

MEDNET 2 – Innovation, exchange, networking for a new leading  
class in the Mediterranean

## **First COUNTRY REPORT: Lebanon**

Update Thematic Dossier #1: The Youth Labor Market  
in the Mediterranean Area

**Topic to be explored:**

**Orientation and Job**

**Search in the MED Area**

*proposed by Laura Martelloni (Impact Hub, Florence, Italy)*

**DPNA-Lebanon**

## INTRODUCTION

Lebanon is a country located in the Middle East bordered by Syria from the North and East, Palestine from the South and the Mediterranean Sea from the West. Lebanon's population is 6,184,701 (July 2015 est.) according to the world Factbook. After its independence Lebanon went through multiple rough times. From 1975 till 1997 Lebanon lived through multiple civil wars and conflicts between the bordering countries. From 1997 till 2005 Lebanon was recovering from the crisis generated due to the multiple wars that we lived through. The situation has bettered until the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005 and the July war with Israel in 2006. Till now Lebanon is still recovering from the consequences driven by these previous wars leading to the immigration of around 63% of the main drivers of economy and evolution "Youth".

## JOB SEARCH AND CAREER GUIDANCE

By definition, Career guidance is a way to facilitate the process of building self-knowledge, the interaction with the educational and employment context, and the reference to social cultural and economic background. It also gives information about careers that helps individuals, youth, decide on a career and also teaches them how to pursue their chosen career.

Lebanon is currently facing a critical unemployment situation, compounded by political instability both at the regional and national levels, and made worse by the influx of approximately 2.0 million refugees from Syria.

At present, the overall unemployment rate in Lebanon stands at 24 percent with youth unemployment exceeding 35 percent (According to the daily star on Dec 2014, [www.dailystar.com.lb](http://www.dailystar.com.lb) and study done by world bank in 2014, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) ). The traditional external markets for the Lebanese work force, whether in the Gulf countries or in European or African countries, have considerably decreased their demand and apply tougher regulations that further limit employment possibilities. As a result, the outlets that have historically eased Lebanese unemployment are getting increasingly blocked.

Today, there is a structural gap between needs and competence. We have a surplus of doctors, engineers and lawyers that the country can hardly absorb, but a lack of specialized skilled workers. To close this gap, vocational training should be totally reviewed and restructured in close collaboration with the private sector, so as to ensure that appropriate and sufficient skilled labour is available in line with market demands.

## **HERE ARE SOME OF THE FACTS RELATED TO UNEMPLOYMENT IN LEBANON ACCORDING TO BLOG BALADI**

Around 35% of university graduates in Lebanon are unemployed. 77% of Lebanese immigrants are aged 35 years or below. More than 50% of Lebanese capable of working are without a job. 50% of the jobs are without a work contract. 40% of males and 20% of females leave Lebanon after 1 year from graduating. The unemployment rate among the youth is double the global unemployment rate.

In the first part, we see fresh graduates reading relevant newspapers and websites that provide an opportunity for youth to find jobs in the different sectors such as: Daleel Madani and Hunting Lebanese, to search for a suitable job for his degree and qualifications. At the end they are left for four main choices: Finding the suitable Job (seldom chance); Changing the major to get later on a job according to the labour market needs, They immigrate like many other Lebanese citizens or they are left unemployed and waiting for a Job which would consist of a period that ranges from 1 to 3 years if LUCKY!.

Overall Lebanon does not have a system of Career Guidance and/or support to Job Search. One of the major challenges facing the Lebanese economy is the creation of jobs for the youth and namely for fresh graduates. Thus the need for more entrepreneurs and the creation of small and medium enterprises that would provide part of a solution for this problem.

As the Lebanese government role has been mostly absent since it has been around 1.5 years with no president and no elections have been made since 2010. The parliament has self-extended to itself two times since the 2009 parliamentary elections, most of the burden is laid on the civil society and the private sector (if had the consciousness to do so).

