

Ideas to Actions
A Springgeneration
for EU–MENA
Cooperation
in Education

Hanan Rezk
and Katarína
Králíková





Springeneration

Centre for European Studies
Design: RARO S.L.
Typesetting: Victoria Agency
Printed in Belgium by Drukkerij Jo Vandenbulcke
Centre for European Studies
Rue du Commerce 20, Brussels, BE – 1000

The Centre for European Studies (CES) is the political foundation of the European People's Party (EPP) dedicated to the promotion of Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values.

For more information please visit:

www.springeneration.eu
www.thinkingeurope.eu

This publication receives funding from the European Parliament.

© Centre for European Studies 2012

Photos used in this publication: Centre for European Studies 2012

The European Parliament and the Centre for European Studies assume no responsibility for facts or opinions expressed in this publication or their subsequent use. Sole responsibility lies on the authors of this publication.

Credits and Table of contents



Table of contents

> Executive summary	05
> Introduction	08
About Springeneration >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	09
Answering the research questions >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	12
Methodology and data collection techniques >>>>>>>>>>>>>	13
Research scope and limitations >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	14
> Analysing current educational performance in the MENA region	16
A bird’s eye view >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	17
Steps in policy and practice >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	21
Egypt >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	21
Libya >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	23
Tunisia >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	25
Reform gaps >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	28
Identifying problems >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	28
Education challenges in Egypt >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	30
Education challenges in Libya >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	33
Education challenges in Tunisia >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	35
Defining cures >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	36
> The EU’s involvement in education reform in the MENA region	39
Policy design:	
The Cairo Declaration as a framework setter >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	40
Policy implementation: From adoption to action >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	43
From the EU programmes >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	45



1. Erasmus Mundus: Together for mobility >	45
2. Erasmus for All: Towards a new 'Mediterranean generation'? >>	52
3. Tempus: Together for quality >>>>>>>	54
Towards better governance and improved (e)quality	59
> Between perils and opportunities	63
> Recommendations	66
The EU as a policy advocate >>>>>>>>>>>>>	67
The EU as a partner >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	70
The EU as a doer >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	73
> By way of conclusion, or it takes two to tango . . .	77
> Bibliography	80
> About the authors	92



Executive summary



The popular movement that began in Tunisia in December 2010 soon spread to Egypt and Libya, and nearly two years later is still causing major political developments across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Citizens in the region have demanded major changes in their systems to deliver jobs and social cohesion. But the aspirations of the people of the MENA region, and in particular the youth, to successfully integrate into the global economy can only be met through quality education. The international community, including the EU as a major player in the area, needs to provide continuous and effective support, and share its past experience. The good news is that the new governments in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, as well as the EU, seem to be serious about working towards the improvement and modernisation of the MENA education systems.

Despite significant past achievements, the MENA education systems still face challenges on several fronts. Both the high unemployment rates among the MENA youth and the importation of specialised foreign experts to the MENA region are clear signals that the education system has failed to equip graduates with the skills demanded by the labour market. A lack of qualified teachers, learning materials, classrooms, laboratories and libraries, coupled with the lack of autonomy and funding, can be blamed for the insufficient quality of MENA education and the subsequent high unemployment rates.

An action plan for EU–MENA cooperation in the field of education should aim to (i) strengthen ongoing projects under the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area while initiating new policy mechanisms to support quality education and network-based governance¹ and (ii) coordinate

¹ This type of network-based governance includes: (i) an external dimension for state/international actors dedicated to financing and planning, and (ii) an internal dimension for state/non-state actors (students, parents and teachers), which is more focused on implementation. In this form of participatory governance, multi-stakeholders work together to improve educational outcomes.



EU efforts with those of other donors to create sound policies that are politically and administratively feasible.

Keywords Middle East and North Africa (MENA) – MENA education systems – Education reform – The Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area – Network-based governance.

2

Introduction



About Springeneration

When thousands of young Arabs took to the streets and the main squares of the capitals and other cities of their countries they sought to oust the dictators from their enduring authority and provoke a regime change. The reasoning behind their actions was more complex, but in very simple terms they could no longer suppress their frustration at the lack of opportunities in their countries and they were desperate for a more optimistic future. When the universal desire for freedom met with the equally universal need for economic stability and advancement, a revolution was born.

Now some of the dictators have gone, the first free elections have taken place and the new governments are trying to find ways to address the most pressing problems in these challenging environments. Europe is there and is trying to help. However, it struggles to prove that the reasons behind its involvement are genuine and in the interests of the Arab population. Due to the colonial past of several EU Member States, as well as what many people in the region consider to be Europe's past support of the old regimes, the European Union must exercise caution. As a result, it has been careful in its actions, sometimes taking an indecisive and tardy stance.

Since the revolutions, many fact-finding missions and study trips have been organised to the region for EU officials, political parties and their leaders, European non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other stakeholders. Despite the financial and economic crisis Europe has been facing at home, considerable amounts of financial aid have been allocated to the region to help establish democratic and accountable institutions, and to implement a wide range of economic, educational, judicial, security and other reforms. A number of initiatives on the EU, bilateral, regional and local levels



have been launched with the aim of supporting the transition. Academics, think tanks, journalists and policymakers have started to pay greater attention to developments in the MENA region.² Many working groups dealing with questions related to the MENA region have been set up and numerous studies, articles and policy papers have been written. In all these efforts Europe has played the role of an attentive listener and observer. This stance was also clear from the words of the President of the European People's Party Wilfried Martens during his trip to Egypt when he said 'we are here not to teach or preach but we are here to listen'.³ Listening is crucial for understanding the thoughts and needs of other people, but it can only bring the desired results when it is coupled with action.

Therefore, the Centre for European Studies (CES) has attempted to combine the two. Last December it launched the 'Springeneration' public opinion survey which served as an online forum from which to gather ideas from people from the MENA region about how to forge a new partnership with Europe based on equality, knowledge sharing and mutual support.⁴ Today, more than 100 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 represent 30% of the Arab world's total population.⁵ These young women and men are generally more educated, healthier and better connected with the rest of the world than their mothers and fathers. Through talking to their friends on Facebook, posting tweets on Twitter, looking at pictures on Flickr, and generally using social networks,

² The MENA countries in this paper represent those which are categorised as Arab countries and sometimes as Southern Mediterranean countries, and exclude Israel.

³ W. Martens, President of the European People's Party, speech during a conference organised by the International Republican Institute, Sheraton Hotel, Cairo, 28 July 2011.

⁴ The Springeneration online survey was open from December 2011 to August 2012. The survey is now closed, but the website itself, as well as an overview of the results and a database of the statements made, can be viewed at www.springeneration.eu.

⁵ World Bank, *Kingdom of Morocco: Promoting Youth Opportunities and Participation* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2012), vii, accessed at <http://allafrica.com/download/resource/main/main/idatcs/00031748:b4e8032ef11f9fb849e7608fde70d0dd.pdf> on 13 October 2012.



their traditional thinking is being challenged by millions of approaches and perceptions from throughout the world. More than ever, they want a good education, access to better jobs and the opportunity to use their skills to become productive citizens. They are the main determinants of Arab development in the next decade, so it is indeed very important to listen to them.

Through the Springeneration survey, more than 70,000 participants came up with more than 25,000 individual comments and proposals. Egyptians and Libyans were the most active participants, together comprising almost half of the respondents, and 85% were under 35 years old.

Through an analysis of the responses, six main themes were identified: education, economic development, cultural exchange, youth empowerment, human rights and the development of democracy. Of these six themes, the survey participants placed the most importance on education and indicated a strong desire for cooperation with Europe in order to improve educational systems in the MENA countries.

Springeneration Survey Idea

'Exchange [of knowledge] and enhancing education is a very important topic for Arab youth'.

- Female, Age 25–34, Egypt

While both men and women agreed overall that education is the most important theme, young people tended to give more importance to education than did the older generation. As for the other categories, men tended to consider economic cooperation more important than did women. The category of results causing the most disagreement was human rights, especially among male respondents, but also among the younger generation of both genders.⁶

In order to turn the feedback from people across the MENA region into a proposal for action, the CES has decided to

⁶ V. Tapio and J. Lageson, 'Springeneration: Overview of Survey Results', Centre for European Studies (Brussels, 2012), accessed at <http://www.springeneration.eu/> on 27 September 2012.



build upon the online survey in the form of this research paper which analyses the education systems in the MENA region. In particular, this paper will examine the positive efforts on the national level in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, and take a closer look at the EU educational policies, initiatives and projects in the region. It will then suggest further action which could be taken. This paper argues that improving educational quality and applying network-based governance⁷ will lead to better educational outcomes in the MENA region. The EU focus on these two pillars will complement its past efforts, leading to better EU–MENA cooperation and partnership.

Answering the research questions

In order to gain a comprehensive overview of the education systems in the MENA region and to outline future options for better cooperation with the EU, this paper attempts to answer four research questions:

1. Why have the MENA schools and universities failed so far to equip their graduates with the necessary skills for local and international labour markets?
2. How can the mismatch between what schools and universities teach and what the market needs be brought into line?
3. What role has the EU played in this field and to what extent has it achieved its goals in the MENA region?
4. How can the EU help the MENA countries to achieve better education outcomes in the future?

⁷ This term and other synonyms have been widely used in public policy to support the paradigm shift in New Public Management. It refers to a policy process that is more open to the participatory approach: multi-stakeholders locally and internationally are effectively consulted and engaged in sector problems and new mechanisms are created so that local central governments shift their centralised hierarchical role towards more decentralisation and reciprocal collaboration.



The paper is organised in a way that mirrors the four questions above. First, it addresses the current situation and assesses the educational reform efforts and their impact. Second, it highlights two major components needed in order to fill previous reform gaps: (i) the efficiency dimension, which ensures the presence of effective teaching and instructional practices, and (ii) the governance dimension, which promotes a responsive educational system that serves the interests of the widest range of citizens⁸. This will lead to an improvement in the state of readiness of the MENA education systems to meet labour market demands. Third, it looks at the EU's attempts to help the MENA countries improve their education systems through an analytical framework. It argues that the EU's education reform assistance should focus on the previously mentioned two-fold action plan. Finally, it focuses on recommendations for the EU as a policy promoter, as a project partner, and as a doer to maximise the impact of its investment in educational reform in the MENA region. The conclusion sheds light on how the EU could help to develop the MENA countries' education capacity to better serve the needs of the Euromed region.

Methodology and data collection techniques

The qualitative analysis in this paper is based on two research methods: (i) primary research using the Springeneration survey results as a source of guidance, and a semi-formal detailed

⁸ It is important to highlight that there are two aspects to the education-related problems facing the three focus countries. First, these problems stem from the often problematic policies of the former authoritarian regimes. Second, they are sector-specific problems that any country might face regardless of its political system. Many observers suggest that the post-revolution political transformation towards more religion-oriented regimes in Tunisia and Egypt is expected to affect education policy design in the future.



questionnaire distributed to, and completed by, 25 relevant actors in the educational field at the European Commission and the European External Action Service, as well as high-ranking government officials in MENA countries; and (ii) secondary research involving analysis of the existing data in the reports and official documents of the EU; World Bank; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and the governments, agencies and other institutes in the MENA countries. The analytical views extracted from the survey and the questionnaire have brought to light major factors that could lead to better education outcomes in the MENA region. Using this research, the authors were able to detect and analyse three different effects: a) the effect of reform on educational output in the MENA region, b) the intentionality of the effect and its strength and, finally, c) the need for additional EU involvement.

Research scope and limitations

The scope of this research only covers the three MENA countries (Egypt, Libya and Tunisia) which have recently witnessed revolutions that have caused major structural political and social changes. However, many of the findings in this paper can be generalised to form rough guidelines for broader enhanced EU–MENA cooperation in the educational field. Most of the MENA countries have followed a similar path of reform and are faced with similar educational challenges. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from these three countries can be used to produce an overview for the whole region. However, one should be careful when designing and implementing concrete policies in individual countries in the



MENA region, as one size does not fit all. Each country has its own political, social and economic contexts and sensitivities that require tailor-made intervention mechanisms.

EU strategies have not always been carefully matched with the political and social dynamics inherent in the governance structures in the three countries under investigation. Although one aim of this paper is to identify where policies have not been well implemented on the ground, more research is needed into the specifics of this problem for each country.

The authors have been faced with some limitations while conducting research for this paper. Despite a number of policy documents about the EU's past, current and future involvement in the educational field in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and third countries, there is a lack of country-specific evidence and statistics, for example, regarding the budget distribution among different EU programmes in each individual country. Furthermore, in cases where statistical data are available, different documents sometimes also provide conflicting data.⁹ Finally, the EU's communications, reports and impact assessments are often too general and unable to explain the concrete impact of their programmes on their partners.

⁹ The authors also faced some difficulties caused by the lack of recent statistics for Libya and the differences between data from Libyan official documents and international donors' reports. Therefore, it was difficult to benchmark and compare the latest educational achievements in Libya with those in Egypt and Tunisia. Moreover, in Egypt it was difficult to establish exact figures for the latest public expenditure on different sub-sectoral programmes in the field of education as the authorities often fail to be transparent. The available budget publication is sometimes confusing, with excessive variability between planned and actual spending.

Analysing current educational performance in the MENA region



In monitoring the efforts and policies of education reform in the MENA region throughout the last two decades, several World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO and other official studies¹⁰ have confirmed that the MENA countries have made great efforts to improve literacy rates and to enhance schools and universities. They have spent almost as much money on education as their European counterparts. Almost every child in the MENA region has access to a free basic education.¹¹ Net enrolment rates for primary, preparatory, secondary and university levels have increased, while regional disparities and gender gaps have narrowed, and modern technology has been introduced in the classroom. In addition to these general achievements, the three MENA countries under investigation have also had their own unique reform accomplishments, as outlined below.

