



EU-ILO Mainstreaming Employment and Trade and Investment (METI) Programme

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Algeria, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory and Tunisia

Evaluation date: 30 August 2023

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Mid-term

Administrative Office: Development and Investment Branch (DEVINVEST) and CO-CAIRO

Technical Office: Development and Investment Branch (DEVINVEST)

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Key Words: trade, investment and employment, Southern Mediterranean region, EC

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The “*Mainstreaming Employment into Trade and Investment in the Southern Neighbourhood*” (METI) with implementation period of September 2020 - August 2024, was launched as an integral part of the “*Inclusive Economic Development and Job Creation in the Neighbourhood South*” Action funded by the EU and implemented by three partners: ILO DEVINVEST, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and International Trade Center (ITC).

The project implementation covers the Southern Neighbourhood region including Algeria, Israel,¹ Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory and Tunisia. The regional dimension of the project includes all the countries, the national dimension is focused on Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia as partner countries.

The development objectives: Policy makers in the Southern Neighbourhood of the EU incorporate employment issues into trade and investment policies and design and implement trade and investment interventions that ultimately optimise the quality and quantity of employment created in the region.

To achieve its development objectives the project intended to realize the following results:

- **Result 1:** Knowledge on the positive and negative impact of trade and investment policies on productive and decent employment in the Southern Neighbourhood countries is generated, improved, discussed and disseminated.
- **Result 2:** Capacity of policy makers, social partners, staff in statistical offices and research institutions in partner countries to collect and analyse relevant data, to produce and use evidence on the effects of trade and investment policies on employment and to discuss, design and coordinate policies is improved.
- **Result 3:** Sectoral approaches to the development of export-oriented value chains and industries are implemented in the partner countries to enhance the employment opportunities and to mitigate the

¹ Though for political issues Israel is not engaged in the project implementation and therefore, not covered by this MTE

	<p>employment challenges arising from trade and investment policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Result 4: Governments, financial institutions, EU delegations and other relevant stakeholders are informed of and consider the potential trade and employment effects of infrastructure investment in the Southern Neighbourhood countries
<p>Present situation of the project</p>	<p>After a period of delays due to uncleared issues of project management and adequate division of roles and responsibilities among the staff members, the project is back on track and completed most of its activities planned for the current period and made progress towards expected outcomes. Therefore, it is highly likely that the project will achieve all its outputs and outcomes both at national and regional levels by the end of its lifecycle as initially planned.</p>
<p>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</p>	<p>The purpose of this mid-term evaluation is twofold: (i) to provide a systematic and evidence-based review of the progress made towards the realization of the project results; and (ii) provide strategic recommendations for the remaining period of the project implementation as well as the similar future programming and planning in the project beneficiary countries and beyond.</p> <p>The evaluation scope is further defined by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Duration: September 2020 – August 2024 - Geography: The Southern Neighbourhood region of the EU including Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Tunisia - Programmatic focus: across the whole scope of the project <p>The primary intended users of this evaluation include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - METI project team at the ILO HQ, regional and country offices. - ILO constituencies in each of the four partner countries as well as across the region - The European Commission as the project financing partner

Methodology of evaluation

- Regional and national institutions concerned with the issues of improved employment through T&I in the Southern Mediterranean.

The evaluation is guided by the OECD DAC evaluation criteria² and includes the following: *relevance and validity of design, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact orientation and sustainability* of the project. The evaluation applied a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection such as *desk review, stakeholder interviews, and case studies* in the partner countries *i.e. Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco*. The *triangulation principle* of utilizing multiple sources for data and methods was applied to validate evaluation findings.

To ensure logical coherence and completeness of the *data analysis*, two compatible strategies of analysis will be used:

- *change analysis* to compare the results indicators over time and against targets as defined in the LogFrame. It provides a status of achievement towards results at the time of the evaluation as “achieved”, “partly achieved” or “not achieved”.
- context-sensitive *contribution analysis* to explore cause-effect assumptions and conclude about the contribution the programme has made or not to both intended and unintended outcomes. The focus of the contribution analysis is not to quantify the degree to which the project has contributed to the outcomes but to provide evidence to support *reasonable conclusions about the contributions* made by the programme to the desired outcomes.

One of the major limitations was the lack of baseline and end-line data as well as project monitoring data. The poor quality of the initial LogFrame and the absence of monitoring plan affected the availability of project performance data. To mitigate the risk, additional data mining was carried out by the evaluation team to ensure adequate information is collected to describe and analyse the project performance.

² <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

The evaluation team also strived to gender balance during data collection phase. The evaluation was conducted in a gender and culturally sensitive manner and with due respect to human rights (HR) and gender equality (GE) principles utilizing the *ILO Guidance Note 3.1: Integrating gender equality in monitoring and evaluation*³ that provides recommendations on how to ensure gender-responsive evaluation.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance and validity of design

Finding # 1: The project has had a clear logic of intervention from its onset. Though the project initial LogFrame lacks key elements (e.g. SMART indicators for outcomes, baseline and targets).

Finding # 2: The project design and implementation are sufficiently gender sensitive and consider non-discrimination imperative at its current stage of implementation.

Finding # 3: The project benefited from the ILO's comparative advantage of tripartism and social dialogue

Finding # 4: The global COVID-19 pandemic caused major delays in the project implementation

Finding # 5: The outcomes as defined in the reconstructed LogFrame of the METI Project remain highly relevant for the final period of the project implementation

Coherence

Finding # 6: The project design and outcomes are in line with the national development priorities, UNSDCF/UNDAF and EC's specific priorities in the Southern Neighborhood region and in each partner country in specifically. Also, the project demonstrated high relevance to the ILO's Global policy outcomes, the SDGs, and national priorities.

