with good quality healthcare and a robust education system still regarded as the foundations of Lebanese society, despite the massive external shocks the country has suffered. The education sector displays very high literacy rates (95.1% in 2018 according to World Bank estimates[38], and as high as 99.3% for young people aged 15–24[39]) and primary enrolment rates (reaching 99.2% in 2018/19 for Lebanese students in the age group 5–9[40]), together with gender parity seen in almost all education indicators (in 2015, the primary and secondary gender parity index (GPI) was 0.95, with tertiary GPI as high as 1.56[41]).

However, the National Education Plan 2010–2015, developed by MEHE to address the qualitative disparities across public-private providers and geographical regions, had to be put on hold in order to shift the focus towards the large influx of young refugees. As the education system transitions from emergency response to meeting the development challenges of a protracted crisis, a hybrid approach to support quality and equity, alongside the enrolment of both Lebanese and Syrian students, has been developed, as seen in the Education 2030 Strategy and the National Strategic Framework for TVET (2018–2022). More specifically, the latter identified and prioritised the three main VET deficits: equitable access; quality and relevance; and governance.

Overall, despite the enormous development challenges that have compounded the previously existing issues and stretched the country to its limits, Lebanon appears to be determined to mobilise the resources needed for implementing the 2030 Agenda. The main priorities have been identified as poverty eradication, upgrading public sector education, reducing unemployment (especially amongst young people), enhancing the critical infrastructures, conserving natural resources (sustainable agriculture, waste and water crisis), and addressing the impacts of the Syrian crisis on sustainable development.

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[38] World Bank, World Development Indicators (WDI).

[39] UNESCO Institute for Statistics (http://uis.unesco.org/).

[40] CAS, The Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey (LFHLCS) 2018–2019, 18th Dec. 2019.

[41] The GPI is calculated by dividing female by male enrolment ratios: GPI = 1 indicates perfect parity between girls and boys; a GPI of less than 1 suggests girls are more disadvantaged than boys in learning opportunities and a GPI of greater than 1 suggests that boys are more disadvantaged than girls. Source: UNESCO, UIS Database.

3. ASSESSMENT OF KEY ISSUES AND POLICY RESPONSES

As elaborated in Chapter 2, it has become evident that human capital utilisation is an issue in Lebanon, and is related to the functioning of the labour market, indicating the need for a number of reforms to improve the responsiveness of the education and training system to its evolving needs. This chapter will discuss how the skills gaps and mismatch[42] in the country are being addressed currently and how they could be further managed in the future, and how reinforcing shared governance and equipping the policy-making process with stronger instruments could result in a more dynamic and sustainable education and training system. The analysis will focus on the two first human capital development (HCD) issues that have direct consequences on the VET system, and which need to be dealt with urgently, as the ETF believes that they are crucial for the socio-economic development of the country and that the current winds of change offer a momentum to be seized in addressing them. While focusing the analysis on these two issues, some recommendations also take into account issues 3 and 4 (e.g. adult education and LLL, the NQF, VNFIL or governance and financing).

3.1 Inefficiencies in human capital utilisation due to low levels of job creation and skills mismatch

3.1.1 The problem

The problems of youth unemployment and skills mismatch are central to the issues of human capital utilisation in Lebanon. This has been highlighted in all the national Torino Process discussions and reports since 2010, as well as in other strategic documents and studies carried out in recent years.

Limited economic growth, the growing informal sector and the Syrian refugee crisis have progressively led to an increase in unemployment and poverty. Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, it is estimated that around 200 000 Lebanese have been pushed into poverty, and another 250 000– 300 000 have become unemployed (World Bank, 2018). In Lebanon's highly fragile context, jobs are critical, not just to reduce poverty and contribute to productivity and growth but also to strengthen social cohesion and avoid radicalisation.

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[42] Skills mismatch is an encompassing term which refers to various types of imbalances between the skills offered and the skills needed in the labour market

## FIGURE 12: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE GROUP AND GENDER, 2018–2019 (%)
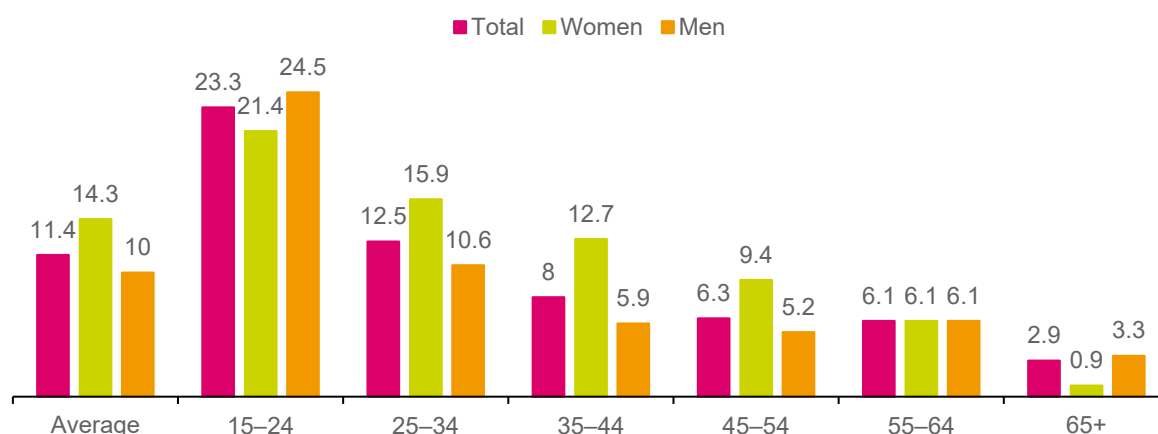
Source: CAS (2019)

According the preliminary key findings of the CAS Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey (LFHLCS) 2018–2019, the youth (15–24 years) unemployment rate is at its highest since 2012. It rose from 18% in 2012 up to 23.3% in 2018–2019, more than double than the general rate (11.4%), and the likelihood of being unemployed is significantly higher among university graduates (35.7%) of the same age cohort. Moreover, about half of the unemployed young people had been looking for work for more than a year, resulting in feelings of discouragement in relation to jobseeking: the percentage of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) is about 22%, and significantly higher among young women (26.8%).

On top of the high and persistent youth unemployment rate, which rises in line with the individual's education level, the limited absorption capacity of the labour market is visible through the presence of skills mismatch. The structure of employment in Lebanon has shifted away from manufacturing and agricultural activities and towards the service sector. McKinsey's Economic Vision Report (2018) estimated that the productive sectors employ only 28% of the labour force, namely agriculture 12%, manufacturing 11%, and hotels and restaurants 5%. According to the LFHLCS 2018–2019, the share of the workforce employed in agriculture has dropped to 4%, with the service sector rate rising to 76%.

## FIGURE 13: EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR
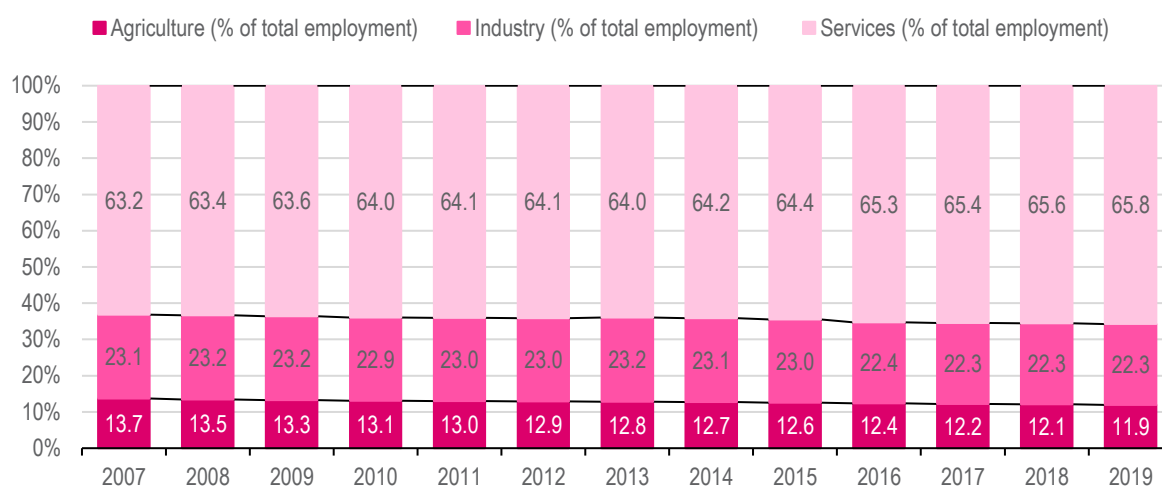
Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) Database, ILO estimates.

As the labour market is becoming more concentrated in fewer service sector activities with relatively low levels of productivity, the economy cannot generate enough high-skilled jobs to absorb the numbers of university graduates. In fact, among young people in employment, 31.5% were engaged in occupations with qualifications requirements below their level of education (CAS, 2019). Moreover, it was estimated that only 40% of graduates work in jobs that match their qualifications, while 20% are engaged in activities that do not match their educational fields (Dibeh et al., 2016).

Even more important is the low and apparently decreasing level of participation: according to the LFHLCS, less than 50% of the working-age population (15 years and over) were active members of the labour force in 2018–19 (the activity rate was estimated at 54% in 2012[43]). The figures are even lower for women and young people (15–24), with participation rates of, respectively, 29.3% and 39.2%, compared with 70.4% for men. Taking into account the potential labour force, including discouraged from job-search, the survey results also show that 29.4% of the extended youth labour force[44] were underutilised to various extents in terms of employment (CAS, 2019).

FIGURE 14: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES, BY AGE GROUP AND GENDER, 2018–2019 (%)
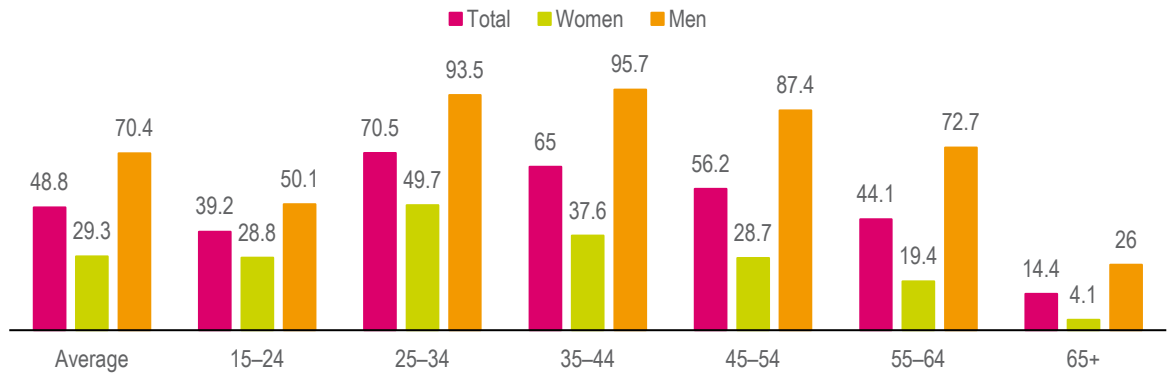
Source: CAS (2019)

Skills deficits and mismatch hinder private-sector growth. A Word Bank enterprise survey released in 2016 estimated that 15% of firms in Lebanon consider a lack of workforce skills as a serious impediment to their operations (World Bank, 2016). A labour market study on electrical technicians in Lebanon, conducted and presented by IECD in 2019[45], stated that 74% of VET graduates holding a BT (Bac Technique) in électrotechnique chose to go into higher education, either for a TS -Technicien Supérieur- (50%) or University degree (50%), while the remaining graduates opted for civil service employment, especially in the armed forces, taking into account the matter of salary and other benefits.