A bird's eye view

In Egypt,¹² clear and well-constructed reform plans have been put in place. As a result, class sizes in public schools have been reduced, the teacher–student ratio has improved, and pre-primary education¹³ has been introduced nationwide. Moreover, the equity of access to education in various regions

¹⁰ These reports include: Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation and United Nations Development Programme, 'Arab Knowledge Report 2010/2011: Education and Preparation of Future Generations for the Knowledge Society' (2012), accessed at http://204.200.211.31/Update_March_2012/AKR%202011/AKR_%20English.PDF on 21 September 2012; and United Nations Development Programme, *Egypt Human Development Report 2010: Youth in Egypt: Building Our Future* (2010), accessed at <http://www.undp.org.eg/Portals/0/NHDR%202010%20english.pdf> on 20 September 2012.

¹¹ A. Akkari, 'Education in the Middle East and North Africa: The Current Situation and Future Challenges', *International Education Journal* 5/2 (2004), 144–53.

¹² The order of precedence of the three countries in this paper is alphabetical.

¹³ Pre-primary education refers to nursery classes for 4–6 year-old children. It is a form of early childhood education that takes place in a formal classroom setting, with a teacher, a curriculum and a small group of children. It is mostly provided by the private sector, NGOs, and religious schools. Egypt is currently implementing a project for the enhancement of early childhood education, funded by the World Bank, which started in 2005 and is to be finalised by 2014.



of the country has also improved. This has been achieved through the school construction programmes in Upper Egypt and promotional campaigns in rural areas.¹⁴ Moreover, during the presidencies of Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, a parallel private education sector offered better quality education in schools, and later in universities and other higher education institutions.¹⁵

In Libya, the positive reform efforts have led to enrolment rates in primary, secondary and higher education which are very high by international standards. According to the 2011 Human Development Report, Libya achieved a gross enrolment ratio¹⁶ of 110.3% in primary schools, 93.55% in secondary schools and 55.7% in higher education. These figures are better than those for Egypt and Tunisia. It has also succeeded in achieving one of the best adult literacy rates in the region (88.9%)¹⁷, with an illiteracy rate of just 2% among young Libyans.¹⁸ Moreover, during the decentralisation period, there was a massive increase in the number of teachers and administrative staff at schools; as a result, Libya has the lowest student–teacher ratio in the world (1 teacher for every 4.6 students).¹⁹

¹⁴ L. Iskandar, 'Egypt: Where and Who are the World's Illiterates?', Paper commissioned for the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006, Literacy for Life* (Paris: UNESCO, 2006), 4, accessed at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001460/146010e.pdf> on 21 August 2012.

¹⁵ N. Megahed, 'Secondary Education Reforms in Egypt: Rectifying Inequality of Educational and Employment Opportunities', in C. Acedo (ed.), *Case Studies in Secondary Education Reform* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2002), 44–72, accessed at <http://faculty.ksu.edu.sa/Youssefsayed/DocLib1/%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9%20%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9%20%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%8A.pdf> on 21 August 2012.

¹⁶ The gross enrolment ratio is the total enrolment in a given level of education regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population for the same level of education.

¹⁷ This is understandable given that Libya is an oil-producing country with relatively significant cash revenues sufficient to finance the basic needs of education for the population.

¹⁸ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2011: Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All* (New York: UNDP, 2011), 159, accessed at http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Complete.pdf on 13 October 2012.

¹⁹ European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, *Libya Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme 2011-2013* (2011), 9, accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/2011_enpi_csp_nip_libya_en.pdf on 20 September 2012.



Almost one in four students is enrolled in a health studies course, a very high proportion by international standards.²⁰ In terms of coverage, schools are located throughout the country: mobile classrooms were introduced with the aim of reaching out into nomadic, hard-to-reach areas. These latest statistics also reveal a higher percentage of females (55.6%) than males (44%) with at least a secondary education.

In Tunisia, education is considered a pillar of development. According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2011–2012, Tunisia has fallen 8 places to 40th in this year's Global Competitiveness Index's²¹ overall rankings—a natural reflection of the instability during the uprising. However, the national events have not affected educational outcomes. Tunisia continues to display solid educational achievements, which remain significantly above the North African average in terms of quality (33rd in the global rankings). It has very high literacy rates, especially among the younger population. It also demonstrates a better quality of mathematics and science education (18th), better school management (31st), and better access to the Internet in schools (53rd) than Egypt and Libya. Tunisia has also shifted the focus of the country's economy from manufacturing and agriculture to services; a process that is based on—and also strengthens—the educational system of the country. In terms of higher education, the state allocates grants to universities on a competition basis through an innovative

²⁰ Libya has more than 15,000 students in 9 medical schools in addition to those studying at the schools of dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, and medical technology. World Health Organization, Regional Health Systems Observatory, 'Health System Profile Libya', 2007, accessed at <http://gis.emro.who.int/HealthSystemObservatory/PDF/Libya/Full%20Profile.pdf> on 27 September 2012.

²¹ The Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) is published annually by the World Economic Forum to rank countries based on over 110 variables organised in 12 pillars, with each pillar considered to be a determinant factor in competitiveness. Primary, secondary and tertiary education enrolment; the quality of the education system; the quality of mathematics and science education; and the quality of school management are some components of the index. World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness* (2012), accessed at <http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-competitiveness> on 25 September 2012.



measure. Through the 2008 Higher Education Act, universities are able to form four-year contracts with the state under which both share the funding and mobilise their own resources.²² This practice has established new methods that could previously only be found in developed countries. Evidently Tunisian women have benefited from the expansion of higher education, as their participation, in terms of both enrolment and graduation rates, has increased considerably over time, surpassing those of men.²³

Egypt and Libya can learn from the Tunisian experience and the well-established legal framework which supports the Tunisian reform plans. Since 2008, the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology has developed measures for the construction of applied bachelor's degrees targeting greater alignment between higher education pathways and the needs of the labour market. Tunisia is also well ahead of Egypt and Libya in terms of enhancing university staff and teachers' qualifications, rewarding teachers in priority area schools with extra incentives, offering career advice to students in preparatory and secondary schools, and focusing on a comprehensive plan for school health care services.²⁴

²² T. Abdesslem, 'Financing Higher Education in Tunisia', Working Paper 551, Economic Research Forum (Cairo, 2010), 10, accessed at http://www.erf.org.eg/CMS/uploads/pdf/1286702600_551.pdf on 21 August 2012.

²³ With the increasing trend towards female empowerment and the higher proportion of women among the 15–64 year-old population, the available data from the late 1980s show that girls' enrolment in primary and secondary education surpassed that of male students, achieving one of the highest female enrolment rates among the MENA countries.

²⁴ Tunisia, Ministry of Education and Training, *The Development of Education: National Report 2004–2008* (2009), accessed at http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/tunisia_NR08.pdf on 1 October 2012.



Steps in policy and practice

The above-mentioned reform efforts have been dedicated to enhancing educational outcomes. Most of these efforts can actually be summarised in the following two major dimensions: policy design and policy implementation.

Egypt

In terms of policy design, Egypt has developed the framework for a Comprehensive National Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education Reform 2007–2012²⁵ (the Basic Education Enhancement Programme and the Secondary²⁶ Education Reform Programme). The plan includes three fundamental policy goals: (i) to ensure high levels of quality education performance, (ii) to ensure an efficient system of management and effective community participation and (iii) to ensure equal access to education for all. In light of the plan, the Ministry of Education has put together 12 major projects to be implemented by 2014.²⁷

For higher education reform, the government set out a long-term programme that continues until 2017 which is aimed

²⁵ Egypt, Ministry of Education, *National Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education Reform 2007–2012* (2007), accessed at <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Egypt/EgyptStrategicPlanPre-universityEducation.pdf> on 29 August 2012.

²⁶ Secondary education in Egypt has two branches: general and technical. Technical secondary education is implemented in either a three-year system or a five-year system. Both technical education options include industrial, agricultural and commercial pathways. See: Egypt, National Center for Educational Research and Development, *National Report of Arab Republic of Egypt from 1990 to 2000* (2001), accessed at <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/international/ice/natrap/Egypt.pdf> on 24 September 2012.

²⁷ Egypt, Ministry of Education, *National Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education Reform 2007–2012*.



at raising the level of efficiency by granting universities more autonomy in the modernisation of their curricula and the allocation of their internal resources. Interviews with high-ranking officials from the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education have indicated that the plans which began to be implemented before the revolution are continuing as planned without significant changes in the post-revolutionary period. Since the revolution the ministry has, however, been undergoing continuous changes to its structure and personnel, and this has caused some stagnation in the policy design and its implementation. Some bilateral agreements with European and US universities have been signed to increase the quality of higher education through staff mobility and training, as well as to enable the institutions to offer new joint degrees.²⁸ What is especially important is that the demonstrations in Egypt have led to a positive restructuring of public universities along more democratic lines. In September 2011, for the first time since 1994, faculty deans were elected at Egyptian universities. New measures have also been introduced to empower students through the election of new student unions and university administrators.

To improve the practical implementation of educational reform in Egypt several steps have taken place. First, the Egyptian Universities Network was established to connect Egyptian universities with one another and later to connect them with the European Academic and Research Network (ERAN). Second, the Education Development Fund was established in 2004 under the chairmanship of the prime minister and the supervision of seven ministers, including the minister for education and the minister for higher education and scientific research. The fund took on an active role in enhancing the quality of schools and universities through seven major projects

²⁸ Egypt, Ministry of Higher Education, *Establishment* (2011), accessed at <http://www.egy-mhe.gov.eg/english/index-e.html> on 21 September 2012.



covering different governorates. Third, the Higher Education Enhancement Project, with its 25 major reform areas, has begun with the help of World Bank funding, and is currently being implemented by the Project Management Unit Affiliated to the ministry.²⁹ Fourth, the National Authority for Quality Assurance and the Accreditation of Education was established in 2006 to assess both the instructional process and the institutional capacity of schools for accreditation.³⁰

Libya

Prior to the revolution, the Libyan General People's Committee of Education was responsible for the strategic plan to develop the education system. The pillars of the reform included the improvement of the curricula. With the Home Education Decision issued in 2007, technical and financial assistance was made available for families who were capable and willing to teach their children at home. In the same year, a Cooperative Education Decision was issued. Under this decision, the General People's Committee of Education was empowered to provide new educational buildings, contribute to the provision of equipment, and assist in obtaining bank loans and the land needed to establish cooperative schools, and to defray half of the tuition fees of those schools. As a result, several public schools and institutes have converted to this type of education, giving wider coverage to more students under this system.³¹

²⁹ The implementation was designed to take place in three phases with the first originally covering the period 2002–7, extended to 2009; the second from 2007–12; and the third from 2012–17. The priority areas were integrated into six main projects: the Higher Education Enhancement Fund, Information and Communication Technology Projects, the Egyptian Technical Colleges Project, the Faculty Leaders' Development Project and the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Project. The Faculty Leaders Development Project has been retained in the form of a permanent centre.

³⁰ Egypt, Ministry of Higher Education, *Establishment* (2011).

³¹ Libya, The General People's Committee of Education, *The Development of Education: National Report of Libya* (2008), 10, accessed at http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/libya_NR08.pdf on 21 August 2012.



The General People's Committee of Education also emphasised the importance of qualified teachers and established the General Centre for Teacher Training in 2006 to coordinate the refurbishment and creation of teacher training colleges. In order to place greater emphasis on distance learning, the Committee also established the Authority of Education Techniques, which has three main departments.³² In 2006, the government decided to re-centralise³³ the public administration. Most of the ministries were recreated centrally but they have remained relatively weak organisations, particularly due to ministerial reshuffles and the likelihood of being dismantled again. Thus, Libya is still finding it difficult to determine clear sector strategies in the aftermath of the re-centralisation process.³⁴

Due to the contrasting nature of the transition through armed struggle, the situation in Libya is somewhat different to those in Egypt and Tunisia. The two newly created ministries (the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research) prepared brief strategic plans for implementation between December 2011 and June 2012 to achieve the immediate or short-term objectives of (i) rebuilding schools damaged during the 2011 upheavals; (ii) accommodating children from displaced families in schools in their original areas of residence; (iii) and reviewing the curricula and textbooks, especially in the subjects of history, civic education and the Arabic language.³⁵ In the medium and long

³² The Department of Computers and Networks, which supplies computers to schools and universities; the Department of Educational Channels, which supervises the operation of educational satellites; and the Department of E-Learning, which manages the educational portal.

³³ Prior to this decision, a major de-centralisation process had been launched to eliminate many ministries, including education, and to transfer human resources management, financial independence and planning to the regions.

³⁴ European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, *Libya Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme 2011–2013*, 11.

³⁵ UNESCO, 'Libya: The Will to Change', 25 April 2012, accessed at http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/higher-education/single-view/news/libya_the_will_to_change/ on 1 August 2012.



term, the plans stress the need for new educational policies to develop school curricula and early childhood education, enhance technical and vocational programmes, regulate private education, introduce e-learning in higher education, and develop universities' institutional capacities.

