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Continuity and Change in Youth Migration Patterns from the Mediterranean

by Ummuhan Bardak



ABSTRACT

Labour emigration has been a structural feature of the Arab Mediterranean Countries (AMC) economies since the 1960s. Considering high proportion of youth in AMC's population, difficult labour market conditions without decent jobs, and the political transition after the Arab Spring, this paper looks at the continuity and change of youth migration patterns from the AMCs. Continuity and change are discussed through reviewing typical profiles of migrants (age, gender), their education levels, labour market status and reasons for migration. The traditional Arab migrant destinations of Europe and the Gulf are revisited in terms of economic and political developments and the evolution in their migration policy. A particular reference is made to the EU's policy developments and the impact of the Arab Spring on emigration flows. The paper ends with the conclusions of: small change based on "path-dependency", continuing pressure of emigration flows, and the unfitting skills set of potential migrants within the context of global job market. Recommendations focus on improving skills and education cooperation between the EU and the AMCs.

Mediterranean | Migration | Youth | European Union | Arab Spring

keywords

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Introduction

Labour emigration has been a structural feature of the Arab Mediterranean Countries¹ (AMC) economies since the 1960s. According to the World Bank,² 3.7 million Egyptians, 3 million Moroccans, 1.2 million Algerians, almost a million each Lebanese and Syrians,³ 750,000 Jordanians and 650,000 Tunisians live outside their countries of origin. Nevertheless, the proportion of emigrants in these countries' populations remains low due to continuous population growth. The main destination for emigrants from the French-speaking Maghreb countries has been Europe (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany in particular, and, more recently, Spain and Italy), mainly due to bilateral labour agreements signed in the 1960s. Migrants from Lebanon have typically headed to North America, while emigrants from Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Syria have gone mainly to the oil-producing Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia.

¹ This paper covers only eight Arab Mediterranean countries from the region: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia and uses the definition of "migrant" by the United Nations: "a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence." Despite the usage of this broader definition, the paper limits itself to labour migration and excludes the emergent (involuntary) humanitarian and refugee movements to remain focused.

² World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Fact book 2011*, 2nd ed., Washington, World Bank, 2011, <http://go.worldbank.org/QGUCPJTOR0>.

³ The number for Syria is for the pre-crisis period and does not include the millions of refugees who have left Syria in the last four years because of the civil war. For the same reason of decades-old Palestinian refugee problems, the number of labour migrants from Palestine is unknown.

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Currently the AMCs are undergoing significant political, economic and social transitions. Some countries experienced extraordinary political changes in what is now called the Arab Spring. "Employment, Liberty, Dignity" was the slogan of the Jasmin Revolution of January 2011 in Tunisia, which created a domino effect across the whole region. The first economic impact of the Arab Spring was rather negative owing to political turbulence and social unrest, particularly on the tourism, production and export sectors as well as on foreign direct investment, which was down already as a result of the global economic crisis.

Even before the Arab Spring, difficult labour market conditions and a lack of decent jobs for young people were well documented for the AMCs.⁴ Labour markets have been segmented along public/private, formal/informal and modern/ traditional lines, and are characterised by large informality and precariousness, very low female participation, high unemployment and significant agricultural employment. Indeed the region has the highest youth unemployment rate in the world (28 percent in 2013 after the Arab Spring), and this is projected to increase further to 29 percent by 2018.⁵ The majority of unemployed people (up to 80 percent in some countries such as Egypt) are young, first-job-seekers with no previous work experience.

Beyond this challenging political and economic context, what is unique about youth in the AMCs is their high proportion in the population. AMCs are experiencing the largest cohorts of youth population in their history, which is likely to continue for the next four to five decades at least. Whether youth is a "gift" or a "burden" is a matter of long discussion, but demographic pressure is a key feature of education systems and job markets in these countries. The share of the population under the age of 30 years has exceeded 60 percent, and the working-age population (15-64 years old) is approaching 70 percent.⁶ Nonetheless, on average only half (even less than half) of the working-age population is economically active and part of the work force in the region, which means countries are largely missing the "demographic opportunity window" of having a young population.