At the same time, medium-level technical expertise (e.g. skilled workers, technical assistants) is extremely scarce across all occupations in the Lebanese labour market. According to the IECD study

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[43] Eurostat Database.

[44] The "extended youth labour force" is the sum of labour force and potential labour force. The "potential labour force" is defined as all 15+ people who, during the previous 7 days, were neither in employment nor in unemployment, but were: (a) seeking employment but not currently available (unavailable jobseekers); or (b) wanting employment and currently available to work, but did not seek employment (available potential jobseekers, and discouraged potential jobseekers).

[45] Technical education meeting: Results of the Labor Market Study of Electrical Technicians in Lebanon.

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(2019), the interviewed enterprises indicated a mismatch between current TS graduate skills and market needs, with over 70% citing a lack of skilled talent and a shortage of technical skills. This is further underlined by an Employers' Survey pilot initiative, carried out by a joint public-private task force and supported by the European Training Foundation (ETF), which reported that 46% of the employers surveyed provided training to their current employees to cover particular skills gaps, namely in maintaining and operating machinery (ETF, 2019a). The lack of organisation and the negative value attributed to these occupations are major obstacles preventing Lebanese people from opting for these professions.

The IECD (2019) labour market study also highlighted the limited presence of women in the VET sector due to gender bias and employers assuming that the working environment is too challenging for women. The latter view reinforces the social perception of gendered roles that leads to steering girls towards non-industrial specialties at school, which further exacerbates the mismatch.

'Mind the Gap: A labour needs assessment for Lebanon', commissioned by UNDP in 2017, covering three sectors (construction, agro-food and ICT) reported skills gaps in relation to semi-skilled labour and stressed the need for further training. Within the agro-food sector specifically, around 40% of employers stated that hiring and keeping qualified employees was an issue for them. Professionals also report that semi-skilled workers' lack of training on quality control techniques and monitoring and evaluation methods is the biggest obstacle they face (Hamade, et al., 2017).

Furthermore, such skills gaps can be ascertained from the sizable inactive population (52%), the high proportion of NEETs (22%) and the underutilised labour force (16.2%, and as much as 30% for the 15–24 age group) which obviously accentuates the deficit of human capital (CAS, 2019).

A youth discussion group organised by the ETF within the framework of the Torino Process 2017 clearly identified the lack of career guidance services and support in the transition from school to work as key issues. The need for better guidance in the choice of education is considered particularly important, as the current system, dictated by traditional values and family influence, frequently guides students towards professions unsuited to their own competences and aspirations. Students often seek advice from their teachers, but most of the staff have insufficient experience or ability to guide students as their knowledge of the world of work is limited. In this context, a clear need was expressed for structured and well-functioning career guidance and career orientation services.

The above factors are also the result of the low social value accorded to VET. Students and parents generally consider that VET qualifications do not add value to their professional and personal development. VET is seen as a last chance for students who fail in general education and who, in most cases, are not even in a position to select a training path appropriate to their capacities and potential because of the lack of career guidance services. Most of those who opt for VET are often seeking to continue in higher education.

VET provision remains disconnected from the demand side of the labour market and does not help in bridging the skills gaps and mismatch. As indicated in previous editions of the Torino Process (ETF, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016) and in the review of VET governance in Lebanon (ETF, 2016), VET in Lebanon suffers from an absence of vision (being partially covered by the NSF) and strategic planning, as well as being adversely affected by centralised governance and lack of accountability and financial transparency. As a result, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, it is far from fulfilling its role. Obviously, this impacts negatively on skills provision in the country, and there is a unanimity concerning the factors that contribute to its inadequacy in addressing labour market needs:

- Teaching and learning approaches that include outdated curricula, with some exceptions, and lack of mechanisms for curricula development, streamlining and updating;
- Limited pre- and in-service teacher training; lack of transparent procedures and criteria for recruitment and performance evaluation. It should be highlighted that more than 80% of staff are contracted on limited terms and so not eligible for professional development;
- A highly centralised system that leaves little room for schools to exercise autonomy and innovation (including with regard to planning, monitoring and use of resources);
- Work-based learning remains at the piloting stage, although launched more than 20 years ago;
- Lack of quality assurance mechanisms. Quality assurance in Lebanon mainly refers to quality control mechanisms such as exams and the accreditation of private providers.
- Lack of career guidance and counselling, with some school-based exceptions (i.e. Guidance and Employment Offices – GEOs).

As a result of the change introduced by the DGVTE (as per law nr. 8590 published in 2012), the TS (Technician Supérieur) programme was shortened, from three to two years. This created challenges for the students pursuing different specialties and especially in regulated fields such as nursing, where the Order of Nurses issued a regulation that unless TS students obtain a 'Licence Technique (LT)' or bridge their studies with other academic studies and obtain a Bachelor's degree, they cannot obtain the required licence to work or become a registered nurse. According to the Torino Process national report, the situation is the same in other industrial specialisations (confirmed through interviews with UNDP, IECD, UNICEF and others), with the programme deemed insufficient in duration to equip the students with the proper skills required by labour market.

A recent ILO study on 'Trends in the demand and supply for skills in the agriculture sector' carried out in February 2018, highlights the urgent need for a better trained workforce, especially at the level of technician, and to improve the quality of programmes. The study estimated that agriculture, including own-account and contributing family workers, employs roughly 20–25% of the Lebanese workforce (significantly higher than the usual estimates) and represents the primary source of income for the poorest families (ILO, 218). This represents a skills deficit that the VET system struggles to address.

Furthermore, the concerns over teachers are not only centred on their capacity and development but also on their distribution over schools and students. The increase in the number of schools has not responded to the over-saturation of students in existing schools nor to introducing new specialisations, but to political considerations. In fact, this could explain the low student-teacher ratio in public technical VET, which was as low as 3:43 in 2017/18[46].

Above all, the monitoring and evaluation of progress is very difficult to undertake due to the lack of basic official data on enrolment and success or graduate placement rates, whether global, regional or by specialty.

The National Employment Office (NEO) struggles to fulfil its function of intermediation. Another serious and long-lasting problem in Lebanon, in addition to the lack of data, is the limited capacity and resources of the National Employment Office (NEO). The NEO acts by law as a services intermediation agency, but does not have the full human, financial and technical capabilities to adequately perform and develop this role, even though 30 new employees have recently been

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[46] Figure provided by General Directorate for Vocational and Technical Education, 2019.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Promote multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance

Revive the higher council for VET

Set up skills councils

Foster public-private partnerships

Reinforce school autonomy

2. Improve VET responsiveness to labour market needs

Upgrade the teaching and learning environment

Mainstream key competences, focussing on digitalisation and entrepreneurship

3. Make school to and work to work transition easier

Upgrade the career guidance system

Reinforce the national employment office

Regulate and extend work-based learning

4. Develop the quality assurance and national qualifications frameworks

Establish a system for the validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning

5. Establish a national labour market information system

Provide the necessary information to bridge skills mismatch

Upgrade the career guidance system

Adapt active labour market programmes

6. Diversify financing

Further engage the private sector

Develop an agreed costing methodology

Move towards a performance-oriented approach to resource allocation

Give schools more financial autonom

7. Smooth the transition from donor to country-led VET planning, implementation and monitoring

Ensure the commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders

Guarantee the financial capacity and autonomy to support reforms

8. Pay more attention to Lebanese emigrants

Foster exchange programmes for Lebanese nationals

Offer entrepreneurship training to returnees

Establish incentives for investment in productive activity

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recruited. In practice, its role is limited to funding continuing training (an accelerated vocational training programme) for jobseekers and vulnerable groups. At the time of drafting this report, the post of

Director General remains vacant, which may have an even greater influence on the slowdown of its activities. Due to a shortage of resources, other services usually performed by public employment offices, such as registering the unemployed, organising job placements, and providing career information, guidance and counselling are not offered by the NEO. On top of this, the issue of the Office's lack of visibility at the national level limits awareness of its role and therefore jobseekers' ability to access training and general services.

Low learning participation rates for females in general, non-Lebanese in particular and people with disabilities. These sections of the population are at a greater disadvantage in terms of accessing learning opportunities, whether academic or vocational. According to the NRF, the extreme poverty of Syrian households forces them to prioritise the education of boys over girls, preventing girls from continuing their education and exposing them to early marriage. The share of female secondary students enrolled in vocational education, around 12%, is lower than the rate for males, at around 18%[47].

## FIGURE 15: SHARE OF FEMALE SECONDARY VOCATIONAL STUDENTS (AS % OF FEMALE SECONDARY PUPILS)
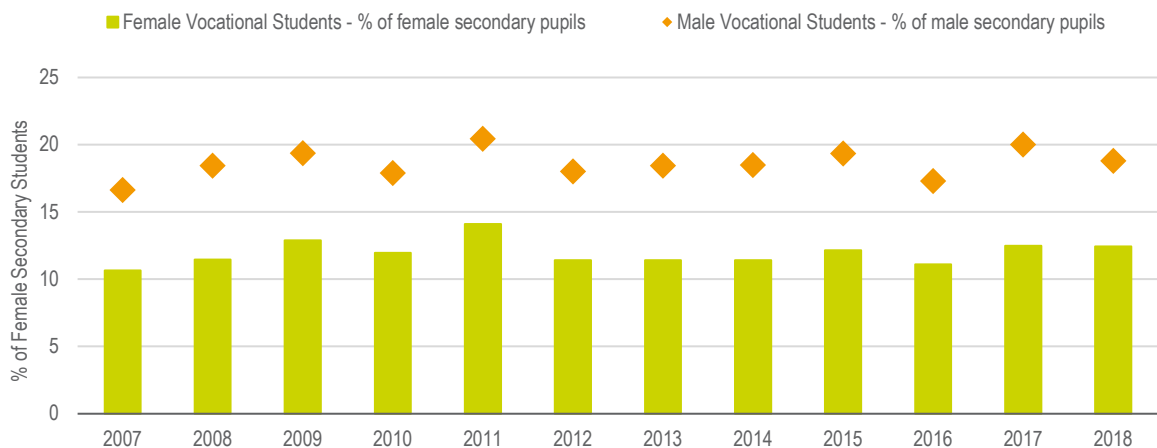
Source: UNESCO USI Database

Furthermore, the participation of females is mostly in gender-oriented specialties such as nursing or beauty, with a lower presence in industrial specialties such as électrotechnique, mechanics, etc. This trend is reflected by women's absorption in the labour market, where women's employment in the industrial sector is dramatically lower than men's (9.7% vs. 26.2% in 2019) and decreasing. By contrast, female employment is mainly directed towards the service sector (74.8% for women and 62.9% for men in 2019)[48]. When it comes to people with disabilities there are no statistics, but the fact that the relevant infrastructure is missing from the majority of schools further hinders their integration into the VET system.

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[47] UNESCO UIS Database.
[48] World Bank WDI Database, ILO Estimates.