Higher education is regulated by a law that was approved in 2010 which stipulates that the higher education sector comprises both public and private universities. The Ministry of Higher Education has three major competencies (the administration of the universities, the national foundation dealing with technical and vocational education, and the administration of private education) to supervise and coordinate among different higher education entities and to implement the ministry's regulations at the respective institutions. The latest plan for the development of higher education (2008–12) emphasises the importance of establishing new university campuses in various administrative regions. It is expected that the new campuses will host more than half a million Libyan university students by 2025.³⁶

Tunisia

In Tunisia, the foundations of the education policy, which aim to ensure a quality education for all, can be found in the legal framework of the Education Act, in the decrees on school life, and in the 'School for Tomorrow Programme' (2002–7). These foundations are complemented by the National Programme for Integrating Disabled Children.³⁷ In addition,

³⁶ Libya, The General People's Committee of Education, *The Development of Education: National Report of Libya*, 23.

³⁷ M. Masri et al., 'Case Studies on the Arab States (Jordan, Tunisia, Oman, and Egypt) and Regional Synthesis Report', prepared for the STRATREAL Foundation and UNESCO (2010), 33–51, accessed at http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/pdf/EPE_Component_One_English_14_May_2010_01.pdf on 2 October 2012.



Tunisia has adopted the concept of Priority Educational Schools. Under this scheme, the Ministry of Education and Training promotes the principle of positive discrimination in all schools by giving additional support to schools that are in need of assistance with this.³⁸ This initiative has since been strengthened by the National Action Plan for 2011.³⁹ In addition, starting in 2008, a new structure for education and training was introduced to ensure the better preparation of students for the labour market. Preparatory technical schools were established to provide students after completion of grade 7 with two-year general and technical on-the-job training programmes. Students enrolled in these schools have the possibility to link their general education with this training to acquire up-to-date technical skills.⁴⁰

One of the most important education policies in Tunisia is that which empowered the regions under the national decree concerning the organisation and prerogatives of the Regional Directorates of the Ministry of Education and Training, which was adopted in 2007. The Regional Directorates have been given more autonomy to manage and monitor their own projects in line with their own indicators. A more efficient partnership between schools and their communities has emerged through the establishment of school councils. In terms of higher education reform, the Higher Education Act was passed in February 2008 in answer to societal expectations, employers' needs and to confirm the credibility of national degrees.⁴¹ As a result of this act,

³⁸ In the period 2004–8, the Ministry of Education and Training launched an evaluation in order to create a list of 100 priority middle schools and 553 priority primary schools. These schools are at the cutting edge in terms of best practices for ensuring a quality education for all.

³⁹ Tunisia, Ministry of Education and Training, *The Development of Education: National Report 2004–2008* (2009), accessed at http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/tunisia_NR08.pdf on 1 October 2012.

⁴⁰ Tunisia, Ministry of Education and Training, *The Development of Education: National Report 2004–2008*, 20.

⁴¹ European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, Tunisia Tempus Office, *Higher Education in Tunisia*, (Brussels, 2012).



universities have become more autonomous and effective in the implementation of the Tunisian national development plan through their remunerated services under contracts with the production sector.⁴²

In terms of practical steps, the Tunisian government decided to enhance the quality of education to meet what are known as the challenges of the 2007–16 decade. In 2001, it created the National Centre for Pedagogic Innovation and Research in Education in order to offer incentives to those who conduct action research and practical surveys. Moreover, with the aim of enhancing academic innovation and scientific research in education, teacher-training institutes were established in 2008 to train the first group of primary school teachers. In a parallel effort to improve the quality of higher education,⁴³ the government established university ‘poles’, in which public research institutions are attached to universities in the same geographical area, ensuring that each region has its own university linked with a research facility.⁴⁴

⁴² Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Contribution of UNESCO: Tunisia’, Universal Periodic Review, 13th session (21 May–1 June 2012), accessed at http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session13/TN/UNESCO_UPR_TUN_S13_2012_UNESCO_E.pdf on 21 September 2012.

⁴³ Starting in 2006, the World Bank supports the Tunisian efforts to reform its higher education system with a project that has three components (expanding access, strengthening quality assurance mechanisms and providing quality grants to improve institutional performance).

⁴⁴ ‘Tunisia – Higher Education’, *StateUniversity.com*, accessed at <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1554/Tunisia-HIGHER-EDUCATION.html> on 9 August 2012.



Reform gaps

Identifying problems

As mentioned in the earlier parts of this paper, the MENA countries have shown great potential to overcome many of the problems in their education systems. However, the disappointing educational outputs/outcomes prove that despite all of these efforts in the last two decades, there is still an urgent need to continue reform efforts while focusing on the quality and governance of education.⁴⁵ Demand has outstripped the level of available public funds, causing the quality of publicly provided education to deteriorate. One observer found that the ‘rapid growth in enrollment rates necessitated the hiring of insufficiently qualified teachers and placed immense strain on existing school facilities’.⁴⁶ University graduates lack the skills needed for the competitive markets,⁴⁷ students realise low scores in international mathematics and science tests⁴⁸ and the number of years of educational

⁴⁵ European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, ‘ENP Package, Country Progress Report – Egypt’, Press Release (15 May 2012), accessed at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-333_en.htm?locale=en on 9 August 2012.

⁴⁶ L. Loveluck, ‘Education in Egypt: Key Challenges’, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House (London, 2012), 4, accessed at http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Middle%20East/0312egyptedu_background.pdf on 2 October 2012.

⁴⁷ M. Oukil, ‘Arab Countries can Perform Better with Clear Emphasis on Innovation, Entrepreneurship and an Evolving Culture’, *International Journal of E-education, E-business, E-management and E-learning* 1/2 (2011), 115–20.

⁴⁸ Between 20% and 81% of MENA-country students failed to achieve the low benchmark scores for mathematics and science. World Bank and European Training Foundation, *Integrating TVET into the Knowledge Economy: Reform and Challenges in the Middle East and North Africa* (Turin, Italy, 2005), accessed at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1126210664195/1636971-1126210694253/TVET_Knowledge_Economy.pdf on 27 July 2012.



attainment in the adult population is still low in countries like Egypt.⁴⁹ Other problems include higher drop-out rates, and low success levels with publications, patents and internationally recognised awards.

Although several governance modernisation initiatives have been implemented, they have not had a direct impact on the MENA countries' educational outcomes. Institutional fragmentation, the absence of clear leadership and the lack of a proper performance assessment mechanism for the education and training systems make it difficult to assess the impact of completed and ongoing governance reforms in the three MENA countries in this study. The sustainability of previous governance reforms is uncertain given the size of the systems in the three countries. The inherent resistance to change in centralised, authoritarian political systems, and the fragile political legitimacy and accountability of the regimes have all contributed to reform outcomes that have deviated from their original goals.⁵⁰ The participatory approach to managing public schools⁵¹ was artificial as it lacked proper supportive mechanisms and true societal empowerment to enforce it.

During the past two decades, some MENA authoritarian regimes tried to present themselves as examples of good governance by establishing specialised ministerial

⁴⁹ Around 10% of the adult population have not attended school at all according to the 2010 Egypt Human Development Report. United Nations Development Programme, '2010 Egypt Human Development Report', accessed at: <http://www.undp.org/Default.aspx?tabid=227> on 18 August 2012.

⁵⁰ The political and social contexts in which education reform is designed and implemented are crucial to its success, as indicated in the UNESCO study. L. Jallade, M. Radi and S. Cuenin, *National Education Policies and Programmes and International Cooperation: What Role for UNESCO?* (Paris: UNESCO, 2001).

⁵¹ Regarding governance reform in universities, interviews have revealed that sometimes resistance to change also comes from senior professors who have worked for their entire career in a centrally governed system lacking the incentive to carry out changes. This is currently preventing younger staff from introducing their initiatives.



committees⁵² and expert consultation mechanisms to solve educational problems.⁵³ The educational reform plans set out above were designed to copy the democratic models of developed Western countries in order to succeed in attracting the financial and technical support needed from abroad. However, the process as implemented has had enormous limitations in terms of the redistribution of power and decision-taking. One observer stated that ‘it rather strengthened those in place and enabled them to co-opt reform-orientated actors from within the schools and universities’.⁵⁴ Several observers believe these committees may have a negative effect if they promote the interests of governments over those of other stakeholders such as research institutions, political parties, professionals, students and civil society.

For the three MENA countries studied here, the gaps in education reform still represent a big challenge. The following analysis highlights these challenges in more detail.

1. Education challenges in Egypt

The Egyptian education system is the largest in the MENA region. More than 20 million students are currently enrolled in different levels and types of education, almost

⁵² As highlighted by the World Bank, experts have praised the involvement of all national ministries in the design of education reform, as their full integration with international donors in the planning exercise will help to ensure that it is coherent and well coordinated from a national perspective. World Bank, *Education in the Middle East and North Africa: A Strategy Towards Learning for Development*, (Washington, DC, 1998), accessed at <http://www.worldbank.org/education/strategy/MENA-E.pdf> on 28 August 2012.

⁵³ However, this consultation process has never been extended to include all non-state stakeholders and the wider public in a meaningful way.

⁵⁴ F. Kohstall, ‘Free Transfer, Limited Mobility: A Decade of Higher Education Reform in Egypt and Morocco’, *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 131 (2012), 91–109, accessed at <http://remmm.revues.org/7624> on 14 August 2012.



90% of them in pre-university education.⁵⁵ The system encompasses more than 43,000 schools and almost 1.7 million teaching and support staff. Despite these significant quantitative achievements in terms of enrolment, there has not been sufficient qualitative improvement. The high rate of unemployment among the Egyptian youth and the lack of adequate technical skills are frequently reported as indicators of this.

The public sector (and thus public funds)⁵⁶ is the main provider of educational services. Almost 93% of those enrolled in pre-university education and 80% of those enrolled in higher education are registered with public institutions.⁵⁷ Over the last few decades, the number of students has increased significantly, the budget deficit has grown rapidly and, consequently, the quality of education has been compromised.

The poor quality of public schools has led to the emergence of an informal educational sector where private tutoring is used to fill the gaps. According to the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, more than 60% of the investment in education is spent on private tutoring. Teachers have begun to witness a conflict of interest, where excelling in their state-funded lessons reduces the incentives for students to pay them for additional support. As a result, they tend to teach the lessons superficially, which has led to widespread absenteeism in public schools.⁵⁸ Overcrowded classes and

⁵⁵ European Training Foundation, *Building a Competitiveness Framework for Education and Training in Egypt* (2011), accessed at [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/90A5FF8C30FE1B C7C12579DD00352EF1/\\$file/Competitiveness%20framework%20for%20education%20in%20Egypt.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/90A5FF8C30FE1B C7C12579DD00352EF1/$file/Competitiveness%20framework%20for%20education%20in%20Egypt.pdf) on 4 August 2012.

⁵⁶ According to the Ministry of Finance more than 92% of total public spending is allocated to current education expenditures, of which wages and salaries constitute almost 89% of the available funds.

⁵⁷ According to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, there are 17 public universities, 17 private universities, the Labour University and Al Azhar University with its 68 schools. In addition, the system has several public and private higher institutions.

⁵⁸ L. Loveluck, 'Education in Egypt'.



centrally set examinations have not created an environment conducive to effective learning.

Another reason for the poor quality of public schooling is the worsening level of educational backgrounds of teachers. Many teachers colleges have been opened for the lowest scoring high school graduates. Subsequently, this had an influence on their (in)ability to provide qualitative instruction. There is also another class of teachers who graduated from science schools with majors such as biology, chemistry, physics and geology, or the arts and humanities such as history and languages. These teachers may be bright individuals, but they often lack teaching abilities. Thus it is not just the teachers who are to blame for low-quality education, but also the structural constraints which have made it difficult for them to teach effectively.

In universities, overcrowding also remains the prime concern, with an expected increase in the student population of 40% by the year 2022. Public universities face challenges in attracting funding, strengthening research capabilities, and addressing the mismatch between educational outcomes and career opportunities.⁵⁹ Moreover, the over-concentration on passive learning is exacerbated by a lack of up-to-date learning materials,⁶⁰ advanced libraries and technical facilities. All of these factors have implications for the students' concentration levels, problem-solving skills and attainment. What constrains universities most from doing a better job is that they do not get enough financial support for their

⁵⁹ According to the Strategic Planning Unit of the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry is facing problems in assessing local labor market needs due to the lack of accurate and updated information from the private sector. As a result, the higher education system is not yet capable of offering suitable preparation for graduates that would lead to narrowing the supply and demand gap.

⁶⁰ Interviews conducted by the authors revealed that the attempt to introduce new specialisation or study tracks is a very bureaucratic and complicated procedure. This makes even private universities incapable of initiating new majors that better match local and international market needs. As a result, duplication of the same exact bachelor degrees with their exact study tracks have been introduced nationwide, even in governorates where there is little demand for such specialisations.



educational and research activities, and even the support they do get cannot be allocated to different faculties according to their needs. This attitude has resulted in a system that is totally supply-driven without accounting for student results and market needs. Therefore, universities in Egypt are not used to acting autonomously and encouraging new activities that lead to income generation.⁶¹

2. Education challenges in Libya

Libya's population of approximately 6.31 million includes 1.7 million students; over 270,000 of them are studying at university level, including those in the higher technical and vocational sectors. Due to the above-mentioned decentralisation and re-centralisation activities, Libya lacks clear sector strategies on which to build successful technical and financial cooperation with international donors. Fragmented education investment has led to the multiplication of small schools which do not teach the skills necessary for the labour market. The subjects—designed by Gaddafi's loyalists—are often outdated and many families rely instead on private tutoring for their children from as early as the first year of primary school. Libyan universities functioned in a completely isolated environment during the four decades of Gaddafi's regime. This has led to a lack of exposure and the existence of an extremely primitive educational infrastructure. The administrative structure remains weak, lacking adequate capacity for policy formulation, implementation and monitoring. In other words, Libya has not developed any serious higher education infrastructure—there are no serious universities or technical institutes, and no research facilities or centres of excellence. The UNESCO team which visited Libya in March

⁶¹ OECD, *Higher Education in Egypt: Report of the 2008-09 International Review* (22 March 2010), accessed at <http://www.oecd.org/education/educationeconomyandsociety/44868528.pdf> on 15 August 2012.