Considering the high aspirations of youth for education, jobs, marriage, housing and many other consumption items, the situation described above puts a tremendous pressure on national political and economic systems and keeps in place the strong push factors for the emigration of youth from the region. Within this context, this paper looks at the continuity and change patterns of migration from the AMCs, with a particular focus on youth who are attracted the most to the

⁴ Iván Martín and Ummuhan Bardak, "Union for the Mediterranean Regional Employability Review. The Challenge of Youth Employment in the Mediterranean", in *ETF Reports*, 2012, http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/UfM_regional_employability_review; Ummuhan Bardak, "Labour Market and Education: Youth and Unemployment in the Spotlight", in *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2014*, p. 78-84, <http://t.co/OZ4eY88J67>.

⁵ ILO, *Global Employment Trends: Risk of a Jobless Recovery*, Geneva, January 2014, p. 64, <http://ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/lang--en/index.htm>.

⁶ UNDESA, *World Population Prospects, the 2012 revision*, New York, United Nations, 2013, <http://esa.un.org/wpp>.

idea of emigration and who constitute the absolute majority of migrants from the region.

Continuity and change in migration patterns are discussed through reviewing typical profiles of migrants (age, gender and marital status), their education levels/types and labour market status, reasons for migration (economic, social, political), and international student flows. Then, the traditional Arab migrant destinations of Europe and the Gulf are reviewed in terms of economic and political developments and the evolution in their migration policy. A particular reference is made to the EU's policy developments, and special attention is given to whether the Arab Spring has increased emigration flows. After an overview of the main migration outcomes so far, the paper ends with policy conclusions: the sustained nature of emigration flows from the AMCs and the importance of skilled labour in the global competition for international job markets. Recommendations focus on the potential cooperation between the EU and the AMCs on educational improvements.

1. Diversity of migration patterns across the AMCs

Despite some similarities, each Arab Mediterranean country has its own context-specific migration patterns. Therefore, it is difficult to make generalisations for the whole region, and even for the sub-regions of the Maghreb or the Mashrek. As already mentioned, FR-speaking Maghreb countries are the source of labour emigrants towards Europe – typically low-skilled or unskilled male workers – with sustained flows through family reunification. Recently there are signs indicating a marginal increase of young and skilled emigrants from the Maghreb to Europe and North America as well as to the Gulf region, while Maghreb countries themselves have become transit and immigration countries for refugees and immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the Mashrek migration has always been mixed more with politics, as significant and long-standing refugee populations from Palestine, Iraq and recently Syria have been accommodated by Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. On the other hand, the labour migrants from the Mashrek (in particular Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Syria), who were largely better-educated, have typically headed to the Gulf region, where they were employed as engineers, doctors and teachers.⁷ Later on, their profiles in the Gulf became diversified as well, including a range of other occupational sectors that were less skilled and lower-paid. Putting aside current refugee problems, Jordan still sends young and high-skilled work in the Gulf, while it receives low-skilled immigrants from its neighbours and Asia. High-skilled labour flows from Lebanon (and partially from Egypt) to North America have continued as well. In Lebanon, a university education is viewed as a good springboard for migration, and 39 percent

⁷ This is partly due to the special inter-governmental schemes, which allowed public servants of sending countries to work in the public administrations of the Gulf countries for certain period of time; they can be considered as "secondment" or "national detached experts."

of university graduates emigrate.

In summary, migrants are far from a homogeneous group in terms of their profiles. When examined as a whole, though, Arab migration flows have historically provided a low proportion of skilled individuals in the total migration stock, particularly in Europe.⁸ By and large, these flows were dominated by unemployed people from rural areas, reducing the unemployment pressures of the abundant labour surpluses and increasing individual earning prospects. The World Bank reports the share of low-skilled migrants from the Maghreb countries at 70 percent, while from Egypt it is 55 percent with the remaining 30 percent being high-skilled and 15 percent medium-skilled.⁹ This pattern can be largely explained by demographic transition, transformation of traditional agriculture and the generally low education and skill levels of the populations, with most migrants having only basic education.

2. The irresistible attractiveness of the 'migration idea' to the youth

Migration is a common aspiration of young people in many AMCs, mainly due to the difficult labour market conditions and limited economic options at home. Youth surveys on intentions to migrate continuously document a high proportion of young people considering migration; e.g. youth surveys in Egypt show half of the young people intending to migrate. According to the ETF surveys in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, around half of the young population (more than half in Tunisia) would like to migrate, and the absolute majority of these people are young males.¹⁰ Despite the attractiveness of the idea of migration, however, the likelihood of migration in reality is much lower (around 10 percent). Due to the tight limitations on legal migration opportunities and the limited means for migration, the reality frequently does not match up to their ambitions.