FIGURE 16: FEMALE EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR
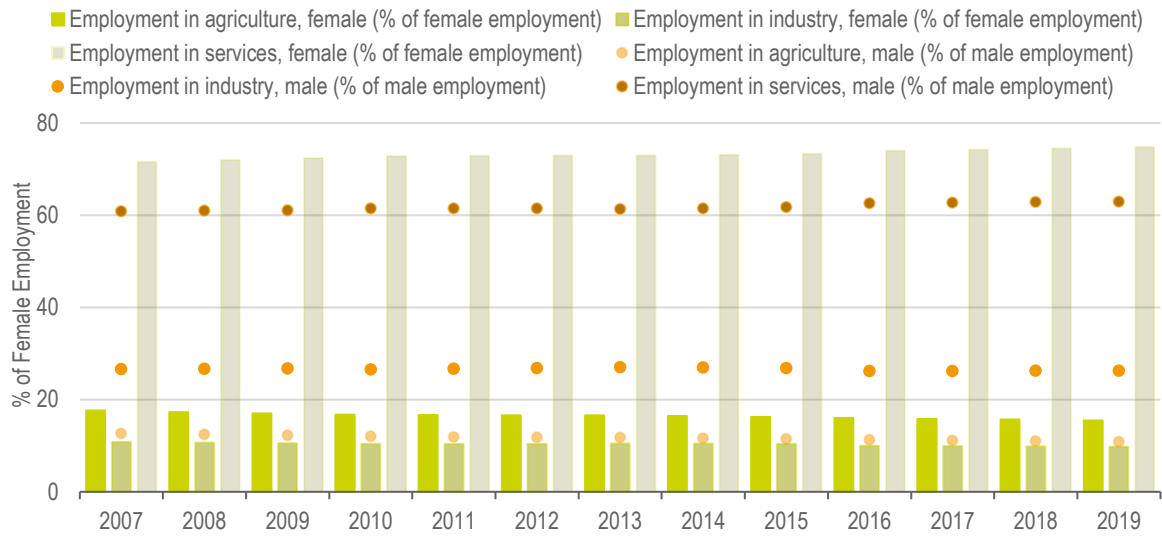
Source: World Development Indicators (WDI) Database, ILO Estimates

The refugee crisis has exacerbated this situation. In addition to the pressure Syrians refugees have exerted on public infrastructure and services, their presence has increased informality in the labour market, resulting in fewer job opportunities, a reduced quality of job offers and the depression of wages, particularly for low-skilled workers. According to the ILO, the estimated increase in the labour force is 14%, while the World Bank's projections have anticipated an increase of 10 percentage points in unemployment. This is placing additional pressure on already stretched VET services in terms of planning, access and quality. The combined effect of immigration and the emigration of skilled Lebanese graduates, creates at the same time a lack of job opportunities for low-skilled Lebanese graduates and a skills gap for jobs requiring high- and middle-skilled workers that the current VET system is not able to bridge.

An Oxfam skill gap analysis for a number of regions in Lebanon reported a discrepancy in perceiving the impact of the Syrian crisis: while enterprises in Beqaa saw a positive outcome, half of the enterprises in Mount Lebanon saw negative repercussions on the national economy. Among the reported barriers to hiring; skills, legal framework and cultural issues were the most dominant. Enterprises reported a gap between the educational background of the labour force and job market needs. Within the agro-food sector, the report saw a role for employing Syrians in the sector through adequate training (Oxfam, 2017).

3.1.2 Policy responses

Priorities and effectiveness

As mentioned above, the McKinsey study (2018) highlights six area that should receive priority government support in order to improve growth and employment:

1. **Agriculture**: Lebanon has the largest amount of arable land in the Middle East, and the potential to become the main supplier of high-quality fruit and vegetables for the Levant and Golf countries;

2. **Industry:** Lebanon should capitalise on its creative edge to become a leader in high value-added artistic products, including jewellery, furniture and fashion;

3. Tourism: Lebanon should build on its strong natural endowments and strategic location to attract its fair share of inbound tourists (4 million tourists by 2025);

4. Knowledge Economy: Lebanon should aspire to become the leading knowledge hub for the Middle East, serving as the region's KPO/BPO[49] destination and the number one tech ecosystem;

5. Financial Services: Lebanon receives the highest financial deposits relative to its GDP in the world, allowing it to become the financial hub for the Middle East and a gateway for financial transactions globally;

6. Diaspora: Lebanon should aspire to leverage its large diaspora to further drive economic growth (McKinsey, 2018).

The National Strategic Framework (NSF) for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) 2018–2022 is certainly the most important development in the sector in recent years. In addition to the fact that the NSF confirms the government's commitment to reform and promoting the VET system, it proposes concrete policy actions for implementation. The main strategic axes are: (i) expanded access and service delivery; (ii) enhanced quality and relevance of VET provision; and (iii) improved VET governance and systems.

A number of reforms were introduced in 2014 in relation to the TS (Technicien Supérieur) and the LT (Licence Technique), and in 2016 for the BP (Brevet Professionnel) and the BT (Bac. Technique)[50]. As part of these reforms, soft skills were incorporated into the curricula, the lack of which having been identified as one of the key impediments to the employability of VET graduates. New VET specialisations have also been introduced in response to labour market demands and industry trends. New areas of expertise include electro-mechanics, sustainable and renewable energy development, IT (smartphone application development), and air conditioning service and repair[51].

With regard to career guidance and counselling, in 2015 the ETF (EU-GEMM programme) established Guidance and Employment Offices (GEOs) in six public vocational schools, along with dedicated staff trained to facilitate young vocational graduates' transition into the labour market. A Ministerial decree published in May 2015 formalised the position of Guidance Employment Officer within public schools – a strong sign of the government's will to mainstream this function at the national level. A further 12 GEOs are being established in other public schools within the framework of the on-going EU project 'CLOSER' using the GEMM approach. The GEOs have had been introduced into the country's private schools by IECD.

A more recent initiative driven by international organisations, the EU-ProVTE (implemented by GIZ), is a competency-based approach for the modernisation and modularisation of curricula. This reform, operated in the Technical Baccalaureate, if generalised, will ease the transition from school to work, allow recognition of prior learning, and enhance the quality of VET provision in general, and thus its attractiveness.

The UNICEF is working with the DGVTE, within the annual action plans, to modernise the curricula according the competency-based approach and develop qualification framework chart and the description of the learning levels of TVET. This includes the setup of quality standards and production of a self-evaluation manual in a number of technical schools. The UNICEF is also working on the

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[49] KPO: Knowledge Process Outsourcing and BPO: Business Process Outsourcing
[50] Including the BT in électrotechnique and the new BT in maintenance.
[51] ETF – Torino Process, 2017.

mechanisms for the participation of employers and workers in the various aspects of the TVET system and establishing employers' committees in some sub-disciplinary fields to identify the skills needs. More recently, UNICEF was assigned to work on the development and modernisation of all BT curricula by applying the competency-based approach. It is also expected during 2020 that the EMIS become effective and that starting the school year 2020/2021 all the data regarding the public technical institutes and schools, their students, teachers and administrators will be entered online in the EMIS system.

Finally, since the London Conference in 2016, the Lebanese government has revoked the 'pledge not to work', allowing Syrians to obtain employment in specific sectors. The government has also waived the residency fees for a large number of Syrian refugees. The Brussels Conference emphasised the importance of education for displaced persons, particularly VET, not only in terms of ensuring social inclusion, but also in preparing the Syrian refugees for their subsequent return home post-conflict and their role in Syria's reconstruction (UNICEF-ILO, 2018). Moreover, all the support initiatives in education and training, in job creation and integration into the labour market, encompass both refugees and local communities, especially vulnerable Lebanese groups such as women and young people.

Shortcomings and policy gaps

The abovementioned policy responses are highly positive initiatives that have been nationally agreed in the VET sector, and have led to the first such action plans for years. They will certainly contribute to upgrading relevant job skills. However, based on previous experience, some gaps might be observed and underlined as follows.

Most of these policy responses are at the planning and/or piloting phase. The implementation and/or consolidation of pilots has always been an issue in the Lebanese context. The NSF will follow the same pattern if an action plan is not approved and implemented quickly. Precise planning should also be established, including an exit strategy focusing on the sustainability and extension of the models, shared with and owned by policy makers. For instance, in the absence of a nationally agreed framework for work-based learning or a competency-based approach, the piloting of different experimental models could last for ever.

Poor inter-institutional cooperation and the current VET governance setting may hamper the implementation of such structural and extensive reforms. This concern operates at both the policy and practitioner level and calls for new governance arrangements and organised capacity building as well as awareness-raising actions that are not always foreseen in the different policy responses. Inter-institutional cooperation is a challenge particularly between the ministries in charge of education and training, employment, social affairs and the economy, but even inside the different departments and with the private sector.

There is a need for national structured frameworks. Currently there is fragmentation in the VET sector and a lack of endorsed frameworks that would allow more coherence and visibility in terms of reform implementation. This is the case, for instance, in such areas as the recognition of prior learning, work-based learning, partnerships with the private and non-government sectors, the NQF and quality assurance systems, and individuals opting to participate in continuous vocational training (CVT).

The teaching environment remains disconnected from labour market needs, and IPNET is still non-operational. More specifically, most of the contracted teachers in the VET system have academic backgrounds, and a large proportion of those contracted on a yearly basis are recent university and

Technicien Supérieur graduates. In addition to contracted permanent staff, part-time teachers are recruited on a short-term basis (sometimes on an hourly basis). While there is clearly merit in the process of using contract teachers in VET institutions as a means to bring practical experience into the classroom, it should be noted that there is no specific legal framework that defines the mechanisms or criteria for recruiting part-time teachers and evaluating their performance. It should be noted that part-time teachers cover the majority of the teaching hours (roughly 90% in 2017/18) (ETF, 2020). One of the reasons for this precarious situation is the fact that the National Training Institution for Technical Education (IPNET), which is in charge of the initial training, graduation and development of VET teachers, has been dormant for many years due to lack of capacity and resources.

A quality assurance system for VET is lacking. Although there is a growing interest in quality assurance, with some isolated initiatives appearing in which quality assurance features significantly. Currently the DGVTE accredits VET providers and programmes through a dedicated commission that checks the implementation of official programmes as well as premises and equipment. Private VET providers require DGVTE accreditation to operate and must follow their official programmes, and students in both public and private VET schools must take the national examinations endorsed by the DGVTE. There is no structured and comprehensive VET management information system, although a dedicated department exists for information/statistics gathering. Data collected on VET participation do not appear to be used for quality assurance purposes (ETF, 2018b).

3.1.3   Recommendations

Addressing the issues of skills gaps and employability in Lebanon requires structural reforms calling for a mix of investments, policy and actions, along with institutional capacity building. Now that a clear strategic framework for VET has been agreed, the following recommendations are proposed to support this initiative and focus on actions related to skills and employability measures, with a special emphasis on proactive actions to combat youth unemployment.

The first set of recommendations (R1.1 to R1.4) covers the need for a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance as a pre-condition for improving the quality of skills provision as well as their alignment with labour market needs.

R.1.1 Create conducive conditions for the establishment of a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance ecosystem

As discussed in section 3.1.1, it is widely recognised that centralised governance is one the main factors that hampers the effectiveness of VET in Lebanon. This issue relates to the national, sectoral and local levels and impinges on VET effectiveness and its attractiveness to learners and employers. The current recommendation proposes a comprehensive and coherent approach to addressing this urgent issue by fostering the conditions conducive to a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance ecosystem that can steer skills development to respond efficiently to the country's socio-economic needs. A possible option could be the experimental governance system that encourages institutional learning by monitoring and identifying joint solutions to common problems through a process of trial and error (Morgan 2018, p. 5; OECD, 2018).