2012 stressed that ‘the country needs in-depth renewal of its educational policies’.⁶²

To a large extent, these problems stem from a combination of a lack of proper planning processes in the past, insufficient data on students’ needs and sector outputs, the absence of institutional stability and a lack of performance-based information systems.⁶³ A recent Trans-European Mobility Programme for Students (Tempus) study shows that cooperation between universities and business and industry sectors is very weak. Industry has never been well represented in the management of higher education institutions.⁶⁴

Springeneration Survey Idea

‘Government should focus more on improving education and access to it as well as supporting Libyan men and women in finding and then exceeding in their careers’

- Male, Age 25–34, Libya

Teacher training is considered another challenge⁶⁵, as in the past schools relied on unqualified teachers applying out-of-date learning techniques. Libyan students still rely on traditional rote learning that does not improve their analytical thinking. At the same time, the current process of producing textbooks is no longer adequate since it is largely fragmented and incoherent. If properly implemented, the system of specialised secondary schools⁶⁶ established in 2002 might help Libya catch up with market demands.

⁶² UNESCO, ‘Libya: The Will to Change’.

⁶³ UNESCO, ‘Libya: The Will to Change’.

⁶⁴ European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, *Higher Education in Libya* (July 2012), accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/overview/libya_overview_of_hes_final.pdf on 14 August 2012.

⁶⁵ In an interview conducted in November 2011 by Kimberly Jones, parents confirmed that some Libyan teachers routinely use both verbal intimidation and corporal punishment. See K. Jones, ‘Does the Libyan Education System Need an Extreme Makeover?’, *Libyan Tweep Forum*, 25 November 2011, accessed at <http://tweepforum.ly/opinion/does-the-libyan-education-system-need-an-extreme-makeover/> on 2 August 2012.

⁶⁶ The system of specialised schools contains the following major divisions: economics, biology, arts, media, social sciences and engineering.



Another problem highlighted by one of the expert interviewees is Libya's long intellectual isolation from the rest of the world. Not only was the country virtually closed for business during Gaddafi's four-decade rule, but it also witnessed a one-way brain drain. The 'one-way' point is important. All of the MENA countries have suffered from brain drains, but in most cases those who left have usually maintained very strong links with their home countries through remittances sent back home, annual visits that help tourism and occasional property investments, as well as the maintenance of 'mental and intellectual links'. In Libya this has not happened and has negatively affected the nature and the quality of education.

3. Education challenges in Tunisia

The Tunisian experience in educational reform has achieved far better results than the ones in Egypt and Libya. However, the First National Conference on Educational Reform last March concluded that 'previous reforms have targeted just the updating of the legal texts without having a profound impact on the reality of the educational institution'. In addition, the conference highlighted the absence of a national framework for assessment and the absence of clear criteria and indicators.⁶⁷

While literacy rates have improved over the years, illiteracy still affects 16% of the male population and 35.6% of the female population. In particular, youth illiteracy remains widespread in rural areas.⁶⁸ There is also a growing disparity between regional educational institutions in terms of the level of performance and results. In addition, further progress is needed to enhance

⁶⁷ 'UNESCO Attends Tunisia's First National Conference on Educational Reform', 24 April 2012, accessed at http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/resources/online-materials/single-view/news/unesco_attends_tunisias_first_national_conference_on_educational_reform/ on 4 October 2012.

⁶⁸ UNESCO, Institute for Statistics, 'UIS Statistics in Brief: Global Literacy Profile', accessed at http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=364&IF_Language=eng on 12 October 2012.



the size and composition of faculties, as well as universities' equipment, technology and management. Tunisian universities, as indicated by some observers, lack the ability to produce the level of research and development reflected in the current generation of ideas, books, and concepts necessary for the whole education system to become better integrated in the larger global system.

The Tunisian higher education system is harshly criticised for the rising rates of unemployment among graduates. However, Tunisia has taken important steps on the road to developing higher education. Large amounts of public resources have been allocated to financing education (public expenditure on education amounts to around 7.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) with 2% allocated to higher education⁶⁹) to accommodate the ever-expanding cohorts of students. However, the major challenge for Tunisian higher education now is the rising rate of enrolment. To cope with this problem, efforts have been made to maintain investment expenditures and to allocate current spending more rationally. Public support for students, through a system of grants and loans and other subsidised services, is grounded in the values of social efficiency and equity in higher education.

Defining cures

The current challenges facing the educational systems in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia are by no means the same for all three countries. The skills mismatch between what the educational system produces and what the labour market

⁶⁹ T. Abdessalem, 'Financing Higher Education in Tunisia', Working Paper 551, Economic Research Forum (Cairo, 2010), accessed at http://www.erf.org.eg/CMS/uploads/pdf/1286702600_551.pdf on 21 August 2012. This was only 6.3% in 2008, see: World Bank, 'Public Spending on Education, Total (% of Government Expenditure)', accessed at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GB.ZS> on 10 August 2012.



needs requires, to a certain extent, a differentiated approach. Libya's economy almost entirely relies on the oil sector, which requires a rather limited skill set. The main contributors to Tunisia's GDP are tourism, agriculture and the phosphate industry; while the Egyptian economy is more diversified and also represents a much bigger market than those of the other two countries. However, the revolutions have also shaken the economic priorities of these countries and the future of their economies lies in increasing diversification, especially in Libya. Therefore, all three countries need to work towards developed educational systems which have a real impact on not only meeting the needs of their labour markets, but also on expanding them. Moreover, problems with the quality and governance of education are not unique to one country, and comparative experience can help us to shed light on possible solutions.

The suggested cures to enhance education quality should follow a comprehensive plan. Teachers should be selected, trained and evaluated in a totally different manner, and private tutoring should be strictly limited by new legal and institutional mechanisms. The government should also link public spending on schools and universities to their performance. Curricula should be updated to reflect recent research and best practices, and the e-content of curricula and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources should be fully utilised. The textbook development process needs to overcome its fragmentation and reach integration and coherence at each of the different educational levels. Centrally set exams should be reformed to encourage students to use creative thinking rather than purely memorising the facts.

Moreover, teachers, parents and students need to be actively involved in the educational reform process, which should lead to more effective coordination between the state and non-



state stakeholders in society.⁷⁰ In all three countries, there is an urgent need to start a national consultation process to draw a roadmap for reform whereby all stakeholders can effectively participate in policymaking and take shared responsibility for the implementation of reforms. Moving towards good network-based governance would mean that the MENA countries would be heading towards real and deep decentralisation, and autonomy for their schools and universities.

⁷⁰ The suggested scenario is based on an accountability shift: 'educators should become accountable to the general public not to the bureaucracy. They should be accountable for the student learning and not for the adherence to the rules and standards'. See: J. A. Anderson, 'Accountability in Education', Education Policy Series 1, The International Academy of Education and the International Institute for Education Planning (Paris; Brussels, 2005), accessed at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001409/140986e.pdf> on 13 August 2012.

The EU's involvement in education reform in the MENA region



While the MENA governments were busy adopting and implementing the various sets of reforms to enhance and modernise their education systems and increase their enrolment and literacy rates, the EU was not inactive. It was debating the possibilities and adapting the principles of its contribution to the gradual improvement of the education systems of its southern neighbours.

Most of the EU's efforts in the field of education in the MENA region can be put under the umbrella of two broad themes—policy design and policy implementation.

Policy design: The Cairo Declaration as a framework setter

The concept of a more articulate relationship between Europe and its southern neighbours is nearly as old as the European Union itself. However, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was only launched in 1995 after a series of attempts to forge greater EU–MENA cooperation. The formal creation of this partnership, also known as the Barcelona Process, was the result of the Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Barcelona under the Spanish presidency of the EU with the aim of ‘turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity’.⁷¹

⁷¹ European Council, *Madrid European Council, 15 and 16 December 1995, Presidency Conclusions, Annexes 11-15* (16 December 1995), accessed at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/mad4_en.htm on 2 October 2012.



The existence of the Euromed partnership has been challenged many times due both to the uneasy relations between the MENA countries and to their, not always simple, relations with the West: ranging from the stalemate in the Middle East peace process to the lack of democratisation in the Arab world and the US-led war in Iraq. Despite the partnership's frequent inability to deliver results, it has survived. Perhaps this is due to the exclusivity of it being the only forum that brings together Arabs and Europeans on an equal footing. But calls for greater efficiency, visibility and a stronger sense of mutual ownership provoked a desire for reform from EU and MENA leaders. What was originally supposed to be a very ambitious plan to create a Mediterranean Union based on the model of the European Union with common institutions had to be scaled down due to the opposition of several Member States. Concerns about the duplication of policies and institutions with perhaps complementary, but frequently overlapping or contradictory results made its leaders rethink the partnership's name and the scope of its competences for the new era, which led to the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean.

The Union for the Mediterranean—as the southern regional branch of the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy—operates in four chapters: politics and security, economics and trade, socio-cultural affairs, and justice and home affairs.

At the Barcelona Summit the Euromed partners recognised the crucial role of education in the political, social and economic development

of the Euromed region, as well as the major importance of research, innovation and human resources development for modernisation. However, the issue of education did not receive much attention until the First Euromed Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research in Cairo in 2007,

Springeneration Survey Idea

'Education is a strategic tool to [carry out] the relationship between the two shores of the Mediterranean'

- Male, Age 35–44, Morocco



when the Cairo Declaration laid down the principles and objectives of a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area.⁷²

With the aim of supporting the economic development of the MENA region, the Cairo Declaration emphasised the necessity of reducing disparities in educational achievement between Euro-Mediterranean countries through the use of internationally recognised educational standards. It also encouraged facilitating the mobility and employability of students and researchers while promoting technical and vocational training and cooperation between universities and the private sector. The Declaration set up a rather comprehensive framework, including ideas on establishing centres of excellence in order to uphold the development of a Euro-Mediterranean research area and encouraging student exchanges through the Erasmus Mundus programme. It also promoted the equivalency of the Euromed higher education systems with reference to the Bologna Process and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) through the Tempus programme. Due to the lack of internationally recognised scientists from the MENA region, the Declaration rightly suggested improving cooperation between the EU and the MENA in science, ICT and innovation in order to support the region's modernisation.⁷³ Upon completion of the Declaration a comprehensive policy framework had been created; yet it still needed to be implemented.

⁷² European Union, External Action Service, 'Euro-Mediterranean—Education', accessed at http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/social/education_en.htm on 12 September 2012.

⁷³ European Commission, *Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area: First Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research (Cairo Declaration)* (18 June 2007), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/cairo_declaration.pdf on 12 September 2012.



Policy implementation: From adoption to action

In the years since the adoption of the Cairo Declaration, some objectives have been met but progress has been, according to many, too slow. One reason for this could be the various conflicts that the region has suffered. For example, due to the difficult situation in the Middle East, the Second Euromed Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research, planned for 2009 in Slovenia, did not take place and progress has therefore slowed. Another possible aspect which may have had an impact on the implementation of the Declaration's objectives is the lack of democratic regimes and accountable institutions in the MENA region.

However, it would be unjust to paint such a bleak picture. Despite many hurdles, the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area is the only effective platform from which the MENA countries are able to access EU funding and cooperate on different EU projects under the Tempus and Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) schemes to enhance their higher education and research activities. Interestingly enough, it is also the only platform to offer a round table at which education policymakers from both sides of the Mediterranean can come together. According to several professors from Egypt, the Euromed education area is also the only effective channel for cooperation with other Arab countries, despite the existence of the Arab League and its affiliated organisations.⁷⁴

The geopolitical situation in the MENA region remains difficult today; nevertheless, the democratic wave offers momentum

⁷⁴ This information was gained through informal interviews carried out by the authors of this paper with Egyptian academics in September 2012. The interviewees prefer to remain anonymous.



for developing closer and more effective links across the Euro-Mediterranean area with regard to education. At a time of change and uncertainty, education determines the future, and its level of quality provides an answer as to whether the future lies in economically successful cohesive societies or in repetitive chaos and unrest. Today, the state institutions in post-revolutionary Egypt, Tunisia and Libya seem to support, hopefully in policy design as well as policy implementation, the need to modernise and internationalise their education systems.

The EU, desiring to support successful transitions, including enhancing the education systems of its southern neighbours, has redistributed €600 million of its existing European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) funding and has made additional financial resources of around €1 billion available, with the largest part channelled through the Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) programme.⁷⁵ The majority of the SPRING programme's resources are to support democratic transformation, institution-building, and sustainable and inclusive growth, but will also give assistance to mobility programmes such as Erasmus Mundus and Tempus, and to civil society development. The Neighbourhood Investment Facility has also increased its lending resources with the hope that these will be rapidly translated into investment in infrastructure and small and medium-sized enterprises, thus helping to address unemployment throughout the region. The European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development also share this increased enthusiasm to assist. However, the EU should try harder to bundle its own

⁷⁵ European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Delivering on a New European Neighbourhood Policy*, Communication, JOIN(2012) 14 final (15 May 2012), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/delivering_new_enp_en.pdf on 15 August 2012.



assistance with that of Member States and multilateral donors in order to create more synergy.⁷⁶

Many researchers agree that modernisation and an improvement in quality, including greater flexibility and efficiency of governance, usually go hand in hand with internationalisation and mobility. The following paragraphs will analyse to what extent the MENA countries make use of the EU programmes aimed at supporting mobility and improving the quality of the education systems. This will be followed by a brief analysis of the impact of these programmes on the quality and governance of the MENA education systems.