Economic considerations such as joblessness, low wages, poor career prospects and low standards of living are overwhelmingly cited as the main reasons for emigration by young people. In particular wage and income differentials rather than unemployment levels as such are primary reasons. Nevertheless, unemployment, underemployment and temporary/insecure employment are direct factors

⁸ Çağlar Özden and Maurice Schiff (eds.), *International Migration, Remittances and the Brain Drain*, Washington/Basingstoke, World Bank and Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/6929>.

⁹ Jennifer Keller et al., *Labor Migration from North Africa. Development Impact, Challenges and Policy Options*, Washington, World Bank, 2010, p. 14, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2010/05/16830843>.

¹⁰ Jesus Alquezar Sabadie et al., *Migration and Skills: The Experience of Migrant Workers from Albania, Egypt, Moldova, and Tunisia*, Washington, World Bank, 2010, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/2421>; Michael Collyer et al., "Migration and Skills in Armenia, Georgia and Morocco: Comparing the Survey Results", in *ETF Working Papers*, July 2013, http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Migration_and_skills_Armenia_Georgia_Morocco.

prompting young men to migrate, whereas young women appear to migrate more for other reasons (as more of a life project).

In addition to economic reasons, surveys in several Arab countries have recurrently evidenced young peoples' dreams of having a migratory experience and their preference for the West over the Gulf, if opportunities are given to them. Linked with the Western intellectual dominance and cinema industry, the desire to live within Western cultures and lifestyles is quite high. Indeed, in the ETF surveys of Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco, there is a consistent 10 percent of young people who would like to migrate because they think that "there is no future" in their country.¹¹ This is linked with the gloomy prospects of socio-economic and political transition, but also heavily influenced by the positive perceptions of Western lifestyles.

Another factor to be mentioned is "geography of migration" that interacts with "migration culture." While the intention to migrate is as strong in rural and urban areas, the ETF findings in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco highlight significantly different regional patterns, learnt by seeing examples in the best-established out-migration areas. In Morocco, for example, the regions with the highest proportions of potential migrants are mostly associated with traditional areas of emigration, i.e. Agadir and Souss, where more than half of the population intends to move abroad.¹² A second important area of traditional out-migration is Oujda, close to the Algerian border, with 45 percent potential migrants. The areas with limited inclination to emigrate are Rabat and Tangier, which are rapidly growing and dynamic locations that may generate the kind of optimism that keeps people attached.

3. Modest but consistent international student flows

Education is sometimes mentioned as a motivation for migration by youth in Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. Indeed, studying abroad is a popular idea shared by many youth, but in reality only around 5 percent of potential migrants would go abroad for "education."¹³ Among the returnees, however, a sizeable minority of migrants moved for education and training purposes from Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Egypt. The international student flows were characterised by a high proportion of returnees, reflecting "brain circulation" and the high premium placed on education acquired abroad within the domestic labour market context. Indeed, brain circulation can play a positive role in development, as migration increases human capital and enhances the acquisition and exploitation of global

¹¹ Jesus Alquezar Sabadie et al., *Migration and Skills*, cit., p. 32.

¹² European Training Foundation, "Migration et compétences au Maroc. Résultats de l'enquête 2011-12 sur la migration et le lien entre compétences, migration et développement", in *ETF Working Papers*, August 2013, p. 52-53, http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Migration_and_skills_Morocco.

¹³ Ummuhan Bardak, *Migration and Skills Development Agenda in Partner Countries*. ETF Position Paper, October 2014 (unpublished).

knowledge, technology and networks.

With the exception of a couple of countries (the UK, France), Europe appears to be less attractive than the USA and Canada in the circulation of international students from AMCs, with the best and the brightest tending to prefer North America as their main destination. Language is an important contextual factor in the direction of these flows, with some EU Member States gaining more than others. For instance, English-speaking countries such as the UK and Ireland attract students from countries where English is the primary foreign language, while France draws more students from Maghreb countries where French is the primary foreign language. The case of France is somewhat interesting. Although it is a destination for low-skilled labour migrants from the Maghreb, it seems at the same time to be a natural preference for higher education studies for French-speaking students from the region.

