

Skills development for the informal economy: Issues and options in vocational education and training in the Southern partner countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy

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In its cooperation with partner countries outside the European Union, the European Commission has long been concerned with the development of human resources. Since 1995, the European Union has supported much needed reforms in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in most Mediterranean partner countries through multiple projects. The report focuses on nine Mediterranean countries which, while differing in many ways, also share characteristics. They all made major efforts in broadening access to education and training, but the gains thereof in terms of widespread income improvements are yet to materialize. Most countries have severe problems in balancing labour supply and demand. Their labour force participation rates are lower and their unemployment rates are higher than those of most countries outside the region. They all have significant and growing informal economies in which currently between 30 and 60 per cent of the labour force try and make a living without being covered by formal arrangements such as foreseen in regulation and legislation. The report reviews what the countries in MENA region do to overcome informality at work and skill deficits. It provides policy recommendations for boosting skills of the working poor and integrating these measures into broader human development strategies.

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