From the EU programmes

This paper does not attempt to discuss all the EU education programmes covering the MENA region but takes a closer look at the two programmes which are considered the largest in their scale and impact: Erasmus Mundus and Tempus.

1. Erasmus Mundus: Together for mobility

The publication produced by the British Council on the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus Programme's creation rightly says that bringing people together from different backgrounds and cultures enables them to challenge stereotypes, promote inclusion and tackle social disadvantages.⁷⁷ It helps them to learn from different sources and test their assumptions in new situations. The Erasmus Programme is named after the Dutch philosopher who was one of the most brilliant students of his time, living and working in many European countries to

⁷⁶ S. Calleya, 'A Strategic Reassessment of EU Policy in the Mediterranean', *Anna Lindh Digest* 6 (2012), accessed at http://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/150422/Chapter_21_-_Stephen_Calleya.pdf on 30 August 2012.

⁷⁷ British Council, *Erasmus 1987-2012* (2012), accessed at http://www.britishcouncil.org/erasmus_25_alumni_brochure.pdf on 7 September 2012.



expand his knowledge and gain new insights. The Programme is considered by many to be the most influential initiative to have contributed to the building of the European Union.⁷⁸

Since its establishment, the Erasmus Programme has enabled the mobility of over 2.2 million students and 250,000 members of university staff. Currently, over 180,000 students study and work abroad each year through the Erasmus scheme. Part of the Erasmus Programme is Erasmus Mundus, established in 2004, which enables the mobility of students and academics between the EU and the rest of the world. It aims to enhance the quality of European

higher education, and to promote interculturalism and understanding of others, as well as contributing to the international cooperation capacity of

Springeneration Survey Idea

‘The Erasmus programme has encouraged a generation of Europeans to see life in another country by being fully immersed in it. By working and living in Arab Countries, I believe that Europeans would be able to better understand the mindset and culture of these fellow citizens’

- Female, Age 25–34, United Kingdom

higher education institutions in third countries through joint and partnership programmes. Between 2007 and 2011, Erasmus Mundus financed the studies of 1,385 students (including at the doctoral level) from North Africa and the Middle East, as well as study/teaching opportunities (including at the post-doctoral level) for around 200 academics.⁷⁹

There are three actions under the Erasmus Mundus Programme:

Action 1. Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes enable master’s courses and joint doctorates which are operated by

⁷⁸ Erasmus is not only named after the scholar, it also stands for *European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students*.

⁷⁹ European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, ‘Erasmus Mundus Programme: Erasmus Mundus Statistics’, updated 14 June 2012, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/statistics_en.php on 1 September 2012.



consortia of higher education institutions (HEIs) from the EU and elsewhere in the world.

Action 2. Erasmus Mundus Partnerships bring together HEIs from Europe and those from a particular region or geographical ‘lot’. Together, the partnerships manage mobility flows between the two regions at a range of academic levels—undergraduate, postgraduate, doctorate and post-doctorate—and also for academic staff.

Action 3. Erasmus Mundus Attractiveness Projects aim to enhance the attractiveness, profile, image and visibility of European higher education worldwide and provide support to activities related to the international dimension of all aspects of higher education.⁸⁰

Table 1 Erasmus Mundus master’s courses: Students selected per year (Action 1)

	2004–12	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Egypt	155	0	3	8	11	10	7	8	10	98
Tunisia	56	0	1	2	5	6	10	6	1	25
Libya	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	213									

Source: European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, ‘Erasmus Mundus Programme: Erasmus Mundus Statistics’, updated 14 June 2012, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/statistics_en.php on 1 September 2012.

⁸⁰ European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, ‘Erasmus Mundus Programme: About Erasmus Mundus 2009–2013’, updated 18 May 2010, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/programme/about_erasmus_mundus_en.php#objectives on 15 August 2012.



Table 2 Erasmus Mundus joint doctorates: Candidates selected per year (Action 1)

	2010–12	2010	2011	2012
Egypt	3	0	1	2
Tunisia	1	0	1	0
Libya	0	0	0	0
Total	4			

Source: European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, ‘Erasmus Mundus Programme: Erasmus Mundus Statistics’, updated 14 June 2012, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/statistics_en.php on 1 September 2012.

Table 3 Erasmus Mundus scholars (Action 1)

	2004–9	2004–5	2005–6	2006–7	2007–8	2008–9	2009–10
Egypt	7	0	0	0	0	5	2
Tunisia	7	0	0	0	2	3	2
Libya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	14						

Source: European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, ‘Erasmus Mundus Programme: Erasmus Mundus Statistics’, updated 14 June 2012, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/statistics_en.php on 1 September 2012.

As shown in the tables above, the majority of Erasmus Mundus students under Action 1 were master’s students, totalling 213. Only 4 doctoral students and 14 academics have come from the 3 selected countries. Most of the master’s students came from Egypt; nevertheless, in terms of population size, Tunisia sent out more Erasmus Mundus students per capita than Egypt. Libya is clearly lagging behind, with only two master’s students studying abroad under the Erasmus Mundus framework.

Neither Libyan doctoral students nor scholars have taken advantage of Erasmus Mundus scholarships. The main reason behind this almost non-existent cooperation in education between Libya and the EU is the fact that Libya—unlike Egypt



and Tunisia—has not been a full participant of the ENPI until very recently. Moreover, past sanctions which the EU imposed on Libya as a reaction to the arrest of Bulgarian medical personnel in Libya have contributed to a lack of cooperation in various areas, including education. Even since the sanctions have been lifted, cooperation between the EU and Libya has been limited to the issues of migration and HIV-AIDS.

The nature of the Libyan revolution—involving an armed conflict—differed from the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia and impeded the possibility of cooperation until late 2011. Then, in light of the Arab Spring and the new situation in Libya, in July 2012 the European Commission adopted a decision which officially added Libya to the list of countries fully participating in the activities of its regional cooperation projects and programmes

designed for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.⁸¹

However, the security situation remains a challenge in Libya and is having a negative impact on education cooperation and on mobility in particular.

EU officials interviewed for this paper mostly agree that once the security situation in the country improves, Libya should be able to catch up with Egypt and Tunisia in terms of the number of exchanges, university partnerships and other joint educational programmes. They argue that many Libyans are very interested in education reform and in building up

Springeneration Survey Idea

'There should be more in depth relations between the Europeans and Arab countries. They both stand as neighbors. The best way to do so is to study alongside each other—not about each other, but with each other. Maybe establish more European schools in the Arab world, maybe with more affordable fees, to include not only the elite and/or rich classes, but to be able to integrate middle classes into such schools'

- Male, Age 25–34, Egypt

⁸¹ European Commission, *Commission Implementing Decision*, Decision, C(2012)4805 – PE/2012/4316 (13 July 2012), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/aap/2012/aap_2012_enpi-s_en.pdf on 31 August 2012.



cooperation with Europe in this area. Adding this to Libya's income from its oil reserves, the country has both great educational and economic potential.

One can also observe in the previous tables a significant increase in the number of Erasmus Mundus students since the Arab Spring. In the case of Egypt, the increase has been more than tenfold, from 8 students in 2010 to 98 in 2012. A similar increase can be noted in Tunisia. This can be attributed to the greater interest shown by the EU and the increased funds allocated to the region after the Arab Spring; in total €80 million in 2012–13, more than double the amount initially foreseen. The freer society and greater desire of young Tunisians and Egyptians to share their experiences and gain new knowledge from their European counterparts may also have contributed to the rising numbers of applicants.

An analysis of the numbers of Erasmus Mundus master's students from the non-EU Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries reveals that, in the same period, there were more students from the latter two regions than from the MENA region. This could be explained by more funds having been allocated in the past to the EaP and Western Balkan countries, as well as by the regions' greater cultural proximity and values that are more closely shared with the EU. However, the idea behind the Erasmus Mundus Programme is to be exposed to different cultures and societies, as this not only enriches the curriculum, but also the overall personal development of every student. Therefore, exchanges between European and Arab students—and not only in the immediate aftermath of the Arab Spring—should be strongly encouraged and the numbers increased in both directions—from the MENA countries to the EU and vice versa. In this context, it is also important to promote Arabic language instruction in Europe, at least for those European students and scholars who wish to learn the language.



Finally, it is worth mentioning that the real bulk of Erasmus Mundus students studying under Action 1 – nearly 3,500 – came from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (the BRICS countries). The likely reason for this is the greater emphasis these countries have placed on education and its quality in the last decade.

Table 4 Erasmus Mundus master's courses by gender (Action 1)

	2009–12 F / M	2009 F / M	2010 F / M	2011 F / M	2012 F / M
Egypt	33 / 90	1 / 6	3 / 5	4 / 6	25 / 73
Tunisia	30 / 12	7 / 3	4 / 2	1 / 0	18 / 7
Libya	0 / 1	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 1
Total	63/103				

Source: European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 'Erasmus Mundus Programme: Erasmus Mundus Statistics', updated 14 June 2012, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/statistics_en.php on 1 September 2012.

In the period 2009–12 the Erasmus Mundus programme saw more male than female master's students coming from Egypt, Tunisia and Libya (38% female and 62% male). Just over one-third of the Egyptian Erasmus Mundus students were women, whereas Tunisia recorded more female than male students in the years studied; in fact, more than two-thirds were female students. It is difficult to judge the gender balance in Libya, since there was only one master's student supported by Erasmus Mundus. When looking at the fields of study, the numbers of female students fall significantly when it comes to science and technology studies, but this is a global trend and not limited to the MENA region.



Table 5 Erasmus Mundus partnerships: Undergraduate, master's, doctorate, post-doctorate and staff (Action 2)

	2007–11	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Egypt	615	103	79	85	108	240
Tunisia	426	55	70	77	87	137
Libya ⁸²	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1041					

Source: European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 'Erasmus Mundus Programme: Erasmus Mundus Statistics', updated 14 June 2012, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/statistics_en.php on 1 September 2012.

During the period observed, the number of partnerships between universities in Europe and universities in Egypt and Tunisia has gradually increased and is comparable (in many cases even higher) to the number of partnerships created with EaP and Western Balkan universities in the same period.

2. Erasmus for All: Towards a new 'Mediterranean Generation'?

In November 2011, the European Commission presented its proposal for an ambitious new programme—Erasmus for All—for the years 2014 to 2020. This programme is intended to bring together a whole series of hitherto separate schemes, not only in the field of higher education (including Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and bilateral programmes with other countries or continents), but also in school education, vocational education and training, adult education, youth, and European integration studies, as well as grassroots sports as a new addition. Through this unification the number of schemes will be reduced from a total of 75 to just 11 under the Erasmus for All programme.

⁸² For the first time, under the 2012 Call for Proposals, Libya has been included in a regional 'lot' together with four other ENPI countries—Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. A partnership must include at least five HEIs from at least three of these five countries: quality proposals for partnerships including representatives from four countries will be more favourably assessed. The Call for Proposals aims to select four such partnerships, each with a maximum budget of €4.428 million, which is intended to fund at least 175 mobility scholarships.



The unification of the intra-EU and external dimension of higher education programmes is intended to strengthen the 'Erasmus' brand and to bring more coherence and simplicity to the EU's educational programmes. According to the dialogue with Southern Mediterranean countries which was launched in Brussels in July 2011 to provide a regional platform for policy dialogue on education and training, Erasmus for All should significantly increase future opportunities for education, training, youth and sport programmes in the MENA region.⁸³ However, there is the significant danger that while Erasmus for All will mean greater simplification for the European Commission, national agencies, and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (the agency directly responsible for Erasmus Mundus), it will be at the cost of students, schools and universities. It is very likely that the new programmes will move even further in the direction of large grants, favouring sizeable institutions which have the structure and enough personnel to administer large grant applications. The majority of the Members of the European Parliament sitting on the committee for culture and education do not favour the proposal either. They argue that the name Erasmus for All is misleading because it makes a promise it cannot keep: Erasmus will never be 'for all' and will remain a programme for the best performers.

Hopefully, before the programme's eventual implementation in 2014, the European Commission and the European Parliament will come to an agreement and will provide instruments to dilute this danger of 'impersonalisation'. Otherwise, the additional funding for the MENA region, and, in general, the 73% increase in funding for youth training for the period 2014–20, may miss its target.

⁸³ 'Commission Launches New Dialogue on Higher Education with Southern Mediterranean Countries', Europa Press Release, 2 July 2012, accessed at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-732_en.htm on 29 July 2012.



3. Tempus: Together for quality

Another successful educational programme established by the EU is the Trans-European Mobility Programme for University Studies, better known as Tempus. According to the EU's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, Tempus is 'an important element of the EU's external policy' that 'continues to support in priority bottom-up multilateral cooperation initiatives'. The programme was started more than two decades ago in Central Europe to guide post-Communist countries towards a modern higher educational system. Since then, it has been extended to the Middle East and North Africa. Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories joined the programme in 2002, followed by Israel in 2008 and Libya in 2010. However, the MENA countries have started from a very different, often worse, position than did post-Communist Europe. Poverty and the lack of development have been more severe in many places, accompanied by wider religious, cultural and social gaps between the MENA region and Europe. Therefore, the two different regions have required two very different responses.

Over the period 2002–11 the EU allocated €143 million to the region, of which €87 million was assigned to projects in the Middle East and €56 million to North Africa. The money has been used on 221 joint projects targeted at institutions and 63 structural measures targeted at the national level. The EU assistance under Tempus has also financed over 600 individual mobility grants for MENA citizens.