1.   National: Reactivate and operationalise the Higher Council for VET and foster all kinds of PPP

The operationalisation of the Higher VET Council will be a precondition for the implementation of the reforms and their success. This Council will represent and model partnership with social partners at the national level and will ensure and guarantee the strategic orientations and their implementation. It will also ensure the development of clear mandates for the various stakeholders and encourage

shared and well-defined responsibilities and accountability with other institutions beyond public education bodies (ministries, social partners, chambers of commerce, sectoral associations, etc.). This should include all types of public-private partnerships at the national, sectoral or local level. The Council should have a key role in the supervision of the implementation of the NSF Action Plan, once it is validated by the national authorities.

To avoid a repetition of past failures, the composition, legislation, assignments and resources of the Council should be flexible and discussed and agreed with all actors intervening in skills development and utilisation.

2. Sectoral: Set up skills councils in priority sectors

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are an effective way to involve employers in the practicalities of policy design and ensure that they can play a role in influencing policy. In countries like Lebanon, this may be a way for the private sector to engage in skills planning and policy dialogue, even if no formal role for social partners at the national level exists. The SSCs need to be progressively established as independent employer-led organisations in the economic priority sectors. In addition to their function of skills anticipation, reducing skills gaps and shortages, developing and managing apprenticeship standards etc., the SSCs will seek to build a skills system that is driven by employer demand. The example of the SSC recently established in the construction sector should be expanded to other selected fields.

3. Local: Reinforce schools' autonomy and integration with their environment

Without a certain level of human resources and financial autonomy, it will be hard for schools to ensure a high quality of VET provision or improve the attractiveness of the offer to learners and employers. This structural reform implies courageous political decisions and a significant degree of institutional capacity building, as well as developing the appropriate tools for implementation.

To start with, we may envisage developing the concept of vocational excellence in selected VET centres that are strategic for their thematic or geographical scope. This new generation of centres, which have a more comprehensive and inclusive conceptualisation of skills provision, addressing innovation, digitalisation, equity, career guidance, transversal skills, organisational and continuing professional learning, LLL courses, etc., should also have a shared governance setting allowing more management and financial autonomy. This autonomy should go hand in hand with rules for accountability. These examples of good practice would then be progressively extended thematically and geographically.

A second phase would be the setting up of consolidated school networks to optimise teaching and learning resources and improve efficiency. These national networks could open up their cooperative relationships to other international school networks to foster peer learning and future development.

R.1.2 Improve VET provision for better responsiveness to labour market needs

The NRF and other studies have highlighted the problems of VET provision in the country, which have been discussed in section 3.1.1. These issues call for a revision of the uneven distribution of students, teachers and schools, updating of the curricula, further development of teachers with a revision of their status and mode of recruitment, the upgrading of infrastructure and equipment, and the expansion of career guidance services, etc.

The NSF also specifies detailed actions that should be undertaken to improve VET provision. The current recommendations have multiple aspects and focus on the main provision issues that need to be tackled as a matter of priority to achieve better responsiveness to labour market needs.

1.   Improve the teaching and learning environment for effective VET provision

As discussed in section 3.1.2, the main challenges for the country's VET provision remain the teachers' capacity and curricula modernisation. There is a clear need to undertake a global review of teachers' status, performance and distribution, as well as an analysis of the relevance of existing specialities in order to open up provision to encompass new trades as required by the labour market and stop investing in specialities that don't meet any need. This should include the development, extension and re-distribution of training centres and equipment renewal.

The teaching profession needs to be comprehensively reviewed and reformed. As discussed above, the mode of recruiting teachers and their status need to be radically reassessed, with the objective of increasing their professionalism and opportunities for further development. Professional development within the existing system, with more that 93% of teaching hours delivered by part-timers, would be inefficient and unrealistic.

The IPNET should be reactivated and reorganised to fulfil its mandate, instead of creating new bodies and more layers of bureaucracy that would require further organisational decisions and legislative acts. The IPNET, if reactivated, could play a major role in both curricula reform and teachers' professional development in a sustainable way. Thus, (pre- and in-service) teacher training would be reinforced and integrated as part of the curricula reform.

A major curricula reform and streamlining process is needed to open pathways in the system and enhance VET's attractiveness. Major reform of the curricula requires an enormous effort in terms of time and resources and would need more structural changes in relation to how curricula are monitored and regularly updated, with the involvement of the private sector and building on real labour market needs. Alongside such reform, the streamlining of specialisations in VET is another key issue that needs to be addressed. The streamlining of specialisations should consider for instance, reducing and clustering the BP (Brevet Professionnel) within more general certificates, forming a base for students to progressively increase their specialisation in the BT (Bac. Technique) level. The BT should be structured on specific trades and offer fewer certificates to form the basis for choosing specialisations at the TS level, where a diverse bank of specialities originating from the BT trades is offered. Graduates at TS level would therefore be able to directly enter the labour market. The LT level should offer higher calibre programmes, and more choices should be offered to give VET certification a real value in the labour market. This arrangement calls for the development of clear mechanisms that would lead to decisions about the specialities offered, discontinuing old ones and initiating new ones based on changing labour market needs.

The competency-based approach should be generalised, together with the provision of teacher manuals and guides, and teachers training in this approach through IPNET, if re-activated. This reform may draw on successful pilots such the IECD project on electrical engineering and the GIZ dual system.

2.   Mainstreaming key competences with a focus on digitalisation and entrepreneurship

While updating the curricula, special attention should be paid to transversal skills as an important need highlighted by labour market surveys. These skills are very much in demand by enterprises, as well as individuals for their personal and professional development, and by society overall. The VET authorities might draw inspiration from the EU 8 Key Competences Framework:

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Lifelong Learning. Translating key competences into learning outcomes is a major step that will guide day-to-day teaching and learning, and pre-define assessment. The Higher Council for VET should ensure that these learning outcomes are consistently specified across curricula. Teachers obviously have a role to play here, notably in the identification of opportunities for learners to develop their specific key competences.

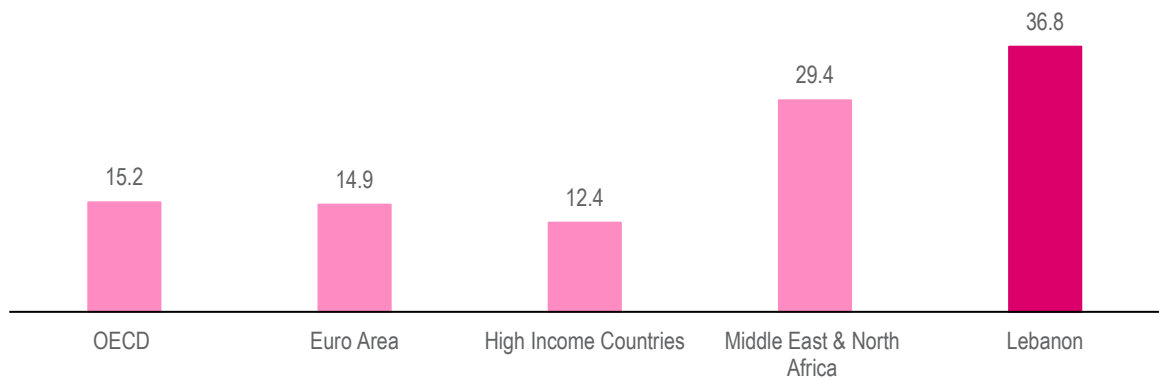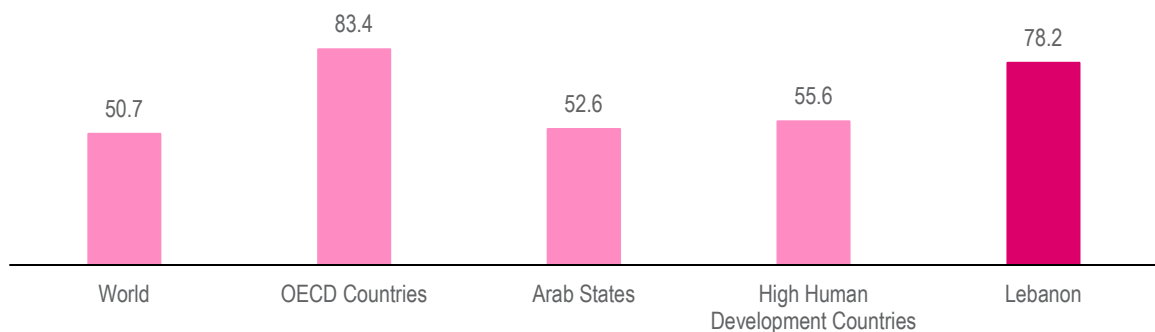**FIGURE 17: SELF-EMPLOYED (% OF EMPLOYMENT) 2019**

**FIGURE 18: INTERNET USERS (% OF POPULATION) 2017–2018**

Source: ILO, ILOSTAT Database and World Development Indicators Database.

In Lebanon, an initial focus should be on entrepreneurship and digitalisation, in line with the urgent need for economic growth and competitiveness. As discussed above, young people in Lebanon are very entrepreneurial and ready for digitalisation. The Joint Research Centre (JRC) Competence Frameworks for Entrepreneurship (EntreComp) and for Digital Competences (DIGCOMP) can be regarded as examples which can support such work, as they are ready-for-use frameworks and include universal concepts that would fit the Lebanese context.

The latest available World Economic Forum's Networked Readiness Index (NRI) ranking, also referred to as Technology Readiness (measuring the propensity for countries to exploit the opportunities offered by ICT), placed Lebanon 88th out of 139 countries in 2016. In spite of its overall poor performance, Lebanon was the second biggest mover from the previous round (2015), gaining 11 places. In terms of the adoption of digital technologies, Lebanon performed well in both individual and business usage. In addition, building on a solid basis in terms of education, skills and knowledge-intensive jobs, Lebanon has many of the factors in place to continue on this positive trajectory.

FIGURE 19: NETWORKED READINESS INDEX,2016
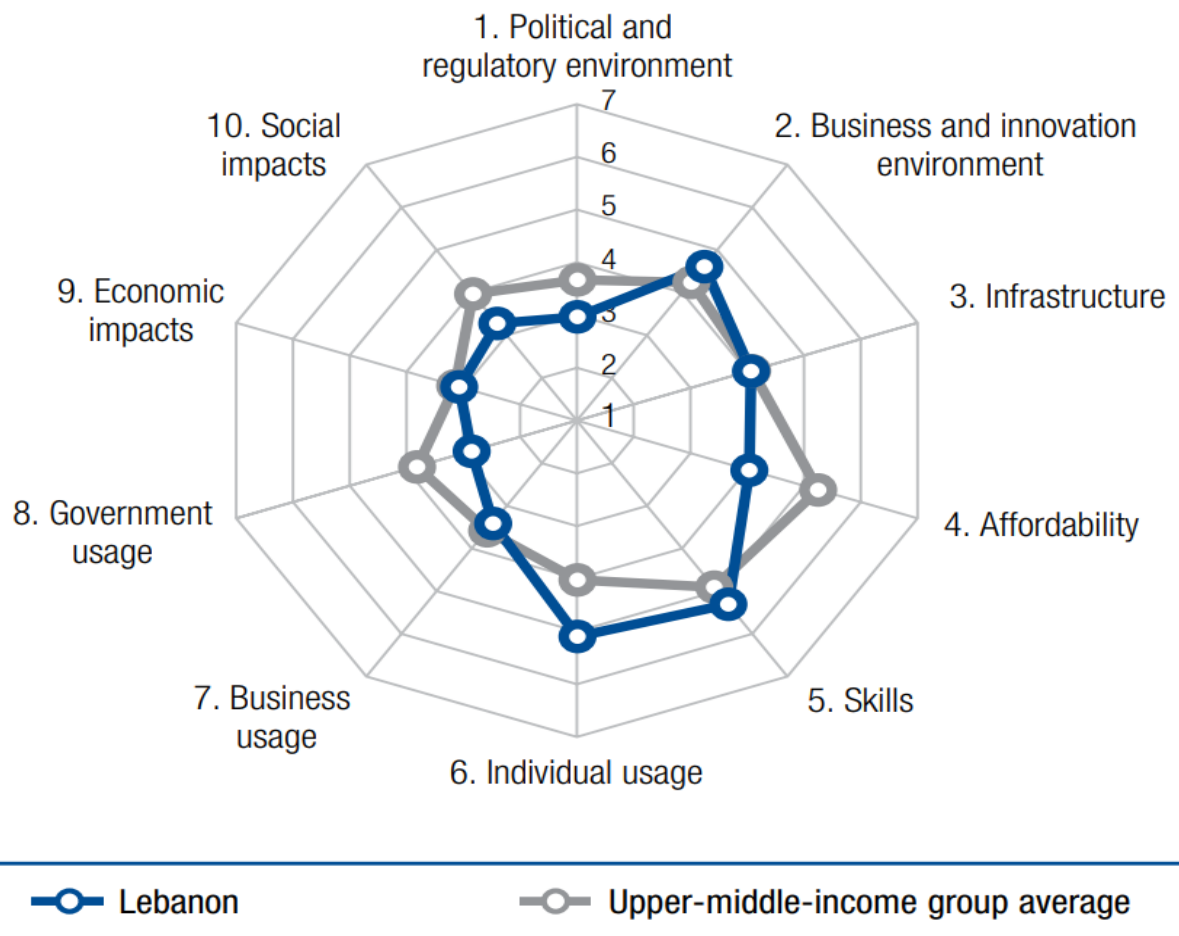
Source: World Economic Forum, https://www.weforum.org/