The majority of schools in Lebanon don't have a Career Guidance and Counselling especially Public Schools and ones in rural areas (The most needed) which leaves youth and graduate in a vague place not knowing which route to take in order for them to venture in a new world that they had not explored yet. 91% of investments in Lebanon are in Beirut, 3% in the South, 3% in the North and 3% in the Beqaa, which limits job opportunities in other areas in Lebanon. This leads to internal migration and puts Beirut in this sur-capacity situation and under a heavy burden of welcoming them Sunday nights or Monday mornings and leaving them Friday nights leading to traffic jams and such... as 2.5 million people work in Beirut and Mount Lebanon areas every day, more than 300 thousands cars travel to Beirut from the northern part.

## TOOLS, APPROACHES AND METHODS

With the absence of an overall system for Career Guidance and Job Search in Lebanon few tools, approaches and methods has been identified.

In schools, in a slight percentage and ONLY in main cities, counsellors/advisors are available for each student in order to help them choose a career and guide them throughout the process of this transition. Keeping in mind that there is no Job Market study available presenting the most demanded Jobs currently or in the future.

Turning to support entrepreneurs and Job Search, over 100 private sector and some 45 public sector initiatives and programs has been identified and reviewed. Still it's not sufficient.

The SME Unit was established in 2005 to implement the Integrated Small and Medium Enterprise Support Programme (ISSP) at the Ministry of Economy and Trade. The project aimed at supporting Lebanese small and medium enterprises through creating an enabling environment conducive to the growth and development of SMEs and through developing Lebanon as a high value added, highly skilled, innovative and enterprising economy based on a thriving enterprise sector, that enables Lebanese businesses to compete globally and lead to better employment opportunities for all Lebanese citizens. Its 2020 vision: SMEs as key economic Engine for Growth and Job Creation.

National Employment Office (NEO) a public sector office that constitutes and engine for Job Search, offers trainings, planning and study plans for youth.

- To conduct studies and research to formulate employment policies for Lebanon.
- To improve the employability and skill level of newly entrant labor force through an accelerated vocational training.
- To find job opportunities for job seekers through the Employment Bureau for the purpose of reducing unemployment rates.
- To build the capacities of persons with disabilities in order to increase their employability

Thus the NEO has not been active nor efficient due to corruption in the Lebanese government and the laziness of the public sector which can be proven by the increasing number of unemployment in Lebanon.

Other means of Career Guidance and Job Search tools and methods and NGOs notably as:

- Labora: [www.laboraonline.com](http://www.laboraonline.com)
- Entrepreneur-Lebanon: [www.entrepreneurslebanon.com](http://www.entrepreneurslebanon.com)
- Bader Entrepreneur: [baderlebanon.com](http://baderlebanon.com)
- HireLebanese: [www.hirelebanese.com](http://www.hirelebanese.com)

- [csb.gov.lb](http://csb.gov.lb) : Offers dates for applying to the public sector jobs, trainings and other opportunities.
- Hunting Lebanese: [www.huntinglebanese.com](http://www.huntinglebanese.com)
- Daleel Madani for the non-governmental sector: [www.daleel-madani.org](http://www.daleel-madani.org)

All the websites and means for Career Guidance and Job Search whether it was public, private or NGO sector are not sufficient. As the unemployment rate in Lebanon is growing, leading to the increase of socio-economic issues. Keeping in mind that a fair number of the services mentioned above are not reachable by everyone.

### EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FACTORS

As previously mentioned, corruption on the government level has been overtaking Lebanon. There is no doubt that the main economic challenge before the new Lebanese Government is the burden of the public debt, which has recently grown at an alarming pace, for every child born in Lebanon, they are born with more than 15,000 USD of debt. The lack of growth and the widening fiscal deficit are putting great pressure on public finances. By the end of January, Lebanon's public debt had reached \$64 Billion and its debt-to-GDP ratio has reached 163.1% according to Al-Monitor ([www.al-monitor.com](http://www.al-monitor.com)) . It should be noted that the debt in Lebanese pounds reached the equivalent of \$37.8 billion, up 12.6%, while foreign currency debt increased by 6.7% to reach \$26.1 billion. The rate of growth of the public debt is worrisome because it has exceeded 10%, and gross domestic product (GDP) growth for 2012-13 didn't exceed 2%. In other words, the debt is growing faster than the economy at a rate exceeding 500%. One doesn't need to be well-versed in economics to see that the country is heading for bankruptcy. This situation puts the country in an economic crisis which affects investments and pushes entrepreneurs to rethink establishing new companies and creating more job opportunities. Resulting to increase of unemployment rate in Lebanon and leading young fresh graduates with innovative ideas to immigrate and look for opportunities outside of Lebanon.