Finding # 7: The project has put efforts to consider the specifics of each country and different stakeholders in its design, inception and implementation, however, there are missed opportunities for more

³ https://www.ilo.org/wcmstp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_165986.pdf

tailored and effective implementation of the project and need for adjustments for the remaining phase of its implementation

Effectiveness

Finding # 8: The project demonstrated slow progress at its inception and in the early phase, but by the time of MTE, the project is fully back on track with its implementation – however specific areas require intensified efforts

Finding # 9: There are several major factors that affected project implementation in each partner country to a different degree: the global COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to remote regime; a confused division of roles and responsibilities between some project team members, and miscommunication with some national stakeholders.

Finding # 10: There are several factors that contribute to the eventual success of the project: (i) high relevance of the METI project to the national needs and priorities in each partner country, (ii) the reputation of ILO in the partner countries and its capacity to mobilize a wide international expertise, (iii) the space METI created for cross-country, cross-region and cross-stakeholder knowledge exchange, and (iv) the multi-stakeholder and highly diverse PWGs in each partner country.

Finding # 11: No unplanned effects (negative or positive) were found during the evaluation.

Finding # 12: The METI project produced high quality knowledge products

Finding # 13: The project implementation demonstrated constant consideration of the imperative to ensure engagement of social partners throughout all of its activities.

Finding # 14: The project demonstrated sufficiently strong focus on gender equality and non-discrimination in its activities and its outputs

Efficiency

Finding # 15: The budget implementation demonstrates no significant deviations, except some savings accumulated due to the restriction of travel in pandemic period and staff changes (P4 level) in the ILO Cairo office

Finding # 16: Country presence is a critical success factor for the METI to ensure effective communication, coordination and trust with the national stakeholders.

Finding # 17: As part of a larger envelope of EU-funded project, the METI project established high-level collaborations with OECD and ITC, though at the operational level there are hardly any avenues for the three interventions to coordinate their efforts.

Impact orientation and sustainability

Finding # 18: The early indications of impact within the METI project (such as knowledge created, tools provided, discussion platforms established, etc.) suggests strong potential for sustainability.

However, to realize that potential there are efforts required (i) to intensify communication with national and regional stakeholders, (ii) strengthen the capacity development component of the project, and (iii) revise the project management arrangement with more on-ground presence.

Finding # 19: Effective and proactive communication with national and regional stakeholders required further reinforcement from the METI team.

Finding # 20: While all products within METI are highly relevant and useful for national stakeholders, the strongest precondition for their sustainability and long-term utilization is the capabilities of the national stakeholders. This requires stronger focus within the remaining period of the METI project.

Finding # 21: There is no exit and sustainability strategy developed within METI project yet

Conclusion

The METI project has dual aspects: on one hand, the quality of its deliverables and the need and relevance perceived by the national stakeholders is very high; on the other, the project was significantly delayed due to global pandemic and there is still a strong need to improve the communication and relationships with the national stakeholders. Besides, the capacity development component of the project, if strengthened, has a great potential for creating critical precondition for lasting impact in each partner country and for the whole region.



By the time of the MTE, the METI project has created a critical momentum that needs to be preserved and amplified through more intensified communication and upfront planning with the national stakeholders; stronger efforts for capacity developments at regional and national levels; and intensified policy dialogues in the partner countries, creating a model to follow for the other countries in the region. Critical revision of the METI management structure and its regional presence could unlock larger potential for stakeholders' engagement and ease pathway towards more policy coherence between employment and T&I in each partner country. It remains important to put all necessary efforts to successfully accomplish the METI project and ensure its continuation with another round of METI with explicit focus on the implementation of the recommendations developed within this project.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

1. Consider using the MTE proposed project LogFrame with strengthened focus on capacity development component of the project. Additionally, ensure there is a monitoring plan in place aligned with the new LogFrame.
2. Revisit the composition of each PWG based on the emerging needs to ensure all relevant stakeholders are included.
3. Ensure that any assessment at the national level is carried out with intensive consultations with national stakeholders, followed with formal validation of the findings as the basis for policy dialogue and recommendations.
4. Ensure stronger focus on the capacity development component.
5. Strengthen coordination between ILO, OECD and ITC at the product level by creating a joint digital gateway for trade, investment and employment resources in the South Mediterranean Region including inter alia Euromed Trade Helpdesk, all the studies from METI, OECD, etc.
6. When organizing national or regional events consider minimizing logistical and financial impediments for participants (e.g. travel between Casablanca and Rabat)



7. Consider requesting a 3-6 month no-cost extension to factor and effectively implement additional capacity development and policy dialogue efforts within the project
8. Consider cost-sharing arrangements with the ILO project offices in Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco to stimulate more effective project continuation over its remaining period
9. Consult with the ILO Chief Risk Officer to strengthen the METI risk lenses, contributing thereby to its effective implementation
10. Confidently explore the options for the potential second phase of the METI with the focus on implementation of policy recommendations developed within METI project as there is a strong support from all national counterparts.

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons learned 1: Cultural and institutional context play a critical role in project performance. Building effective personal relationships and trust with people lead to success of the project performance.

Lessons learned 2: Results of the project studies/assessments could be owned and internalized by the national stakeholders if those studies were produced in a highly consultative manner and with due validation of the findings

Good practice 1: PWG in the partner countries as a viable and much needed inter-agency coordination mechanism to explore the nexus between employment and T&I

Good practice 2: Effective working relationships between ILO, OECD, and ITC that ensure the opportunity to mobilize critical expertise on employment, investment and trade respectively

Good practice 3: Evidence-driven policy discussion and recommendation to enhance policy coherence in the partner countries