R.1.3 Create the conditions for an ecosystem easing the school- and work-to-work transition

The issues of education, training and employment are currently considered as part of a single process – the school-to-work transition – defined typically as the period between the end of compulsory schooling and the attainment of full-time, stable employment. In addition, the notion of labour market transition in this report includes job-to-job transition, which also needs to be addressed, notably through adult learning from a lifelong perspective and through education and training that further supports individuals' professional mobility throughout the life course.

In the case of Lebanon, this transition is difficult for graduates due to the abovementioned gaps between education and training supply and labour market needs, among other issues. The limited or inadequate policies and institutions currently in place, including labour market measures, career guidance services, work-based learning and apprenticeship, as well as weak institutions such as the NEO, could also be part of the solution and better contribute to easing both the transition from school to work and from work to work, if reorganised and reinforced.

1. Review and consolidate a comprehensive and more effective career guidance and counselling system

The current Lebanese career guidance policies and actions are dispersed and isolated. The upstream part of career guidance and counselling, which aims to promote and enhance the profile of the VET system, is covered partly by the MEHE General Education Directorate through its Orientation and Guidance Unit. The DGVTE has developed Career Guidance Offices (GEOs) in some schools, which provide assistance with graduates' placement in the labour market (downstream part of career guidance and counselling). In addition to the GEOs, the school advisory boards follow up on academic and professional progression of students and facilitate their insertion in the job market. The NEO's career guidance services remain very limited.

Given the technological and demographical transformations in Lebanon, which have a direct impact on education and the labour market, a review and expansion of the country's career guidance services is needed for the progressive development of a national lifelong guidance system able to assist both young people and adults in their education, training and employment choices. Strengthening guidance in the school curriculum at an early stage of education (prior to VET), as well within VET, is also recommended to guide students and ease their transition into higher education or work. In the specific case of Lebanon, career guidance services should also be developed for adults and refugees. The private sector is a strong asset in Lebanon and should also participate in the provision of guidance, through private employment services, private education and training providers as well as employers' representations.

To support the above development, the opportunity should be taken by the MEHE to consider establishing a national orientation portal, inspired by successful models elsewhere in the world.

2. Reinforce the role of the National Employment Office (NEO) to fully accomplish its role of labour market intermediation

The role of the National Employment Office should be reinforced and improved with regard to its function as a public employment service. In addition to the important part it plays in career guidance, highlighted above, the NEO needs to be strengthened to coordinate and monitor other services supporting employability.

Its mandate should include, as a minimum, the following essential functions: (i) keeping track of registered jobseekers and job offers; (ii) career guidance and counselling; and (iii) delivery of or links to ALMPs. Other functions, such as supervising studies to identify labour market needs, participating in the development of occupational standards led by the private sector, coordinating the future development of an LMIS, etc., could be covered gradually. Job intermediation services for all (e.g. pre-departure information and e-tools for Lebanese emigrants, dedicated services for immigrants, orientation for the most vulnerable groups) could also be progressively included in the NEO mandate (see R.2.8 on emigrants, the diaspora and returnees).

The NEO needs to develop close cooperation with the DGVTE in skills development and employability, as well as with the National Centre for Vocational Training (NCVT) regarding accelerated VET programmes and other public and private short-term training providers and NGOs contributing to skills and employability development. The NEO should further collaborate with other bodies to perform its functions from a customer-oriented perspective – its customers being jobseekers and enterprises.

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Finally, once operational again, the NEO needs to be more visible at the national level. To this end, a national awareness-raising campaign about its role and potential should be envisaged to allow for new relations with its ultimate beneficiaries and renovated forms of cooperation with the private sector.

3. Regulate and extend work-based learning for more effective and faster transition into employment

Work-based learning (WBL) is the most appropriate way not only to increase the employability of graduates, but also to enhance and consolidate the needed partnerships with the private sector. Well-developed WBL will also solve the perennial challenges of outdated equipment, optimise the use of infrastructure and substantially support VET public financing, as part of the training is hosted by companies.

The initiatives developed so far, such as the dual-system programme or some isolated apprenticeship initiatives, need to be reviewed together with employers' associations and chambers of commerce to better adapt them to the needs and resources of enterprises, which are mainly SMEs. The same goes for the related legislation which should aim to further foster and institutionalise WBL, as well as making it more flexible and adaptable to the needs of enterprises in general and to smaller concerns in particular.

Apprenticeships should be developed in the first stage as an important WBL mode for special target populations such as NEETs. However, the absorption capacity of companies (together with their size and potential for growth) should be considered in the planning of such programmes. Traineeships are more often developed by schools, but need to be structured and organised. This includes careful selection of appropriate companies, and managing the number, distribution and preparation of students, as well as the follow-up by teachers.

In addition to the above, the development of WBL implies clear roles for school managers and teachers with regard to the promotion and implementation of this effective mode of training. Enhancing the autonomy of schools (see R 1.1.c) will ease this process.

R.1.4 Developing a QA framework and completing the NQF project for greater quality, transparency and mobility of qualifications and recognition of prior learning

The efforts to bridge the gap of skills mismatch and improve employability should consider the completion and institutionalisation of previous endeavours to develop frameworks, such us Quality Assurance (QA), the National Qualification Framework (NQF) or the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). These frameworks, if implemented, would also extend benefits to vulnerable populations such us migrants, young people, NEETS, women, and those with low educational attainment.

1. Develop a quality assurance framework

Developing a quality assurance framework first of all supposes that there is an official definition of VET quality, which is missing currently. The VET quality assurance arrangements should be a systematic set of procedures and processes based on principles of accountability, transparency and effectiveness. These will ensure that the behaviours and activities of all actors engaged in VET (the government, VET providers, etc.) whether in the public or the private sector, are congruent with the criteria, standards and norms that have been established to achieve clear and purposeful goals and outcomes through the work

of the VET sector[52]. Policy makers should draw on the current ad hoc initiatives in which quality assurance features significantly across the policy cycle, from planning through to implementation, to develop a systemic and systematic approach. This includes such practices as ad hoc cooperation with employers, chambers of commerce and associations of industrialists on skills development and assessment, working on the accreditation of private providers, developing donors' initiatives on curricula reform, defining learning outcomes, promoting work-based learning, and overseeing teacher training.

2.   Complete and formalise the National Qualifications Framework

Qualifications offered by the Lebanese education system, including VET, vary greatly between public and private providers delivering national and international certificates. As mentioned in the NSF, the update of the qualifications system will prevent further development of the curricula using outdated ways, sometimes without even specifying the purpose of the diploma, the reason for its existence and the system used for the application of the teaching and learning process etc. In order to make the qualifications system more transparent, in 2012–2015 the MEHE, with the support of the ETF, implemented a project to develop a Lebanese National Qualifications Framework (LNQF). A matrix was developed and agreed, comprising eight levels with corresponding descriptors, but no decision on legal and institutional arrangements was made. It would be more efficient to draw on this project, as well as on work recently carried out for VET, to develop an overall national qualification framework. The NQF should be also referenced against the EU framework to promote academic and professional mobility for citizens across borders. A national qualification committee should be set up to steer this collaborative action

3.   Set up a system for the validation of the non-formal and informal learning

The quality assurance and the national qualifications frameworks would ease the establishment, in the short to mid-term, of a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). If, in addition, the provision of adult education from a lifelong learning perspective (see R.2.10 is reinforced, this would help to bridge skills gaps and fill vacancies by equipping people with the required skills. Given the demographic transformations in the country, this initiative would benefit not only the Lebanese but also the refugees, by helping them to participate in the socio-economic development of Lebanon as well ensuring they are better prepared for rebuilding Syria on returning home post-conflict.

3.2   Limited institutional capacity and resources for policy reform and ownership leading to inequity and the disconnection of VET from labour market requirements

3.2.1   The problem

Policy reform in general, and strategic planning and evidence-based programming in particular, have always been problematic in Lebanon, and many isolated and unsuccessful attempts have been made in this area. The reasons for this are many and do not only relate to the shortage of data. The first condition for sound policy reform is to have a clear vision for human development from which a coherent and agreed strategy and action plans for VET system reform should emerge. The vision, strategy and action plans should be set up in concert with the main actors in the field of human capital and skills development, such as social partners, other ministries, civil society and local authorities, as

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[52] ETF QA note 2017. The ETF defines quality assurance in VET as 'the measures established to verify that processes and procedures are in place which aim to ensure the quality of VET. The measures relate to quality standards with underlying principles, criteria and indicators'.

well as private VET providers. Currently the conditions for effectively planning, implementing and monitoring VET policy reforms are not present.

The lack of data and the absence of an LMIS exacerbate the policy-making process. Labour Force Surveys have never been systematically carried out in Lebanon. As previously mentioned, at the time the current report was being finalised, the CAS made available the preliminary key findings from its first Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey carried out in 2018–2019. It not yet clear if this will be a regular exercise, as is the case worldwide. Consequently, no LMIS is in place to track labour market demand and supply over time, which prevents policy making from properly addressing the country's skills shortages and mismatch issues.

In 2018, in the framework of the Youth Employment in the Mediterranean (YEM) Project, supported by the European Union and UNESCO, conducted a review on establishing an LMIS in Lebanon. The report covered assessments of labour market studies' methodologies, data collection, and interest in an LMIS in Lebanon. The review concluded (and confirmed) that there is a vacuum in labour market information that is currently partially filled by the national employment office and independent employment programmes carried out by NGOs or the private sector (UNESCO, 2018).

Together with governance and institutional arrangements, financing presents a long-lasting challenge that hampers skills policy reform and development in the country. While it is difficult to obtain official information on financing, it is recognised, as mentioned in section 1.2, that the education sector constitutes one of the main contributors to Lebanon's GDP and that public IVET is financed mainly through the general public budget. The DGVTE budget averages annually about 0.5% of the total government budget and less than 10% of the total education budget, with salaries constituting more than 94% of it. In addition to the insufficient budget, due to the non-diversification of financing mechanisms there are other problems in this area, such as the lack of costing, the allocation of budgets to VET providers without any performance conditions, and the centralised nature of financial management along with its lack of transparency (ETF, 2016). Moreover, the country's limited human, material and financial resources mean that institutional and policy development is constantly at risk.