Lebanon is a country situated in an unstable environment. The ongoing revolutions that are taking place in the surrounding Arab countries have had a big impact on the country. Mostly the Syrian revolution going in its 5th year. Lebanon and adding to the 0.5 million Palestinian refugees, is hosting around 2.0 million Syrian refugees which creates a heavy burden for such a weak country to take care of the different sectors; economic, social, relational, municipalities and the services they provide for the community members, etc. The flow of such big number of Syrian refugees became over the capacity of the government which in the first place wasn't able to provide Job opportunities to youth and graduates of its own.

## GOOD PRACTICES

New Entrants to Work (NEW) Program offers unemployed first-time job seekers life skills training, counselling. It builds on the strength of Lebanon's NGO sector and its vibrant private sector and aims to promote public-private partnerships in addressing Lebanon's youth employment issues. This Program was launched since September 10<sup>th</sup> 2012.

Specific outcomes of the NEW program include:

- Breaking initial barriers in the transition from school/university to work;
- Improving the skills of 1,600 first time job seekers in a 75-hour comprehensive training program that comprises learning modules geared to job search coaching and placement assistance, competency life skills, team work, soft-skills, and communication training;
- Linking of training content with the requirements of the private sector in order to raise employability of young, first-time job seekers;
- Enhancing intermediation services (job placement); and
- Capacity enhancement of the NEO.

NEW program can be considered as a good practice since it was a successful program and can definitely be enhanced and worked on again as it offers several opportunities, training and guidance for youth, graduates and first time job seekers.

Initiatives and projects implemented by different NGO's aiming to introduce and promote entrepreneurship to youth and empowering them with the needed skills to be able to work within the private sector. For example, DPNA in partnership with CIPE, implemented several projects in the Youth and Private Sector aiming to:

- To institutionalize the democratic concepts of civic education and responsibility and entrepreneurship in education curricula for Lebanese youth.
- To develop a culture of employability and internship amongst South Lebanon youth
- To enhance the civic participation of Entrance to Enterprise (E2E) Alumni Network members.

Accompanied with multiple guides for youth:

- Youth and Private Sector
- Entrance to Enterprise (University Level)
- Entrance to Enterprise (High-School Level)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Uniting the efforts of public authorities: the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Economy.
- Reactivating the Supreme Council for Vocational and Technical Education and include the largest relevant stakeholders (industrialists, syndicates - Chambers of Commerce and Industry, etc.) to set the main policies for VET in Lebanon.
- Promoting the entrepreneurship education initiative as supported by international organizations (ETF, ILO, CIPE, UNESCO)
- Working with business sector to set up sectorial councils in Vocational and Technical Education to be involved mainly in the curriculum design according to the job requirements
- Promoting the participation of civil society and local authority in supporting and financing of vocational and technical education
- Giving schools and institutes some autonomy in coordination with the concerned local bodies (municipalities - civil society)
- Developing a policy to use and integrate regular surveys and studies for the labour market needs, such as the implementation of the 2020 SMEs vision for the Ministry of Economy that would facilitate the creation of more job opportunities for the youth in Lebanon “SMEs as key economic engine growth and job creation.”

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Lebanon does not have an overall system of Career Guidance and Job Search even though the country shows high need of such system. Lebanon is currently witnessing an increase of the rate of unemployment mostly between youth and fresh graduates. Due to the high unemployment rate present in the country, youth and graduate full of innovative ideas, energy and passion towards their work are immigrating mainly to countries in the Gulf Area or European ones. Resulting to a loss for the country, a loss for a chance of rehabilitation and improvement on diverse levels. The public sector, private sector and civil society work is not enough as the rate for unemployment is increasing. A national strategy should be developed, and a system of Career Guidance and Job Search should be implemented and this can start by studying the needs to the labor market and working with schools on career guidance sessions to be delivered to stude.