Another interesting emerging pattern is the Arab student mobility towards the Gulf countries. While historically Cairo, Beirut, Damascus and Baghdad had hosted many Arab students in their education institutions in the past (mostly in Arabic, but also some in English), today the tide has moved to the Gulf countries, where intense investment in education made over the last decade has started to attract Arab students from neighbouring countries for post-graduate studies (combining both English and Arabic). Studying abroad brings the issue of qualification recognition into the agenda as well. The practice so far shows that only some highly-educated migrants apply and receive recognition of their academic qualifications to study abroad. However, this is not linked to the professional recognition, and it is almost unthinkable for those with medium (and VET) education levels to receive recognition.

4. Changing profiles of migrants: young, single, less-educated men?

The typical profile of migrants from the AMCs has been of young men in their 20s, mostly with primary education (Morocco, Egypt) or secondary education (Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan). Women from the AMCs have primarily migrated as a "family member," rather than being a "migrant worker." Migration is always linked to young ages, but the linkage of being young and having the intention to migrate is extremely strong in the AMCs, and intention to migrate dramatically decreases after the age of 30. In contrast, the age range of migrants from Eastern Europe is older (middle-aged). Potential migrants have also fewer family links in the AMCs, most likely being "single" and/or without children. The thesis that family ties reduce an individual's desire to emigrate is strongly supported by data on marriage and children.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid.

What seems new is a slight increase of young educated women migrating independently of their male family members.¹⁵ Studies examining the mobility of women from the Maghreb shed light on this within the context of migration to Europe (Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco to a lesser extent),¹⁶ while others show an increasing trend of educated female migrants from Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. Considering the limited mobility of young women in these societies, this is a special group of young, educated female migrants who are generally coming from middle-class families.

Despite many differences in migrants' skills, however, the education and skill levels of migrants largely reflect the overall education levels of the populations and the structure and performance of education systems in the AMCs. Access to education and training has increased greatly in recent decades, particularly in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, but there are still significant levels of illiteracy in Morocco and Egypt.¹⁷ Furthermore, technical/vocational education has played an extremely small role in comparison to secondary general education in the whole region (except in Egypt). Thus, typical migrants from Morocco are still more likely to have only primary education and no vocational skills, while at the same time an increasing number of young university graduates (in particular in technical fields such as engineering) emigrate to study and/or work abroad. Recent trends confirm signs of this uneven record of education for individual migrants in each country.

Another interesting feature of potential migrants in the AMCs is their higher levels of employment compared to non-migrants,¹⁸ which is explained by the fact that employed people generally have better access to information and connections. The strong empowering effect of education is particularly important. Higher education normally reduces the intention to migrate while increasing the opportunity to do so. This empowerment effect is very visible in all AMCs (especially Morocco, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia), where overall education levels are far lower and graduate unemployment is higher. For example, higher-educated people from Morocco and Egypt tend to be more mobile, but they also tend to return home after a period abroad. Overall, it is possible to see a slight and slow change in migrant profiles towards a medium-education level, but the 'path-dependency' of migration patterns largely persists.

¹⁵ Zahra R. Babar, "Mobility and Migration from the Southern Mediterranean States to the GCC", in *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2014*, p. 318, <http://t.co/0Z4eY88J67>.

¹⁶ Jennifer Keller et al., *Labor Migration from North Africa*, cit., p. 16-17.

¹⁷ Morocco is the most dramatic example of low education levels of 15+ population: 80 percent of people have primary or basic education, 12 percent have a medium level of education and only 7 percent have higher education. According to UNESCO, more than 40 percent of the population was illiterate in 2010. Moreover, the share of people with vocational training at secondary and post-secondary level is less than 5 percent. See Iván Martín and Ummuhan Bardak, "Union for the Mediterranean Regional Employability Review", cit., p. 33-36.

¹⁸ Ummuhan Bardak, *Migration and Skills Development Agenda in Partner Countries*, cit.

5. Evolving destinations: developments in Europe and the Gulf and their policies

Traditional migrant stocks in Europe and the Gulf create a natural gravity for new migrant flows through diaspora knowledge and networks in those destinations. This largely keeps the path-dependency of new flows, which are shaped by historical legacies, colonial links, the language factor, migrant/diaspora networks and family reunification. However, political, economic and labour market conditions of destination countries have also evolved, leading to changing immigration policies. For example, a trend of saturation for low-skilled migrants is observed in the old European destinations (in particular in northern Europe), with Eastern European migrants (mostly from the new enlargement countries) now filling most medium-skilled jobs. At the same time, new opportunities have arisen in Italy and Spain (as well as Portugal and Greece to a lesser extent) for low-skilled migrants from Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, but the recent economic crisis has reduced these flows. Another marginal increase is in better-educated out-flows to the overseas – USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand – with limited intake and a special migrant profile.