The programme's three priorities focus on curricular, governance and higher education reform and are implemented through joint projects, structural changes and accompanying measures. Institutional cooperation between the EU and partner countries, which focuses on the reform of higher



education systems and universities, is supported by national teams of Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs). These are usually rectors, vice-rectors, deans, senior academics, directors of study, international relations officers and university students. They provide a pool of expertise, promoting and enhancing progress towards further modernisation of the higher education sector. HEREs benefit from training, technical assistance, briefing and networking, and participate in the development of policies and reforms in their own country. They are also invited to devise Bologna development strategies with their peers, as well as with non-academic bodies such as industrial, cultural or social organisations, as long as they are in line with national strategies. HEREs design and deliver training courses for other experts who are actively involved in the promotion of higher education reforms in their own countries.⁸⁴ Tempus is managed locally and monitoring of the projects in partner countries is in the hands of the National Tempus Offices, which act as contact points in each partner country.⁸⁵

For the purpose of this study, only Egypt, Libya and Tunisia will be analysed further.

⁸⁴ European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 'Tempus Higher Education Reform Experts', updated 24 May 2012, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/programme/heres_en.php on 6 October 2012.

⁸⁵ European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 'Partner Countries' National Tempus Offices', accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/tools/contacts_national_tempus_offices_en.php#Egypt on 6 October 2012.



Table 6 Participation in Tempus: Number of projects in which one or several institutions in the country have been involved (as a coordinator, contractor or partner)

	Tempus I and II 1990–9	Tempus III 2000–6	Tempus IV 2008–12
Egypt	0	65	33
Tunisia	0	31	31
Libya	0	0	3
Total		163	

Source: European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 'Erasmus Mundus Programme: Erasmus Mundus Statistics', updated 14 June 2012, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/statistics_en.php on 1 September 2012.

Between 2002 and 2012, the EU accepted proposals for 163 projects to be run under Tempus in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. This number is comparable to the numbers of Tempus projects run in the EaP and Western Balkan countries in the same period. In terms of the areas which were granted EU funding in the MENA region under Tempus, priority was given to teacher training and higher education reforms (over 30% of the selected proposals); followed by economy, industry and enterprise (15%); and social work, vocational training and lifelong learning (10%). ICT, media, libraries and e-learning were not given a high priority, counting for only 5% of the proposals selected. A vast majority of Tempus projects in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya have been joint projects aimed at curriculum development, enhancing university governance and creating better links between higher education and society at large.

Egypt. In Egypt, a number of Tempus projects have been accepted, most of which are still running. Tempus has enabled around 20 new degree programmes to be created, 30 curricula programme enhancements, over 1,500 bi-directional mobility flows and around 90 educational laboratories to be



created or redeveloped.⁸⁶ The ongoing projects range from the creation of e-laboratories for physics and engineering education to projects to bridge the gap between academia and industry, and on to the development of a diploma in public policy and children's rights. In the four calls for proposals under Tempus, Egyptian applications have represented almost 10% of all applications from all countries. Most recently, however, the much-needed planned education sector reforms to improve the quality of educational services and learning outcomes, and the effective management of public spending in education—supported by the EU through a €140 million sector budget support programme—have been postponed for one year.⁸⁷

Libya. It is not really possible to evaluate the impact of Tempus in Libya since it only became part of the programme in 2010 and project implementation was hindered due to the volatile situation in 2011. Now there are three projects being implemented in relation to the enhancement of Libya's education system under Tempus, with hope for more to come in the future.

Tunisia. Under Tempus, Tunisia has, since 2002, developed a number of new degrees at 80% of Tunisian universities, updated the course content at not less than 40% of its universities, and created or improved the quality of training courses at around 60% of its universities. These reforms were mainly in areas such as nanoscience, ICT, agricultural science,

⁸⁶ European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, *Brief Summary of Tempus Impact Study in Tunisia, Tunisie*, (2012) accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/impact/tunisia.pdf on 5 August 2012.

⁸⁷ European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Staff Working Document: Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Egypt, Progress in 2011 and Recommendations for Action*, SWD(2012) 113 final (15 May 2012), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_egypt_en.pdf on 12 October 2012.



biotechnology and mathematics.⁸⁸ Tunisian academics particularly appreciate how the Tempus projects have taught them to work in networks, and praise Tempus's support of young teachers, staff and students in projects on governance reform and the content of university degrees and courses. The Tempus projects on engaging with ICT and distance learning in the process of building a society of knowledge and technological innovation have also received positive feedback.

One of the problems with Tempus, however, is that it often has an 'elite effect'. Although it represents the seal of good quality, its projects are often not big enough to have a serious institutional impact. Another problem is that there are only a few projects that focus on student activity and involvement in university life and its structures, which is what Tempus should promote more actively in the MENA region.

Notwithstanding certain limitations, Tempus has helped to create closer ties and synergies through intra-regional networks in the MENA. One of the projects supporting regional cooperation is led by Cardiff Metropolitan University and aims to empower leaders in higher education, enabling university leaders, management and executives to come together in a virtual network to discuss and learn about advanced EU-standard management tools, methods and attitudes. Another intra-regional project seeks to promote gender balance in higher education through the establishment of a regional club for female leaders, known as the Women in Higher Education Elite Leaders (WHEEL).⁸⁹ Another objective of Tempus is to involve women in developing the materials to be used in e-learning modules in order to ensure that women's needs in

⁸⁸ European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, *Brief Summary of Tempus Impact Study in Tunisia*.

⁸⁹ M. Ajbaili, 'EU Program Seeks to Modernize Higher Education in Middle East and North Africa', *Al Arabiya*, 1 May 2012, accessed at <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/05/01/211514.html> on 14 October 2012.



higher education are addressed. One should also not forget the Mediterranean Innovation Alliance which aims to bring innovative thinking into the region's higher education systems and to enhance universities' abilities to encourage and conduct collaboration with their economic environments. It aims to do this through the establishment of centres of excellence in knowledge transfer at 12 universities in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Algeria.

Towards better governance and improved (e)quality

Over the years of its engagement in the MENA region, the EU has directly or indirectly contributed to certain improvements in the quality of and, perhaps to a lesser extent, better governance of the region's education systems. With the support of the EU, weak and outdated education systems in Egypt and Tunisia have been improved. However, unlike Egypt and Tunisia, Libya has not benefited from the regional cooperation projects and programmes of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership under ENPI until very recently, when the European Commission decision in July 2012 added Libya to the list of eligible countries. Prior to this, in late 2011, the EU allocated €30 million to supporting civil society in Libya, which simply had not existed before the revolution. Significant funds (€2.4 million) also went to projects aimed at enhancing the quality of primary education.

In a broader sense, the EU has also contributed to improving the availability of basic education, with its emphasis on girls and the lower classes significantly increasing literacy rates across the region in recent years. However, a sizeable gender gap in educational attainment still persists,⁹⁰ as do social

⁹⁰ World Economic Forum, *Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap* (Geneva, 2005).



inequalities, especially in Egypt, where over 60% of investment in education is spent on private tutoring.⁹¹ The children whose parents can afford to pay for private teachers are much better equipped to enter university or to find a job.

There is also clear evidence that those students who have taken advantage of mobility programmes under the Erasmus Mundus scheme have found employment faster than those who have not gained such experience. In times of high unemployment in many parts of the world, just 3% of former Erasmus Mundus students are unemployed.⁹² Erasmus Mundus not only enables students to learn a foreign language, but also makes them more flexible and adaptable to new situations and cultures. It helps them to develop confidence to take the initiative, to think critically and to work independently. Such an experience strengthens a student's curriculum vitae, making a former Erasmus student more attractive to employers.

This serves as the basis for the argument that Erasmus Mundus students from the MENA are more able to bridge the existing gap between what their home-country universities teach them and what the labour

Springeneration Survey Idea
'Education and unemployment. Start resolving those two big problems [in MENA countries] and Europe will have a friend for life!'
- Male, Age 35–44, Tunisia

market needs. According to the results of a survey conducted by the European Commission released in October 2011,⁹³

⁹¹ T. Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From Nasser to Mubarak*, revised edition (Yale, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁹² European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, *Erasmus Mundus: Cluster on Employability* (2010–11), accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/clusters/documents/employability_cluster_summary.pdf on 20 September 2012.

⁹³ European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, *Clustering Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses and Attractiveness Projects, Lot 2: Employability* (October 2011), accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/clusters/documents/publication_version_employability_survey_results.pdf on 4 October 2012.



the major benefits of the Erasmus Mundus scheme in terms of career are the international experience, intercultural and innovative competences, and professional expertise it brings. Moreover, the courses taught at universities which offer Erasmus Mundus programmes have to be constantly updated and improved as part of a regular evaluation process. Consequently, they are obliged to follow current trends and thus respond better to market needs. Therefore, Erasmus Mundus seems to be a highly efficient training programme for skilled workers and researchers from non-European countries. Looking to South-East Asia, and South, West and Central Africa the programme holds great potential with regard to employability for the developing regions. If the programme is used more broadly in the MENA countries, they could follow the same higher employability trend.

Both Erasmus Mundus and Tempus—which has helped to create links between higher education institutions and the world of work, and to promote the Bologna Process principles—also give smaller universities the opportunity to become truly international. In addition to creating partnerships between existing universities under Tempus, the EU has established the Euro-Mediterranean University in Slovenia, which is expected to be followed by a second Euro-Mediterranean University in Morocco.

There are also some private EU Member State universities, such as the German University in Cairo (GUC), established in cooperation with the State Universities of Ulm and Stuttgart, and the French and British Universities, both of which are also in Cairo. These universities have been very successful in introducing education of a very good quality, and their graduates have always had good career prospects. For example the GUC, which actively tries to establish links between the university and business/industry, is among the top 100 universities in the MENA region. It also enables students



to undertake part of their studies in Germany and, last year, it established a branch in Berlin to foster greater cooperation. However, the university is only accessible to upper middle-class young people as it is very expensive compared to public universities. This is the problem with all private universities in Egypt. The French University in Cairo may be a slight exception since it is not a profit-seeking institution and, in addition to providing high-quality education, it is also actively engaged in many community development programmes and has been awarded several international prizes. The other problem with many private universities is the limited number of faculties and specialised pathways, and thus the lower number of students. Due to the smaller number of students, the impact of these universities is also limited. Therefore, there is a lot of scope for some European-funded universities that would be affordable for less-privileged youth. Such universities should not only provide a high-quality university education but also human rights education, while also advocating democracy and its principles.

5 Between perils and opportunities



Even though mobility in the field of knowledge has been part of the history of the Mediterranean universities since their foundation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, significant obstacles remain. One of the challenges they face is the prevalence of south-to-north mobility and subsequently, on one side of the Mediterranean, the fear of brain drain and, on the other side, anxiety over security and uncontrolled migration. This can be linked to the serious difficulties faced when obtaining visas and residence permits for MENA students in Europe. However, some progress has been achieved in this matter since the revolutions. The EU has offered to engage in partnership dialogues on migration, mobility and security, including visa issues, with Egypt and Tunisia, and Libya is likely to be joining in soon as well. A joint declaration opening the way to mobility partnerships with Tunisia should be signed in the coming months, but Egypt has so far declined to enter into concrete discussions.

On the other hand, encouraging flows of students from the EU to the MENA region is often more problematic due to the lack of modern laboratories and other facilities in the MENA countries. This discourages European students from undertaking part of their studies in one of the MENA countries, especially those studying in the fields of science and engineering.

Particular obstacles, especially for MENA students, include financial issues, awareness about mobility programmes, the conditions of mobility and incompatibility between the higher education systems. For example, none of the three countries analysed is a Bologna-signatory country, and each of them differs in their level of integration in the Bologna Process. Tunisia is the most advanced, having the Bologna Process and the Bologna-cycle structure fully embedded in its education system, whereas Egypt simply implements the Bologna Process through ad hoc groups under the supervision



of the Ministry of Education. Libya, on the other hand, has no particular mechanism supporting the implementation of the Bologna Process. Tunisia is also most advanced when it comes to the use of ECTS. More than 75% of universities in Tunisia use ECTS for transfer and accumulation purposes, which guarantees easier mobility for Tunisian students. Neither Egypt, which uses another credit system, nor Libya, which does not have a credit system at all, can benefit from the ECTS transfer of credits to improve mobility. Full implementation of the Bologna Process, including adoption of ECTS and quality assurance practices, as well as the recognition of foreign qualifications, would certainly contribute to a higher quality of education in the MENA region, and therefore should be a priority.

Recommendations



The main efforts of the MENA governments until now have focused on building schools in remote areas, allowing the private sector to build schools and universities, bridging the gender gap, recruiting teachers, and increasing primary education enrolment rates. Unfortunately, these efforts have neglected the quality of teaching and learning materials, the importance of a motivational educational environment, and the positive effects of student and teacher mobility. They have also failed to address the realities of the modern working world and it is this that has contributed to pervasive youth unemployment.

In most of these MENA reform efforts, the EU has guided the MENA countries and has offered its support. Without the EU's assistance, many positive initiatives could not have taken place. However, the EU has not, as yet, managed to address several serious imperfections in the MENA education systems which remain an obstacle to progress. Critics of the EU place the blame for this on the inefficiency of the EU's financial assistance, while the EU's supporters see it as a failure of the previous regimes in the MENA region. Who is right no longer matters. The revolutions have started a new chapter in the EU–MENA relationship and it is crucial to look ahead and come up with effective solutions.

The focus now needs to shift towards performance-based incentives and public accountability enhancement while promoting international cooperation, and reducing the gap between supply and the demands of the labour market.