There is a lack of policy coherence in the short training offer for jobseekers, employees, refugees and vulnerable populations, in particular on those courses offered to Syrians and vulnerable Lebanese as a result of the Syrian crisis. This phenomenon has created: (i) a fragmentation of the system due to the high number of short training courses often provided by NGOs and other private providers; (ii) a lack of overview at the sectorial and geographical level, with courses offered sometimes in the same area and on the same topic; and (iii) a decrease of participation rates in formal VET because shorter, funded courses are seen as a quicker way to access the labour market. Given the importance of continuing training for bridging the skills mismatch and increasing the employability of jobseekers, a global review of this training offer is needed. This calls for more policy coherence and a consolidated framework, notably through a clear strategy of adult learning from a lifelong perspective.

The potential of emigrants, the diaspora and returnees are untapped, as their role and human potential is underestimated by the national authorities. The concept of 'brain gain', complementary to the well-known 'brain drain', relies on the assumption that the outflow of skilled labour can generate medium or long-term beneficial effects in the country of origin in various forms. Examples include return migration that could imply a transfer of knowledge, skills and technologies, or international remittances providing liquidity to alleviate poverty and increase investments. The overall net impact of skilled labour emigration (brain drain vs. brain gain) would depend on Lebanon's responses and adaptation processes at the institutional and policy levels.

Figure 20: Migrant Remittances Inflow
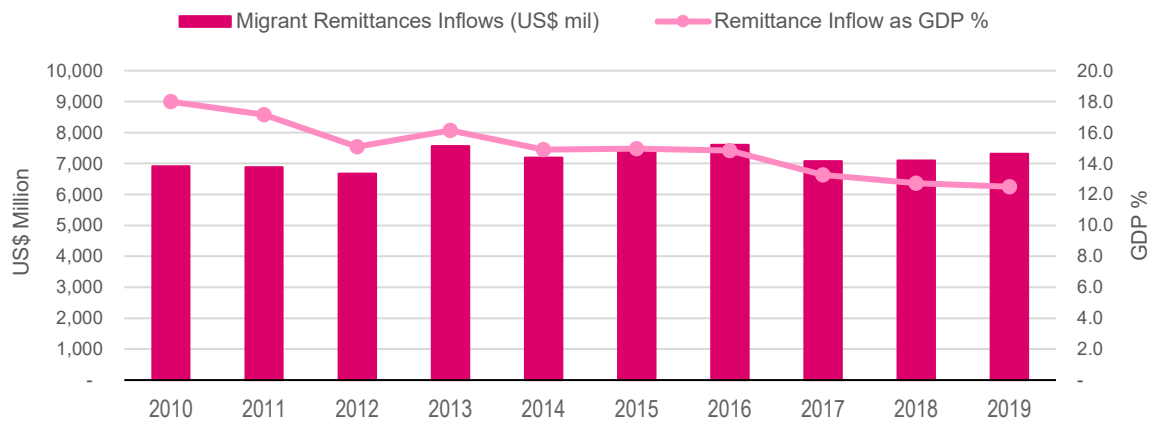
Source: The World Bank Migration and Remittances Data as of Oct. 2019.

Regional disparities mean that all the above challenges are even more prominent in rural and remote areas and endanger social cohesion. Regional disparities in terms of economic opportunities are unambiguous, with most of the poor living in lagging regions outside of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Poverty rates in the Beqaa, North, and South Lebanon regions are well above the national average and around twice as high as in Mount Lebanon and Beirut (CAS and World Bank, 2015). This is linked closely with labour market outcomes, with trailing regions having much lower labour force participation, higher unemployment, and significantly higher reliance on self-employment (World Bank, 2018).

FIGURE 21: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY REGION
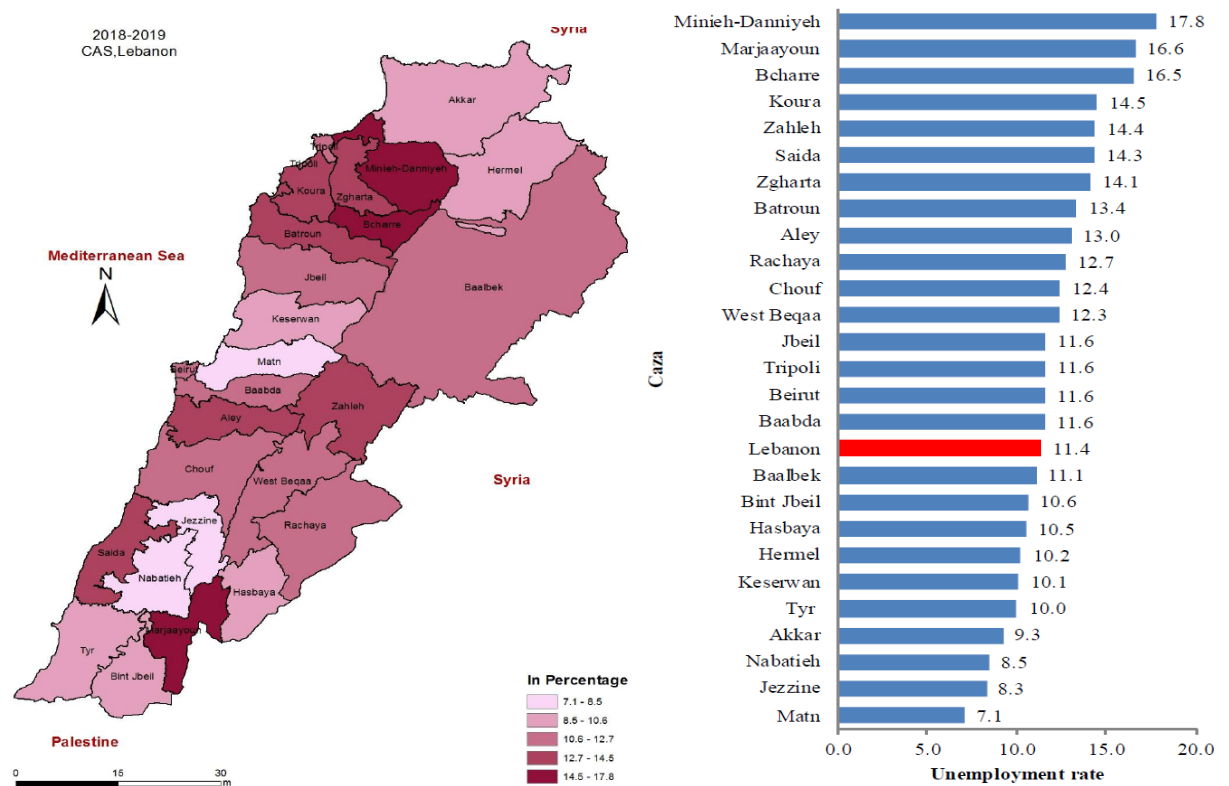
Source: CAS (2019)

VET provision in rural areas shows the same deficits and inequities, especially for women, young people and refugees. Indeed, the geographical distribution of VET schools looks to be quite arbitrary and doesn't appear to follow a master plan or take into account socio-economic needs. The establishment of new schools seems random and is often based on political and sectarian criteria rather than on market needs at the local level. A more coherent distribution of VET schools is often advocated in the Torino Process and other analyses of the system, both in terms of specialities and geographically.

For instance, in 2017, a skills gap analysis validation was implemented by Oxfam in the Mount Lebanon region for the food, construction, gardening and manufacturing sectors (Oxfam, 2017). The food-related sector had the largest number of full-time employees, with the majority being women. Most employers stated that they need VET graduates because they don't have the capacity to train uneducated workers. At the same time they are looking for employees ready to work long hours for low wages. Enterprises expressed a willingness for partnerships with vocational training programmes in many areas (Hamade et al., 2017).

The results of the International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 and 2018 highlight problems in the quality of basic education. Although Lebanon slightly improved its results from 2015 to 2018 (OECD, 2019), the low level of achievement in reading, mathematics and science is worrying. This low performance will obviously follow these pupils throughout their life, including in the VET system and/or the workplace, depending on their future stream.

FIGURE 22: PISA UNDERACHIEVEMENT (% AGED 15)
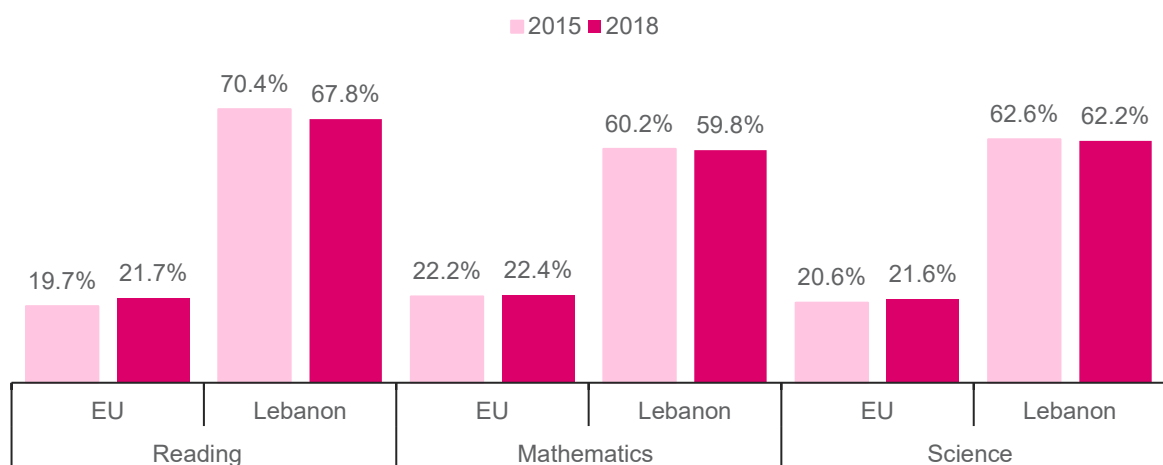
Source: OECD (2019).

The above-mentioned issues are all interrelated, which intensifies the challenge facing policy makers in addressing them in an integrated and coherent manner. Previous attempts to address them separately, without a unified vision and strategy, proved to be ineffectual.

3.2.2 Policy responses

Priorities and effectiveness

As mentioned above, with the support of international organisations and in consultation with the main VET actors in the country, the country has developed a National Strategic Framework 2018–2022 (NSF). This framework stipulates an inclusive VET sector, with a tripartite governance system, that

provides skills for work and life. It should also have a permeable structure with pathways throughout the education system, and be attractive to young people and enterprises. One concrete result of this strategic initiative is the resumption of the Higher Council for VET, which organised its first meeting in 2019 after years of dormancy.

An action plan for the NSF has been prepared and is currently undergoing validation. The plan, once approved, will bring together the relevant national authorities for the implementation phase, which will hopefully cover most of the recommendations and systems gaps highlighted in this assessment.

It is also important to note that the ILO, together with the CAS, recently finalised the Labour Force Survey (LFS), funded by the European Union. This initiative is viewed as a major achievement in the move towards skills demand identification and as a basis for planning future interventions in the area of employability. The LFS would be also used for designing a national employment policy. Preliminary results have made available but the full report has not yet been published, and is awaiting clearance by the Prime Minister.