Overall, public opinion in Europe is increasingly against immigration, leading to more restrictive policies. Migration and its management has become a very important item in the EU policy agenda, squeezed between the needs of labour and security. The main dilemma is how to manage legal migration and mobility within an environment secure against the risks of irregular migration. An EU communication opened the way to temporary legal migration schemes for the first time, introducing mobility partnerships as the main strategic, comprehensive and long-term migration cooperation instrument for the EU and third countries.¹⁹ In 2011, this approach was systematised in the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), which is a key EU policy document that provides a framework for an external migration policy compliant with EU foreign policy, development policy and the Europe 2020 Strategy.²⁰ GAMM establishes four pillars: (1) facilitating legal migration and mobility; (2) preventing irregular migration and trafficking; (3) promoting international protection and asylum policies; and (4) maximising the development impact of migration and mobility.

GAMM thus emphasises the role of good migration governance through the signature of mobility partnerships (MP) with the European Neighbourhood countries. MPs cover all migration-related issues in a single package under the four pillars listed above and bring the Commission, signatory EU Member States and the third country together at one table. Under the pillar of legal migration, the focus is

¹⁹ European Commission, *On circular migration and mobility partnerships between the European Union and third countries* (COM(2007)248), 16 May 2007, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52007DC0248>.

²⁰ European Commission, *The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility* (COM(2011)743), 18 November 2011, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52011DC0743>.

mainly on the significant role of temporary/circular migration and the importance of matching jobs and skills for migrants. Within this framework, the EU has signed MPs with Moldova (2008), Georgia (2009), Armenia (2011), Morocco (June 2013), Azerbaijan (December 2013), Tunisia (March 2014) and Jordan (October 2014). Recently similar negotiations were also launched with Belarus and Lebanon, and the intention to launch similar negotiations with Egypt and Libya was announced.²¹

Another interesting transformation has also happened in the Gulf. Arab migrants particularly from the Mashrek and Egypt used to make up the bulk of the Gulf's workforce beginning in the 1960s, but over time their percentage has shrunk significantly and the national composition of the Gulf's foreign workforce has altered. According to Babar,²² in 1975 the percentage of Arab migrants in the Gulf workforce was 72 percent, but by 2009 this figure had dropped to 23 percent. Today most of the foreign workers in the Gulf (estimated to be 17 million) are Asia-based or international, and recent figures suggest about 2.4 million Arab migrants are present in the Gulf.

This is the result of the shift in recruitment policies of the Gulf countries due to both political and economic factors. The authoritarian monarchies of the Gulf were concerned about the potential for non-Gulf Arabs to radicalise the local population through promoting political ideas considered to be destabilising (e.g. the Pan-Arabism of the 1960s, the support for Saddam's Kuwait intervention in the 1990s, the expansion of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, sectarian divisions, and the Arab Spring in 2011). Having the same language, religion and cultural affinity and mostly bringing their families, young Arab migrants could easily infect local Arab populations with revolutionary ideas. Asian workers are not only cheaper to bring in, but also socially and politically easier to manage. Moreover, the Gulf countries themselves started to experience high youth unemployment among their own native populations, with an increasing number of youth who are also better educated. Nationalisation policies of skilled Arab migrants were put in place in many sectors with mixed success, so the absorption capacity of the Gulf for the Arab migrants is increasingly limited.²³

²¹ It must be emphasised that the EU external migration policy builds on EU legislation and legal instruments that have recently incorporated measures to facilitate circular migration, including directives on legal and irregular migration, visa facilitation and readmission agreements, common visa application centres, a visa information system and the EU immigration portal. Also, political instruments such as bilateral policy dialogues and action plans are combined with operational support and capacity-building instruments where project support is provided to numerous stakeholders. Capacity-building instruments include the support provided through the EU agencies such as FRONTEX (frontiers), EASO (asylum), EUROPOL (law enforcement), ETF and the EU programmes such as TAIEX and MIEUX. MPs fit in this articulated context. See the EU Immigration Portal (<http://ec.europa.eu/immigration>), which was launched in 2012 in different languages as a one-stop-shop (first point of entry) for clear, accessible, up-to-date, targeted and practical information on EU and national immigration procedures and policies, including visas and work permits for potential migrants.

²² Zahra R. Babar, "Mobility and Migration from the Southern Mediterranean States to the GCC", cit., p. 317.