The EU as a policy advocate

Through its involvement in the region, the EU should support quality enhancement and advocate a shift from hierarchical



state control to network-based governance in the MENA schools and universities. This could be done through the following policies and measures:

- *Decentralisation.* The EU should advise the MENA countries on the drafting of a roadmap towards the greater decentralisation of their universities. Such a roadmap would also identify the areas (such as recruitment of teachers/professors, budgetary control and the design of the curricula) which would be more appropriately handled at the university level rather than the national one. According to many researchers, when the autonomy of universities is restricted, there is always academic stagnation. Therefore, the EU should help the MENA countries to take this concrete step towards greater academic freedom and institutional autonomy in higher education.
- *Cooperation.* The EU should work towards establishing more European schools and universities in the MENA countries. However, it should perhaps place even greater emphasis on improving the quality of the existing schools and universities through the network-based governance of public–private–NGO partnerships or government–EU partnerships.
- *Participation.* The EU should provide guidance on how to empower the Parent–Teacher Associations (PTAs) in the MENA, thus ensuring their meaningful participation. Until now, despite the implementation of some participatory initiatives in recent years, PTAs have mostly been used to urge officials to build new schools to reduce overcrowding, to sign agreements to keep small children with their siblings, and to establish resource committees to assist poor children. Other topics, such as the content of curricula, teachers’ performance and the monitoring of school activities by parents, have not been included in PTA discussions. Likewise, students’



involvement in monitoring and evaluating different aspects of the educational process is almost negligible in the MENA region.

- *Diversification*. The EU should explore ways in which to develop alternative models of informal education for those young people not in education, and support and give training to the NGOs which offer or would like to offer skills development and training for young people with the aim of making them better-equipped for the needs of today's labour market.

- *Incentivisation*. The EU should assist MENA schools and universities in designing policies which favour the best performers by offering performance-based incentives. At the same time, the EU itself should motivate schools and universities by providing more incentives for better performance, for example, special financial rewards, special mobility programmes for universities, and so on. Individual teachers' performances should also be motivated by short-term or longer-term mobility, financial and other benefits. Schools and universities with lower quality teaching which have shown an interest in improving their results should have the opportunity to receive additional training for their academic and non-academic staff, and other forms of guidance.

- *Alternative financing*. The EU should help enhance rationality and efficiency in resource allocation and promote more cost-effective behaviour in the education systems of the MENA countries. Since public funding has reached its limits, the MENA countries urgently need to diversify their funding sources and to find supplementary contributions from the private sector, in the form of cost-sharing mechanisms, partnerships with firms and economic institutions, or the provision of private education.



- *Better management and more transparency.* The EU should help the MENA countries to design mechanisms for better management practices, increased transparency in the use of resources, quality control and greater accountability.
- *Integration.* The EU should continue its efforts to promote Mediterranean voluntary convergence with the Bologna Process, the integration of the MENA countries into the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education Area, and improvement of the knowledge and use of Tempus and the Erasmus, Jean Monnet and Marie Curie schemes.⁹⁴

The EU as a partner

The EU should not only serve as a framework setter and advocate of change through its policies but it should also be a partner in educating youth on both sides of the Mediterranean.

- *Knowledge sharing.* The EU should share best practices and experience gathered through its past efforts to improve the quality of education in the MENA region and elsewhere in the world. The EU, among other things, should offer simple and feasible guidelines on how to increase universities' revenues, including examples from EU Member States.
- *Tailor-made mobility.* As many of the comments in the Springgeneration survey indicated, there is also a need to adjust the existing mobility programmes to the needs of the MENA countries and to make them affordable for the whole of society. If the EU wants to act as a true partner, it needs to encourage mobility in both directions. Due to the lack of laboratories and

⁹⁴ For more information on these schemes see: European Commission, 'Dialogue with Southern Mediterranean Countries on Higher Education', updated 11 September 2012, accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/southdialogue_en.htm on 12 September 2012.



teaching/learning materials, and the overall lower quality of education, mobility from the EU to the MENA has its limitations. Therefore, short-term mobility should be encouraged in terms of study trips, winter/summer schools organised alternately in the EU and the MENA, simulation exercises and so on. In terms of longer-term mobility, the mobility of EU students should be strongly encouraged, particularly among those studying the Arab language, literature and culture; Islamic and Middle Eastern studies; Islamic law; and ancient history.

- *Mobility follow-up.* Upon their return to their home country, students, academics, teachers and others should (i) be integrated into the labour market, (ii) have the opportunity to share their experiences with others, and (iii) be encouraged to help younger students with mobility applications and/or serve as their tutors by sharing the knowledge they have acquired with them. A more interactive platform for Erasmus Mundus students and alumni associations should be established. There is also a need to establish local mechanisms for formal recognition of the periods abroad, including non-institutional mobility.

- *Skills match.* The EU's training and internships should lead to higher employment rates among the MENA graduates. Therefore, EU-funded programmes should be linked with vocational training and internship programmes aimed at equipping graduates with the qualifications and skills demanded by the MENA labour market. European and MENA companies should be encouraged through incentives, for example, tax deductions, to provide opportunities for young graduates to experience an internship.

- *Cross-institutional cooperation.* Tempus should add more emphasis to the cross-institutional cooperation dimension — for example, the cooperation of universities with other research institutions from different regions, different ministries, the



private sector and NGOs.⁹⁵ This will guarantee the contribution of universities to bi-regional and national development plans.

- *Easy visas.* The EU should work towards simplification of the visa regulations for the MENA students and teachers travelling under EU-funded programmes. In particular, visas for students, academics and teachers travelling to the EU for a short stay should follow simplified procedures. Multi-entry visas should also be available to those travelling regularly for study trips, training, conferences and workshops. It is recommended that the visa fee for young people under 25 years travelling to Europe for educational purposes be waived. The High Representative and the European Commission have invited EU Member States to make more systematic use of the possibilities provided by the European Visa Code, so hopefully some results of this will be seen in the near future.
- *Intra-regional cooperation.* Besides promoting EU–MENA education cooperation, the EU should assist in building intra-regional education partnerships and research cooperation, establishing regional universities and centres of excellence, and promoting mobility between the MENA countries.
- *E-learning.* The EU should help to design, pilot and implement an e-learning tool to help the MENA schools and universities assess their levels of e-maturity and guide them in improving them, in line with the existing European e-learning strategy.

⁹⁵ There are positive trends in Tempus-NGO cooperation. For example, several Egyptian NGOs have joined Tempus projects. However, the problem is that senior university professors are still reluctant to exercise such partnerships.



The EU as a doer

If past EU reform support has not generated enough economic return for the MENA's individuals and society, it should be critically assessed and future cooperation should be redrawn based on a better policy mix. Meeting educational objectives does not always correlate positively with the available funding.⁹⁶ Therefore, it is not only the amount of money that the EU is injecting into the region which determines the success of the reform, but the mix of measures which are taken and how they are prioritised.

The Dialogue on Higher Education with Southern Mediterranean Countries, which was launched by the European Commission with the aim of coordinating all of its ongoing educational programmes and suggesting new ones, is a brilliant idea. However, it is not enough. The EU should not only be an advocate of change and a partner in supporting new policies and programmes, but also an active and effective doer, being able to respond quickly to the ever-changing environment. In this context this paper offers a series of proposals (and a suggested name for each proposal) which the EU could consider:

- Assisting the MENA countries with identifying the skills gap⁹⁷ in the desired sectors and formulating training needs, followed by offering tailor-made training programmes.

⁹⁶ For example, Saudi Arabia, which has a relatively high per capita income, performed less well than Tunisia, which has a lower per capita income.

⁹⁷ Interviews in the Strategic Planning Unit of the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education revealed that the serious lack of accurate skills which are urgently needed for the universities to redesign and update their curricula was highlighted five years ago by independent OECD experts as one of the major problems that should be tackled immediately. According to the interviewees, the problem still exists and is considered one of the major problems for which EU assistance is needed.



- Providing teacher training and reforming teachers colleges. The EU can offer its teachers, professors and other experts to train teachers in the MENA region. The EU should help to introduce new tools for on-the-job training and for planning teachers' supply and demand within the MENA region's political and social contexts. At the same time, it should assist in reforming and building the capacity of the teachers colleges. Additionally, through existing programmes like FP7 and some local initiatives,⁹⁸ it should help to link MENA professors with the private sector by offering short-term industry work experience especially for younger staff. This will allow them to see the skills that are required in key jobs, keep up-to-date on the latest developments outside the classroom and be better placed to equip their students to meet labour market demands. It is equally important to create, with the assistance of the EU, new channels for parents and students to access information, and to monitor and evaluate teaching practices in a more fruitful way, in order to hold teachers accountable for their work.⁹⁹

- Creating a '*fit for purpose*' group: the EU would put together a pool of European teachers, academics, businesspeople, politicians, civil society representatives, student representatives and other experts to share their knowledge, concerns and challenges with each other, thus using education to form a bridge. With support from businesses, the EU should create a Euromed portal for educators, providing free ideas for lessons, professional development opportunities, helpful videos, educational tools and even a social network for teachers. There is also a need to ensure that the portal will be publicised,

⁹⁸ One of the very successful recent initiatives in Egypt for local cross-sector links is the European Egyptian Innovation Fund hosted by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and funded by the European Commission.

⁹⁹ Some professors confirmed that these evaluations are already taking place but because of the huge number of students in some faculties, the personnel needed to analyse the results gained from these evaluations and obtain sufficient funds to cover their work are not available. Therefore, the faculties do not fully benefit from such evaluations.



which could be achieved through a widespread media campaign.

- Offering training to the media and press in MENA countries and discussing with them the ways in which a credible education-oriented press could improve independent university systems.
- Using EU financial support more effectively and broadly to enhance school facilities such as computer and science labs as well as workshops for crafts. At the same time, the EU needs to provide training for their technical staff and maintenance managers.
- Introducing creativity and innovation programmes: The EU could, for example, offer training, advice and financial help to start-up education entrepreneurs from the MENA through a '*Something in the Zeitgeist*' programme in order to help the MENA countries pitch and create their own education-technology businesses. It also could - together with European and MENA businesses - establish a '*Euromed Youth Award in Innovation*' in which two young innovators from the MENA and the EU work together on an innovative and implementable proposal.¹⁰⁰
- Introducing new mobility schemes for non-university staff and graduates as well as looking at possibilities to offer mobility schemes with affordable fees for less-privileged MENA students.

¹⁰⁰ The EU has already started a successful initiative for cooperation with Alexandria University in which its professors and students can contact European universities, research centres and representatives of industry to convert their ideas and prototypes into real products. The problem in spreading this initiative to other universities in the region is, according to the experts interviewed, bureaucracy and a fear of initiating new projects in what remains a relatively rigid environment.



- Making available some smaller EU grants under a ‘*Quick Little Money*’ programme for short-term internships, NGOs’ educational projects and so on.
- Encouraging the establishment of ‘*centres of excellence*’ which would collaborate with EU universities, research institutes and think-tanks on common projects.¹⁰¹ ‘*Forums of dialogue*’ between young leaders from Europe and the MENA region should be part of such centres in order to build closer relationships and generate ideas for projects that will integrate the European and Arab worlds. Young Arabs who have studied and worked in Europe should be used as ‘ambassadors of cooperation’ in these forums.

¹⁰¹ According to several researchers we interviewed who worked within the FP6 and FP7 frameworks, the biggest problem in establishing centres of excellence and forging greater EU-MENA educational cooperation in a broader sense is the very bureaucratic environment inside public research centres and public universities. Sometimes it takes a month or more to obtain an official approval to move one step forward in a research project.

**By way of
conclusion,
or it takes
two to
tango . . .**



What is true is that both on paper and in terms of policy instruments, much of what is needed already exists. At the same time, the results of the Springeneration survey conducted by the CES reveal that the MENA youth see an urgent need to improve and strengthen Euro-Arab cooperation in the field of education. Something does not fit here. One reason for the conflict between what has been done and what is still in demand is the fact that many of the EU policy instruments and concrete initiatives have not been implemented in practice as they were originally designed. Sometimes the conditions have not been very favourable for changes in the Southern Mediterranean. Local observers from the MENA region view the lack of political will and accountability as a major reason for the failures in the education system, and the mismatch between the educational output and market needs.

Based on the statistics included in the earlier parts of this paper, one reason for this conflict between supply and demand might lie in the low numbers of students, academics and university staff joining the EU programmes when compared with the total numbers of students enrolled in higher education in the three countries examined. A second reason is that they have never been fully integrated in the medium-term plans for improving national education systems. This has caused EU initiatives to remain scattered without forming a coherent whole that can effectively help to push for upgrades to the whole system. Another reason might be that those projects which have been implemented have often remained invisible: frequently, they have not left the boundaries of the university concerned.

The EU and the educational institutions involved should not forget that the reforms, exchange programmes and other education projects are about students and for students. Since the revolutions, the EU has significantly increased its



support of Erasmus Mundus by an additional €40 million for 2012 and 2013, taking total spending to €80 million a year; and of Tempus by an additional €12.5 million for 2012 and 2013, taking total spending to €29 million a year.

The EU should listen carefully to young people when making decisions about how to spend this additional money.

Perhaps it should also put aside a small percentage of this money for a visibility and clarification campaign to prevent the programmes from going unnoticed or being misunderstood.

As Stephen Calleya points out in his recent paper, the revolutions in the Arab world do not call for Europe to reinvent the wheel, but do call for a rethink of the EU's hierarchy of policy priorities and of the manner in which such policies have been carried out. On the MENA side, let us hope that the new regimes will prove to be fair, open and reliable partners in the Euro-Arab tango. This is very important because it is not all about education. A good education system does not—as the World Bank's 2002 report pointed out—guarantee economic development. An educated workforce in a dysfunctional environment will produce high unemployment and costly youth unrest, not high growth and wages. This was very clearly proved by the youth revolts in the spring of 2011.