In terms of the influx of refugees into the country, substantial programmes funded by international organisations and led by the MEHE, such as the EU Regional Trust Fund (EUTF) in Response to the Syrian Crisis (the 'Madad Fund'), are attempting to address the issue, notably by ensuring that Syrian as well as Lebanese youth have better access to VET. While the crisis was initially managed primarily from the humanitarian perspective, the government has now made efforts to centralise and coordinate a number of measures to tackle issues related to the labour market and education and training in particular. The leading principle underpinning all the actions is that they should address the needs of the Lebanese communities in parallel with the needs of the refugees, while it is further envisaged that the support given should enable the Syrians to acquire the skills that will be needed once they can return to their country. In addition, within the framework of this initiative, in December 2019 the Madad Board approved the action document 'EUTF support to economic development and social stability in Lebanon'. This action, – entitled VET4all – recognised job-related competences for Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and vulnerable Lebanese in response to the Syrian crisis. It will aim to upscale the experience of the current programme – ProVTE – in designing and delivering modular competence-based training (CBT).

Another positive change is the new management of DGVTE, which seems to be more open and responsive to the needs of a multilevel governance structure and strategic and documented planning. The current momentum around the National Strategic Framework and the regular Torino Process VET review could support the DGVTE management to plan and activate the NSF.

Shortcomings and policy gaps

A national vision on human capital development is still lacking. One of the reasons related to the absence of a national HCD vision is the challenging tripartite approach and insufficient inter-institutional cooperation in Lebanon. Establishing such cooperation would ensure that the vision is coherent with other national strategic socio-economic policies. Without this vision, the VET strategies and actions, and any policy planning, will remain only partially equipped to address the huge skills challenges in the country. Such a vision would make the NSF more effective, especially in terms of ensuring the permeability of VET with general and higher education, and further highlighting the importance of LLL, social inclusion and economic competitiveness. In addition, the NSF and its aims would be strengthened by securing the agreement of the major stakeholders concerned.

Although positive, the NSF and related action plan initiatives are mostly donor-driven, which raises the issue of possible non-appropriation and lack of ownership by national policy makers, as has been the case in many donor-driven programmes in the past. Considering the complexity of these reforms, the high number of stakeholders that will (should) be involved and their structural and complex nature, the implementation phase calls for sound planning and the practical involvement of policy makers and beneficiaries, including end-users, which is not always easy to achieve in the Lebanese context.

The initiatives requiring legislative reforms risk being delayed in the current political vacuum. Lebanon's sectarian political system has always been an obstacle for legislative reforms. Initiatives such as the NQF, quality assurance, key competence curricula, etc., although technically very advanced, have been blocked at the legislative stage for years. This risk is even higher in the context of the recent political turbulence and unrest.

The issue of missing labour market data will not be completely resolved by a one-off Labour Force Survey. As mentioned above, this initiative is also donor-driven and its chances of achieving sustainability and ownership within the country are still unclear. The LFS is indeed costly, but it is also inevitable and needs to be fully integrated into the country's systems and repeated regularly. Besides, the LFS alone will not be sufficient to inform and document skills anticipation and matching or build a prospective LMIS.

A multilevel governance system builds on trust and dialogue with partners, which are still insufficiently established in Lebanon. More and clearer signals, showing the good will of VET authorities towards reform, need to be sent to skills actors and partners, especially the private sector and students. This is a challenging action that would need substantive support in awareness creation and capacity building.

The VET policy responses do not meet the huge social and inclusion demands triggered notably by the recent demographic transformations. Meeting the demands of social inclusion means ensuring access to VET for vulnerable and marginalised groups, NEETs, rural populations, and especially girls and young people operating in the informal sector, as well as upskilling workers through continuous training.

3.2.3 Recommendations

This second set of recommendations focuses on the amelioration of institutional capacity and resources to better face the different challenges of policy implementation and ensure greater ownership and sustainability of reforms. The policy directions should be translated into executable, measurable and accountable actions.

Success relies on the strategy clarifying the position of each stakeholder in the overall system and illustrating the different kinds of relationships and reporting lines. Whenever several stakeholders are assigned identical responsibilities and tasks, be it in the strategy or in the action plans, then a lead should be identified and clearly assigned. This creates the conditions for responsibility and accountability to flourish.

The momentum created around the national VET strategic framework and the hoped-for political transition could present an opportunity to put the agreed measures into action, avoiding past mistakes and political constraints. The NSF defines the mission of VET reform as creating a system that is *'tripartite-led, fit for purpose and inclusive'* and which will *'provide competencies and life skills to meet the skills demand in the labour market, forming part of a larger education system with multiple pathways to encourage lifelong learning'.*

R.2.5 Create the conditions to gradually establish a national labour market information system (LMIS)

This recommendation should in fact serve as a basis for all the others because sound decision making should be well documented and evidence-based. Based on the available studies and consultations with the relevant actors, the Torino Process national report emphasised the need to develop a labour market information system. The report also recommended investment to enhance the capacities of the business sector in an effort to improve its contribution to the establishment of an efficient LMIS aligned with labour-market demand.

A reliable and coherent LMIS system has to rely on the institutional arrangements and procedures that coordinate the collection, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination of labour market information. The term 'information system' not only refers to information technology systems, but to a comprehensive set of institutional arrangements, technology platforms, datasets and information flows, and the way these are combined to provide information to those requiring it (ETF, 2017a). The Labour Force Survey should be an integral part of the LMIS.

This is obviously a challenging endeavour in the current country context. As there is no general blueprint for a single and effective LMIS, a first step would be to define the aim, scope (education, employment, economy, etc.) and level (national, regional, sectoral) of the most-needed analysis. The VET system is clearly an important part of an LMIS and should build its own information system. The main purpose of data collection (quantitative and qualitative) and analysis should be to provide labour market actors with the necessary information to bridge skills mismatches, but it also needs to support career guidance services that will lead to better occupation choices, as well as adapting ALMPs to be more efficient and able to anticipate and plan changes in skill requirements for specific sectors. A reliable LMIS is essential for good career guidance services and in providing information for pupils, students, employers and the public in general. As with the other reform initiatives, this requires a substantial reinforcement of capacity building and a high level of cooperation with the private sector, CAS, the Ministry of Labour and the NEO, among others.

R.2.6 Diversifying the financial mechanisms to address policy priorities, further engage the private sector and ensure greater sustainability

As discussed in section 3.2.1, the financial resources of the VET sector do not cover its needs as they are delivered mainly through the state-budget and are insufficiently diversified. A shared governance approach to addressing policy priorities should also cover VET financing and the diversification of its sources. The ETF recommends initiating this reform through a review of the current budget formation and allocation process and its efficiency in providing the right skills (see ETF, 2018a). This should lead to the following actions.

1. Develop an agreed costing methodology to ensure accurate and sustainable budget planning and execution. Simulating the financial implications of policy options can check whether choices are realistic and sustainable over time. It is important that the current strategy includes estimations of the costs related to the outcomes and to the activities in the ongoing action plan. This will give better predictability in terms of the resources needed over the implementation period. Using the cost variable as a decision factor in a VET strategy supposes the availability of data, not only on financial issues but for the VET system as a whole.

2. Diversify the sources of funds and increase the share of non-state resources to implement the current ambitious strategy and engage the private sector in practical ways. The diversification of financing sources assumes an economically fair cost-benefit approach, ensuring that those who benefit from public policies also contribute to them. This contribution, or funding formula and

conditions, could take many forms, such as a training levy and related incentives, income generation by schools, tuition, etc. In the Lebanese context, one concrete and quick way to increase VET resources could be the extension of work-based learning (see R.1.3c). This extension could cover, in a first stage, the priority occupations needed for national economic development and job creation.

3. **Move towards a more performance-oriented approach to resource allocation.** Currently, the budget is determined by a simple percentage increase (or decrease) on the previous year's budget without taking into account the performance of providers or the achievement of VET policy objectives (the historic incremental approach). Policy makers should consider establishing basic criteria for the allocation of funds based on performance and policy priorities (i.e. enrolment, graduation, placement, continuing training, work-based learning, social inclusion, etc.).

4. **Give more financial autonomy to VET schools** so that they can respond to local labour market needs and promote innovation. This should go hand in hand with the reinforcement of schools' management capacity and revisiting the accountability rules, based on a defined priorities mechanism and agreed objectives (see also R1.1c). This autonomy will also reinforce the financial diversification of resources, as schools will be able to generate income, to the extent possible, through the provision of goods and services.

Finally, policy planning should take into account the various sources of funds, both public and private (including private VET providers and donors' contributions), in order to bridge the current gap between strategies and actual achievements, while ensuring greater visibility and transparency and making the policy more credible.

R.2.7 Ensure a progressive transition from donor- to country-led VET planning, implementation and monitoring

This is a generic and important recommendation for policy makers to ensure greater relevance, coherence and sustainability in the field of skills development in Lebanon. Policy makers need to gradually take the helm in terms of VET planning, implementation and monitoring. This will require organisational and capacity review and reinforcement. The case of Project Management Unit (PMU) managing the EU Regional Trust Fund (Madad Fund) in the MEHE could be considered as a good example and a first step towards regaining control of policy supervision.

1. **Full ownership would require a broader base of stakeholder commitment and collaboration.** Horizontal coordination across ministries in particular merits development, namely with the Ministries in charge of labour, economic development, social affairs, etc. Cooperation and coordination with private sector players should be both horizontal across sectors and vertical (including the national, intermediate and local levels). This would allow a renewed multi-level governance of human capital development policies, while giving more space, power and capacity to national actors for decision making throughout the overall policy cycle.

2. **Policy uptake and ownership means also having the financial capacity and autonomy to support reforms.** This requires urgent interventions to increase the share of non-state resources by diversifying the sources of funding (see R.2.6) and providing more autonomy to schools (see R.1.1c)

3. **A monitoring and evaluation system needs to be established to assess the progress of policy implementation.** Building and institutionalising a shared and impacted-oriented monitoring and evaluation framework will not only support evidence-based policy making and reinforce policy making per se, but it will also foster the engagement of actors in the policy cycle and increase their responsibility and accountability within a more transparent reform process.

Lebanon is still in need of extensive support from the international community as a consequence of its limited capacity and resources, as well as its substantial deficits in the area of human capital development and use. The current and upcoming support should clearly anticipate the need for appropriation activities and an exit strategy in order that the outcomes can be sustained. Otherwise, there is a risk that the situation could remain unchanged.

R.2.8 Give more policy attention to Lebanese emigrants, including those in the pre-departure stage, the diaspora and returnees

Emigration is a key aspect of Lebanese history and its present socio-economic situation. Further investment should be dedicated to supporting Lebanese emigrants, including those in the pre-departure stage, the diaspora and returnees. Investment, in particular in promoting the employability of emigrants, can positively impact on the development of both receiving countries and Lebanon, yielding economic returns that could potentially be much higher than the initial investment (ETF, 2017b). Incentives and new schemes for remittances could also be created to redirect such sums away from consumption and towards productive activities that could generate jobs and increase the amount of migrant inward investment, which fell from 18% of GDP in 2010 to 12.5% in 2019[53].

This calls for more engagement of the international private sector, in particular the Lebanese diaspora, to generate social, cultural and economic benefits in Lebanon, which could include activities such as:

1. Mapping the profile of Lebanese emigrants (including returnees);
2. Exchange programmes for Lebanese nationals studying and working abroad to attract them back to the country (even temporarily);
3. Business management and entrepreneurship training for returnees;
4. Micro-credit schemes;
5. Remittances schemes for investing in productive activities in Lebanon, including components such as skills development[54].