²³ Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Labour Immigration and Labour Markets in the GCC Countries:

6. Has the Arab Spring increased emigration?

When the Arab Spring broke out at the end of 2010, the AMCs were the source of almost 8 million first-generation migrants, 62 percent of whom were living in an EU Member State, 27 percent in another Arab state (20 percent in the Gulf) and 11 percent in another part of the world.²⁴ Libya, a major receiver of international migrants, was the only country with a small percentage of emigration (1 percent of its population). The same factors that had produced emigration – the frustration of young people faced with unemployment, low rewards to education, state authoritarianism and lack of fundamental freedoms – were now triggering protests.

According to Fargues and Fandrich,²⁵ the period immediately preceding the Arab Spring revolutions was one of intense emigration in most of the AMCs. From 2001 to 2010, the aggregate number of AMC emigrants to the OECD countries increased by 42 percent, from 3.5 million to almost 5 million. The lion's share of this increase in Arab emigration has been destined to Europe (91 percent) and particularly to the three closest neighbours of the Arab states: Spain, Italy and France. In the first two countries, low- or medium-skilled migrants were attracted by jobs left vacant by natives in conjunction with booming economies and rapidly rising standards of living. In France, however, the recent increase was mainly due to family reunification. Morocco itself was the largest and fastest-growing sender of migrants to OECD countries, with 62 percent increase of emigrants in 10 years.²⁶

Looking at the annual statistics of the (legal) immigrant stock trend over the last five years, no particular break was observed in 2011 in Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. Thus, legal migration to Europe has not accelerated after the Arab Spring, apart from a short-lived movement from Tunisia, but has simply continued along previous trends.²⁷ Just after the revolution started in both countries, Tunisia and Libya became points of departure for boats smuggling scores of migrants and refugees into Italy. Due to national governments' loss of border control, this seems to be re-routing existing flows of irregular migration more than stimulating new ones. In sharp contrast, migration within the AMCs has been deeply affected by the events in Libya, Syria and Iraq, which have resulted in considerable population displacement and millions of refugees fleeing instability and violence to the neighbouring countries. Therefore, change happens only gradually and slowly with the rise of new opportunities, with the exception of sudden political/ security shocks.

National Patterns and Trends", in *LSE Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States*, No. 15 (March 2011), <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55239>.

²⁴ Philippe Fargues and Christine Fandrich, "Migration after the Arab Spring", in *MPC Research Reports*, No. 2012/09 (2012), p. 1, <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/23504>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 1-2.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

7. What are the main migration outcomes?

Labour migration plays an important economic and social role in the AMCs, which have been and continue to be supportive of the out-migration of their citizens. It is even possible to mention an implicit “labour export” strategy, not only the export of low-skilled but also high-skilled labour. It eases the demographic pressure on the labour markets of the AMCs, particularly the graduate unemployment problem, while brain drain does not represent a serious threat for the development of most AMCs (the possible exception is Lebanon and some sectors in Morocco and Tunisia). Indeed labour markets in AMCs indicate that the environment for the productive use of education in the domestic economy is poor, suggesting that the actual “lost” output from skilled migration is even lower.²⁸

Remittances are particularly high in countries such as Egypt and Morocco, and they constitute a high share of the gross domestic product in Lebanon and Jordan. They do not seem to affect average wages that are very inelastic due to the abundance of labour, the prevalence of informal employment and the high levels of unemployment. Many studies confirm the positive impact of migration in improving the socio-economic conditions of migrant households and poverty reduction in all AMCs, despite the big discussion on the unproductive consumption of remittances.²⁹

The migration experience itself leads to modest skill gains in subtle ways, particularly in countries where education levels are generally low, such as Morocco.³⁰ Migrants develop new skills during their time abroad by extending their knowledge, experiences, empowerment and learning in formal, informal and non-formal settings – in particular building language skills, vocational and technical skills learnt at work, work organisation and ethics. However, most of these new skills are never certified or made truly visible in the domestic labour market upon return. Moreover, migration experience activates people and increases employment levels upon return in many AMCs, especially for women. A high proportion of returnees work as employers or become self-employed, with entrepreneurship tending to be especially high among returnees in Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia. Despite limited information about (voluntary) return migration, the return rate from the Gulf seems much higher compared to Europe.