A large, dark teal, stylized number '8' graphic is centered on the page. The number is composed of two thick, rounded horizontal bars, each with a circular cutout in the center. The word 'Bibliography' is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the number.

Bibliography



Abdessalem, T., 'Financing Higher Education in Tunisia', Working Paper 551, Economic Research Forum (Cairo, 2010), accessed at http://www.erf.org.eg/CMS/uploads/pdf/1286702600_551.pdf on 21 August 2012 .

Ajbaili, M., 'EU Program Seeks to Modernize Higher Education in Middle East and North Africa', *Al Arabiya*, 1 May 2012, accessed at <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/05/01/211514.html> on 14 October 2012.

Akkari, A., 'Education in the Middle East and North Africa: The Current Situation and Future Challenges', *International Education Journal* 5/2 (2004), 144–53.

Anderson, J. A., 'Accountability in Education', Education Policy Series 1, The International Academy of Education and the International Institute for Education Planning (Paris; Brussels, 2005), accessed at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001409/140986e.pdf> on 13 August 2012.

British Council, *Erasmus 1987-2012* (2012), accessed at http://www.britishcouncil.org/erasmus_25_alumni_brochure.pdf on 7 September 2012.

Calleya, S., 'A Strategic Reassessment of EU Policy in the Mediterranean', *Anna Lindh Digest* 6 (2012), accessed at http://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/150422/Chapter_21_-_Stephen_Calleya.pdf on 30 August 2012.

Campus France, 'The Erasmus Mundus Student and Alumni Experience in France', September 2010, accessed at http://ressources.campusfrance.org/publi_institu/agence_cf/notes/en/note_25_en.pdf on 31 August 2012.



'Commission Launches New Dialogue on Higher Education with Southern Mediterranean Countries', Europa Press Release, 2 July 2012, accessed at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-732_en.htm on 29 July 2012.

Egypt, Ministry of Education, *National Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education Reform 2007-2012* (2007), accessed at <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Egypt/EgyptStrategicPlanPre-universityEducation.pdf> on 29 August 2012.

Egypt, Ministry of Higher Education, *Establishment* (2011), accessed at <http://www.egy-mhe.gov.eg/english/index-e.html> on 21 September 2012.

Egypt, National Center for Educational Research and Development, *National Report of Arab Republic of Egypt from 1990 to 2000* (2001), accessed at <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/international/ice/natrap/Egypt.pdf> on 24 September 2012.

European Commission, *Commission Implementing Decision, Decision*, C(2012)4805 – PE/2012/4316 (13 July 2012), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/aap/2012/aap_2012_enpi-s_en.pdf on 31 August 2012.

European Commission, 'Dialogue with Southern Mediterranean Countries on Higher Education', updated 11 September 2012, accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/southdialogue_en.htm on 12 September 2012.

European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, *Brief Summary of Tempus Impact Study in Tunisia, Tunisie*, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/impact/tunisia.pdf on 5 August 2012.



European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, *Clustering Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses and Attractiveness Projects, Lot 2: Employability* (October 2011), accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/clusters/documents/publication_version_employability_survey_results.pdf on 4 October 2012.

European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, *Erasmus Mundus: Cluster on Employability* (2010–11), accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/clusters/documents/employability_cluster_summary.pdf on 20 September 2012.

European Commission, Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency, 'Erasmus Mundus Programme: About Erasmus Mundus 2009–2013', updated 18 May 2010, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/programme/about_erasmus_mundus_en.php#objectives on 15 August 2012.

European Commission, Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency, 'Erasmus Mundus Programme: Erasmus Mundus Statistics', updated 14 June 2012, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/statistics_en.php on 1 September 2012.

European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, *Higher Education in Libya* (July 2012), accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/overview/libya_overview_of_hes_final.pdf on 14 August 2012.



European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 'Partner Countries' National Tempus Offices', accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/tools/contacts_national_tempus_offices_en.php#Egypt on 6 October 2012.

European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 'Tempus Higher Education Reform Experts', updated 24 May 2012, accessed at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/programme/heres_en.php on 6 October 2012.

European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, Tunisia Tempus Office, *Higher Education in Tunisia* (Brussels, 2012).

European Commission, EuropeAid, *Education Enhancement Programme in Egypt* (2010), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/case-studies/egypt_education_en.pdf on 22 September 2012.

European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, *Libya Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme 2011-2013* (2011), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/2011_enpi_csp_nip_libya_en.pdf on 20 September 2012.

European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 'ENP Package, Country Progress Report – Egypt', Press Release, 15 May 2012, accessed at [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-12-333_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-333_en.htm?locale=en) on 9 August 2012.



European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Delivering on a New European Neighbourhood Policy*, JOIN(2012) 14 final, 15 May 2012, accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/delivering_new_enp_en.pdf on 15 August 2012.

European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Staff Working Document: Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Egypt, Progress in 2011 and Recommendations for Action*, SWD(2012) 113 final (15 May 2012), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_egypt_en.pdf on 12 October 2012.

European Commission, *Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education & Research Area: First Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research (Cairo Declaration)* (18 June 2007), accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/cairo_declaration.pdf on 12 September 2012.

European Council, *Madrid European Council, 15 and 16 December 1995, Presidency Conclusions, Annexes 11-15* (16 December 1995), accessed at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/mad4_en.htm on 2 October 2012.

European Training Foundation, *Building a Competitiveness Framework for Education and Training in Egypt* (2011), accessed at: [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/90A5FF8C30FE1BC7C12579DD00352EF1/\\$file/Competitiveness%20framework%20for%20education%20in%20Egypt.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/90A5FF8C30FE1BC7C12579DD00352EF1/$file/Competitiveness%20framework%20for%20education%20in%20Egypt.pdf) on 4 August 2012



European Training Foundation, 'European Neighbourhood South', accessed at http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Neighbourhood_Region on 4 October 2012.

European Union, External Action Service, 'Euro-Mediterranean – Education', accessed at http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/social/education_en.htm on 12 September 2012.

Iskandar, L., 'Egypt: Where and Who are the World's Illiterates?', Paper commissioned for the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006, Literacy for Life* (Paris: UNESCO, 2006), accessed at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/0014_146010e.pdf on 21 August 2012.

Jallade, L., Radi, M. and Cuenin, S., *National Education Policies and Programmes and International Cooperation: What Role for UNESCO?*, (Paris: UNESCO, 2001).

Jones, K., 'Does the Libyan Education System Need an Extreme Makeover?', *Libyan Tweep Forum*, 25 November 2011, accessed at <http://tweepforum.ly/opinion/does-the-libyan-education-system-need-an-extreme-makeover/> on 2 August 2012.

Kohstall, F., 'Free Transfer, Limited Mobility: A Decade of Higher Education Reform in Egypt and Morocco', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 131 (2012), 91–109.

Libya, The General People's Committee of Education, *The Development of Education: National Report of Libya* (2008), accessed at http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/libya_NR08.pdf on 21 August 2012.



Loveluck, L., 'Education in Egypt: Key Challenges', Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House (London, 2012).

Masri, M. et al., 'Case Studies on the Arab States (Jordan, Tunisia, Oman, and Egypt) and Regional Synthesis Report', prepared for the STRATREAL Foundation and UNESCO (2010), accessed at http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/pdf/EPE_Component_One_English_14_May_2010_01.pdf on 2 October 2012.

Megahed, N., 'Secondary Education Reforms in Egypt: Rectifying Inequality of Educational and Employment Opportunities', in C. Acedo (ed.), *Case Studies in Secondary Education Reform* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2002), 44–72, accessed at <http://faculty.ksu.edu.sa/Youssefsayed/DocLib1/%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9%20%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9%20%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%8A.pdf> on 21 August 2012.

Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation and United Nations Development Programme, 'Arab Knowledge Report 2010/2011: Education and Preparation of Future Generations for the Knowledge Society' (2012), accessed at http://204.200.211.31/Update_March_2012/AKR%202011/AKR_%20English.PDF on 21 September 2012.

National Center for Pedagogical Innovation and Educational Research, 'Creation and Mission', updated 1 August 2012, accessed at <http://www.cnipre.edunet.tn/siteen/index.php?id=45> on 9 August 2012.



OECD, *Higher Education in Egypt: Report of the 2008-09 International Review* (22 March 2010), accessed at <http://www.oecd.org/education/educationeconomyandsociety/44868528.pdf> on 15 August 2012.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Contribution of UNESCO: Tunisia', Universal Periodic Review, 13th session (21 May–1 June 2012), accessed at http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session13/TN/UNESCO_UPR_TUN_S13_2012_UNESCO_E.pdf on 21 September 2012.

Osman, T., *Egypt on the Brink: From Nasser to Mubarak*, revised edition (Yale, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011).

Oukil, M., 'Arab Countries can Perform Better with Clear Emphasis on Innovation, Entrepreneurship and an Evolving Culture', *International Journal of E-education, E-business, E-management and E-learning* 1/2 (2011), 115–20.

'Syrian Students Encouraged to Apply for Erasmus Mundus', *ANSAMED.info*, 25 September 2012, accessed at http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/nations/europe/2012/09/25/Syrian-students-encouraged-apply-Erasmus-Mundus_7529123.html on 5 October 2012.

Tapio, V. and Lageson, J., 'Springeneration: Overview of Survey Results', Centre for European Studies (Brussels, 2012), accessed at <http://www.springeneration.eu/> on 27 September 2012.

Tunisia – Higher Education', *StateUniversity.com*, accessed at <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1554/Tunisia-HIGHER-EDUCATION.html> on 9 August 2012.



Tunisia, Ministry of Education and Training, *The Development of Education: National Report 2004–2008* (2009), accessed at http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/tunisia_NR08.pdf on 1 October 2012.

TVET, 'TVET Reform Programme', accessed at <http://www.tvet.org> on 21 September 2012.

UNESCO, Institute for Statistics, 'UIS Statistics in Brief: Global Literacy Profile', accessed at http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=364&IF_Language=eng on 12 October 2012.

UNESCO, 'Libya: The Will to Change', 25 April 2012, accessed at http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/higher-education/single-view/news/libya_the_will_to_change/ on 1 August 2012.

UNESCO, 'UNESCO Attends Tunisia's First National Conference on Educational Reform', 24 April 2012, accessed at http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/resources/online-materials/single-view/news/unesco_attends_tunisias_first_national_conference_on_educational_reform/ on 4 October 2012.

United Nations Development Programme, '2010 Egypt Human Development Report', accessed at <http://www.undp.org.eg/Default.aspx?tabid=227> on 18 August 2012.

United Nations Development Programme, *Egypt Human Development Report 2010: Youth in Egypt: Building Our Future* (2010), accessed at <http://www.undp.org/Portals/0/NHDR%202010%20english.pdf> on 20 September 2012.



United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2011: Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All* (New York: UNDP, 2011), accessed at http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Complete.pdf on 13 October 2012.

World Bank and European Training Foundation, *Integrating TVET into the Knowledge Economy: Reform and Challenges in the Middle East and North Africa* (Washington, DC: January 2005), accessed at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1126210664195/1636971-1126210694253/TVET_Knowledge_Economy.pdf on 27 July 2012.

World Bank, *Education in the Middle East and North Africa: A Strategy Towards Learning for Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1998), accessed at <http://www.worldbank.org/education/strategy/MENA-E.pdf> on 28 August 2012.

World Bank, 'Implementation Completion and Results Report', Report No. ICR0000325 (2007), accessed at http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/08/24/000333037_20080824235652/Rendered/PDF/ICR3250REPLACE1LIC01disclosed081211.pdf on 2 August 2012.

World Bank, *Kingdom of Morocco: Promoting Youth Opportunities and Participation* (Washington, DC, 2012), vii, accessed at <http://allafrica.com/download/resource/main/main/idatcs/00031748:b4e8032ef11f9fb849e7608fde70d0dd.pdf> on 13 October 2012.

World Bank, 'Public Spending on Education, Total (% of Government Expenditure)', accessed at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GB.ZS> on 10 August 2012.



World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness* (2012), accessed at <http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-competitiveness> on 25 September 2012.

World Economic Forum, *Women's Empowerment: Measuring the global gender gap*, (Geneva, 2005).

World Health Organization, Regional Health Systems Observatory, 'Health System Profile Libya', 2007, accessed at <http://gis.emro.who.int/HealthSystemObservatory/PDF/Libya/Full%20Profile.pdf> on 27 September 2012.



About the Authors



Hanan Rezk

Dr Hanan Rezk is a researcher for government agencies and international sponsors. She conducts workshops and training sessions in cooperation with the Egyptian ministries of Education and Youth and works as a part-time instructor at private universities in Cairo. She previously worked as a senior researcher with the UNDP's national decentralisation project in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Local Development. Supported by the United States Agency for International Development, Hanan has also worked as a researcher for the privatisation project and the investment banking advisory project in Egypt, both in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Public Enterprises. She holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the American University in Cairo and a PhD in advanced European Mediterranean Studies from the Faculty of Economics and Political Science at Cairo University, Egypt.

Katarína Králiková

Katarína Králiková is a diplomat with the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Previously she was a CES research officer and assistant editor-in-chief of the Centre's policy journal, the *European View*. In her work at the CES she mainly focused on foreign policy issues. Prior to joining the CES, Katarina worked in the European Parliament in the Directorate-General for Internal Policies in Brussels. Katarina studied international law and economics at universities in Slovakia and Austria, and recently returned to her studies focusing on the EU's external relations and human rights at University College London.