R.2.9 The potential of the private sector should be more effectively tapped and anchored in policy making and reform of the skills system

The private sector is a strong asset in Lebanon that should be given more space in national policy making and socio-economic development and monitoring. In the area of human capital development and utilisation, the private sector could play a more prominent role in improving employability and reducing skills gaps and skills mismatch at the national and international (see R.2.8) levels, if fully involved in the policy cycle, as proposed by almost all the recommendations of this analysis. This involvement could range from contributing to VET governance and financing to the amelioration and reinforcement of skills provision and monitoring.

R.2.10. Reinforce adult education and training from a lifelong learning perspective to improve employability, close mismatch gaps and ensure greater equity

The ETF recommends that the authorities develop a lifelong learning (LLL) policy aimed at improving knowledge, skills and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons. Lifelong learning is a conceptual and policy approach that makes the most of formal, non-formal and informal learning on a continuous basis throughout people's life course. The conceptual development of LLL

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[53] World Bank Migration and Remittances Database, Oct. 2019 estimates based on IMF data and OECD GDP estimates, 2019.
[54] Recommendations of Migrant Support Measures from an Employment and Skills Perspective (MISMES) (ETF, 2017b).

encompasses an adult learning strategy which should fully involve the education sector, including both public and private training providers, as well as civil society and the MoL/NEO. It should target jobseekers with the aim of closing at least part of the current skills gap, while also focusing on marginal and displaced populations to optimise the use and development of human capital. A lifelong learning perspective and continuing training actions can also be used as leverage to attract inactive populations, including NEETs, and ease their transition into the labour market

To this end, the Higher Council for VET needs to propose, as a matter of priority, the development of a clear and long-term vision for adult learning as part of a lifelong learning policy, along with mechanisms for their implementation. In addition to the NEO, public and private training providers should be encouraged and incentivised to provide, beyond formal schooling, continuous training for both individuals and companies, in line with national priorities for human capital development. This could include:

1. a general review of the current adult learning practices with the objective of identifying gaps and areas of overlap to ensure a holistic coverage;

2. development of a clear and long-term vision for adult learning as part of LLL, with strong interlinkages to initial training (IVET) through a wider consultation with all education sectors, social partners and other concerned actors;

3. consolidating and adapting the financial mechanisms to achieve the policy's strategic goals (see R.2.6); and

4. the recognition that adult learning should be fully part of the career guidance and counselling system (see R.1.3a) and cover the target populations, such as NEETs, jobseekers, refugees, migrants and other vulnerable groups.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This report has been produced at a turning point in Lebanon's political history. There is some hope that long-awaited changes will happen this time, including the reforms proposed in this report, to make the most of the human capital potential of the country.

In the complex Lebanese governance setting, reforms have always been difficult to achieve and fragmented. One example of this disjointed approach is the running of pilot schemes that never lead to real reforms. Instead of fostering this silo mentality, what is needed is comprehensive reform bringing together policy, actions and monitoring and evaluation. This is universally true but nowhere more so than in the context of human capital development.

The policy recommendations identified in Chapter 3 propose possible steps to escape from this vicious cycle and link efforts to move forward to foster human capital development and its contribution to national social inclusiveness, economic prosperity and innovation.

More specifically, the reform of skills development needs to start with a more open, shared and multilevel governance structure that actively involves social partners and other actors in the design and implementation of skills policy priorities.

To this end, the government needs to demonstrate its commitment to the reform process by allocating sufficient resources to it and sending a clear public signal that it is serious about change. In parallel, the private sector needs to make a greater effort to cooperate with government. Otherwise, the mistrust between government and the private sector will remain and the reforms won't take root. While the employer organisations should review their role and level of engagement in the VET policy process, it is the job of the government to break this vicious cycle.

ANNEX 1. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

All recommendations are interlinked and would contribute to the policy reforms, including those related to **demographic transformation** (issue 3) and **sustainable development goals** (issue 4).

Key HCD issue	Recommendations		
	No.	**Description**	
Inefficiencies in human capital utilisation due to low levels of job creation and skills mismatch	R.1	Create conducive conditions for the establishment of a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance ecosystem	a. National: Reactivate and operationalise the Higher Council for VET and foster all kinds of PPP b. Sectoral: Set up skills councils in priority sectors c. Local: Reinforce schools' autonomy and integration with their environment
	R.2	R.1.2. Improve VET provision for better responsiveness to labour market needs	a. Improve the teaching and learning environment for effective VET provision b Mainstreaming key competences with a focus on digitalisation and entrepreneurship.
	R.3	Create the conditions for an ecosystem easing the school- and work-to-work transition	a. Review and consolidate a comprehensive and more effective career guidance system b. Reinforce the role of the National Employment Office to fully accomplish its role of labour market intermediation c. Regulate and extend work-based learning for more effective and faster transition into employment
	R.4	Developing a QA framework and completing the NQF project for greater quality, transparency and mobility of qualifications and recognition of prior learning	a. Develop a quality assurance framework (QAF) b. Complete and formalise the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) c. Set up a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL)
Limited institutional capacity and resources for policy reform and ownership leading to inequity and disconnection of VET from the labour market requirements	R.5	Create the conditions to gradually establish a national labour market information system (LMIS)	Provide labour market actors with the necessary information to bridge the skills mismatch gap support career guidance services and adapt ALMPs
	R.6	Diversifying the financial mechanisms to address policy priorities, further engage the private sector and ensure greater sustainability	a. Develop an agreed costing methodology b. Diversify the funding sources c. Move towards a more performance-oriented approach to resource allocation. d. Give more financial autonomy to VET schools
	R.7	Ensure a progressive transition from donor- to country-led VET planning,	a. Full ownership would require a broader base of stakeholder commitment and collaboration. b. Policy uptake and ownership means also having the financial capacity and autonomy to support reforms.

		implementation and monitoring	c. A monitoring and evaluation system needs to be established to assess the progress of policy implementation.
	R.8	Give more policy attention to Lebanese emigrants, including those in the pre-departure stage, the diaspora and returnees	Foster exchange programmes for Lebanese nationals studying and working abroad to attract them back; offer entrepreneurship training to returnees; establish micro-credit initiatives and remittance schemes to invest in productive activities, etc.

ANNEX 2. THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM OF LEBANON

Republic of Lebanon – Ministry of Education and Higher Education
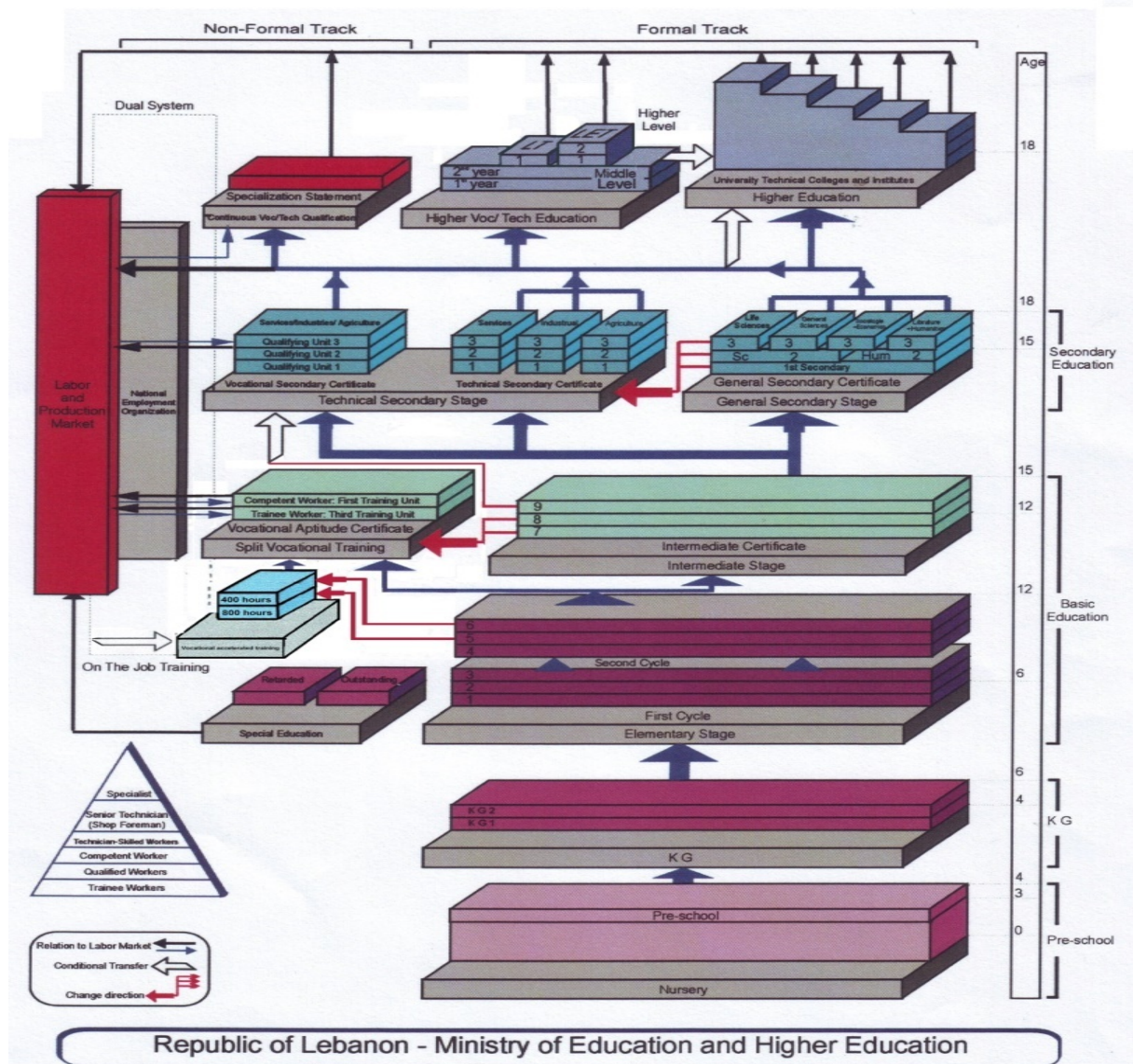
Source: From a study conducted by WARD in 2020: How to understand TVET in Lebanon (not yet published).

Formal education diplomas are the following:

- **Technical**: Licence Technique (LT), Technicien Supérieur (TS), Baccalauréat Technique (BT)
- **Vocational**: Meister, LP, Brevet Professionnel (BP)

Non-formal education comprises short-term courses (three months/300 hours), mid-term courses (six months/600 hours), and long-term courses (nine months/900 hours). It is provided by a certified registered school and signed off by the school and the DGVTE.

Informal education is a training curriculum exempt from regulations regarding its duration. It is usually provided by NGOs or by private training centres or enterprises. A certification of attendance is provided by the training institution.

ACRONYMS

ALMPs	Active labour market policies
CAS	Central Administration of Statistics
CBT	Competence-based training
CERD	Centre for Educational Research and Development
CVT	Continuing vocational training
DGVTE	Directorate General for Vocational Education and Training
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ETF	European Training Foundation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEMM	Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean
GEO	Guidance and Employment Offices
HCD	Human capital development
IECD	Institut Européen de Coopération et de Développement
ILO	international Labour Organization
IPNET	The National Training Institution for Technical Education
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LFHLCS	Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLL	Lifelong learning
LMIS	Labour market information system
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MOL	Ministry of Labour
NSF	National Strategic Framework
NEO	National Employment Office

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NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRF	National Reporting Framework
NVTC	National Vocational Training Centre
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VET	Vocational education and training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning
WBL	Work-based learning

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