There are negative externalities of migration as well. Despite the positive impact of remittances, they increase the consumption and investment in non-tradable sectors (e.g. construction) and the demand for labour in family-driven activities. Migration affects the labour market behaviour of young people negatively, namely through an increase in reservation wages and a decrease in their activity rates

²⁸ Jennifer Keller et al., *Labor Migration from North Africa*, cit., p. xviii.

²⁹ Ibid.; Ummuhan Bardak, *Migration and Skills Development Agenda in Partner Countries*, cit.

³⁰ Michael Collyer et al., “Migration and Skills in Armenia, Georgia and Morocco”, cit.

(e.g. Jordan). Increased reservation wage increases the labour costs particularly in certain skilled professions in the AMCs, which is detrimental for companies due to the low number of such professionals. The high rate of emigration among university graduates is clearly causing a problem in terms of loss of human capital in Lebanon, while there is also evidence that skilled migration might be causing shortages of skilled labour in certain sectors in Morocco and Tunisia.

Finally, the models and values that migrants have been exposed to in destination countries may work behind the scenes in shaping political opinions and ideologies, through a mechanism commonly described as social, or ideational, remittances. Fargues and Fandrich argue that migrants to the Gulf states could be potential vectors of dissemination of Wahhabi or Salafi models that prevail in the host society, while migrants to the West may convey secular values to their origin countries³¹ – e.g. studies confirm the decreasing number of children in households with migrants to the West and the increasing number of children in households with migrants to the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. For transfers to operate in the expected direction, however, migrants must be well integrated in their destination. Failed integration may act otherwise and produce the rejection of mainstream values and models of the host society.

Policy conclusions and recommendations

The Arab Spring and emigration are linked by common determinants, in particular intense frustration of young people who are increasingly educated but at the same time denied agency and acceptable futures. If the revolutions end with the establishment of regimes that are responsive to peoples' demands and instil trust, economically and politically, one can expect emigration to gradually decline and even some return migration to take place. The opposite can be expected if revolts stall and fail to provide political freedoms and economic security. History shows that revolutions tend to be followed by years and sometimes decades of instability. Considering the current instability caused by the Arab Spring on the economies and societies, the migratory pressures will continue if not increase due to the youth demographic expansion, economic pressures and labour market pressures – all structural factors independent from the political developments.

Unfortunately, the global context is not favourable to migration. The preferred destinations of Arab migrants (the West and the Gulf) are facing growing unemployment among their native populations, there is labour competition from other emigration countries (i.e. Eastern Europeans in Europe, Asians in the Gulf), and anti-immigration opinions are rising everywhere. In the destinations, migrants and natives are probably not always competing for the same jobs as labour markets are segmented, and perhaps when the crisis is over, migrants will still be

³¹ Philippe Fargues and Christine Fandrich, "Migration after the Arab Spring", cit., p. 2.

needed to fill certain segments of the economy – in particular in rapidly ageing Europe. However, the AMCs should be aware of the evolving EU migration policies, which are increasingly focusing on temporary and circular migration schemes, in particular for the low-skilled jobs. Indeed circular and other forms of short-term mobility have become more common.

As seen in the EU 2020 Strategy and the box below with EU directives to facilitate legal migration, on the one hand the EU aims to attract more talent in the global race and promote Europe as a whole as a world centre of excellence for studies and vocational training. For this reason, the EU directives were adopted to facilitate easy entry for researchers, students and the highly-skilled (Blue Card) into the EU. Due to the modest implementation results of these directives, recently there was a proposal for a recast directive integrating and extending the scope of two existing directives (researchers and students) into one for knowledge-based migration.³² The “European Agenda on Migration” within the work programme of the new European Commission also plans to revise the EU Blue Card directive to attract more high-skilled migrants to Europe. On the other hand, low- and medium-skilled migration is projected to be temporary, seasonal and circular, with specific sets of core and soft skills in the occupations needed.

Box: Key EU directives for facilitating legal circular migration

EU Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification

EU Directive 2003/109/EC on the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents

EU Directive 2004/114/EC on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service

EU Directive 2005/71/EC on the admission of third-country nationals for the purpose of scientific research (Researchers directive)

EU Directive 2009/50/EC on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly-qualified employment (Blue Card directive)

EU Directive 2011/98/EC on the application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a member state and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a member state (Single Permit directive)

COM(2010)378 - Proposal for a directive on conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals in the framework of an intra-corporate transfer

COM(2010)379 - Proposal for a directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of seasonal employment

³² European Commission, *Proposal on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, pupil exchange, remunerated and unremunerated training, voluntary service and au pairing* (COM(2013)151), 25 March 2013, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52013PC0151>.

While the demographic profile of AMCs fits the European labour needs, its average skills sets do not. Cedefop's projections of European skill needs identify a number of labour and skills shortages across the skills spectrum, with significant demand for medium-level skills.³³ Similarly, the EU skills panorama and competitiveness reports reveal skill shortages in many Member States for technical-related occupations.³⁴ Based on current education and skill levels, AMCs would provide a poor match to the projected skill needs in Europe. In the global competition for the international job markets, skills of migrants are key for success. The profile of migrants from a given country does not change overnight, as this is the outcome of long-term human development investment.

One policy recommendation, therefore, is improving the education and training systems of the AMCs significantly, in both quantity and quality aspects.³⁵ While the number of graduates from different stages of education is increasing in AMCs, the majority lack the core competences and soft skills needed in a modern economy.³⁶ The crucial question is how education can meet the challenges of knowledge-based society, which are more than traditional literacy and schooling rates. With few exceptions, curricula and teaching methods give high importance to memorising and rote learning, and the prevailing environment does not reward the acquisition of knowledge and creativity. When talking about migrant workers, issues of work ethics, individual manners, work attitudes and culture come up. Indeed, key competences and soft skills (e.g. teamwork, learning to learn, analytical and critical thinking, languages, ICT, gender equality at work) are increasingly sought-after from migrants.

Current and future migration patterns imply the need for internationalised education and training, meaning that curricula must consider international trends in order to produce qualifications comparable, readable and portable to possible destinations. Such changes require structural adaptation of the entire education system. Several EU initiatives are interesting examples in providing access to learning and employment opportunities in different countries. EU tools such as the Bologna Process, Copenhagen Process, European Qualifications Framework, Europass (European CV, Language Passport, Europass Mobility, Certificate Supplement and Diploma Supplement), EURES, youth exchange programmes (Erasmus, Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci) and VET quality assurance mechanisms

³³ Cedefop, "Skill needs in Europe. Focus on 2020", in *Cedefop Panorama series*, No. 160 (2008), <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/node/11099>; Cedefop, "Future skills supply and demand in Europe. Forecast 2012", in *Cedefop Research Papers*, No. 26 (2012), <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/node/11872>.

³⁴ For more information, please see: <http://euskills Panorama.cedefop.europa.eu>; and <http://europa.eu/!bb46rm>.

³⁵ Iván Martín and Ummuhan Bardak, "Union for the Mediterranean Regional Employability Review", cit.

³⁶ Ummuhan Bardak, "Brain Circulation and Knowledge Society in the Mediterranean Region", in *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2007*, p. 99, <http://www.iemed.org/anuari/2007/aarticles/aBardak.pdf>.

could be used for initiating reforms. There is a higher chance of success for future migrants when education systems perform well in instilling the requirements of a knowledge economy and its values, attitudes and practices.

The EU and Mediterranean countries must work together to improve the education and training systems of the AMCs for both human development and migration management. Training, internship and student exchange programmes (i.e. of the Erasmus-Mundus type) could be increased for young people, students, artists, cultural workers, researchers and academics from the AMCs. Twinning arrangements in VET, higher education and training institutions could encourage cross-border cooperation and exchanges that can contribute to the alignment and recognition of curricula, certificates and qualifications. In the VET sector, the establishment of dual certification programmes could be useful in specific in-demand sectors of labour mobility. An open and accessible system for the recognition and validation of migrants' skills and qualifications could improve matching between available jobs and migrants' skills, but establishing such a system requires greater transparency, better quality qualifications and effective cooperation on both sides.

Improving education systems alone will not pay off unless there is an enabling environment that allows a productive use of knowledge in the AMCs' economies. Among the most distortive policies inhibiting the productive use of educated labour (and all labour) in the region is the legacy of the public sector. Given the sensitivity of migration to employment and economic developments, job creation policies are essential for both EU and AMC governments. Supporting economic growth and decent work opportunities in the Mediterranean must be part of a migration policy aimed at retaining skilled workers, as this is still a key variable in economic development. Within the mobility partnerships with Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan, migration management must be closely linked to other national policies, socio-economic equity and democratic transition. Indeed political instability, corruption, high informality, etc. seem to be just as significant bottlenecks in progress toward higher productivity and growth. These are the very same factors that encourage some of the best and brightest to leave the AMCs in the first place.

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