



## CONTEXT

The MENA region has the largest youth population in the world: more than half of its population is below the age of 25. Youth has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated existing challenges due to impact on physical and mental health and its long-term social and economic implications. Because of the crisis, 8.3 million people are at risk of falling into poverty. Youth unemployment levels reached 23% and 42% for young women on average across Arab states in 2020.

OECD countries prospects for a more youth-responsive future in the framework of the G7 Deauville Partnership project "Youth in Public Life", financially supported by the MENA Transition Fund.

The Minister of Youth, Mohammad Salameh Faris Nabulsi, opened the event alongside the British Ambassador to Jordan, Bridget Brind, and the Head of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, Miriam Allam. The Minister of State for Youth Affairs in the UAE, Shamma Al Mazrui, delivered a key note speech. The event brought together 200 policy makers,



The disruption in the access to public services, such as education, has put young people on a much more volatile trajectory in finding decent jobs, housing and other milestones of adulthood. In this context, the **MENA-OECD Youth Event**, co-organised by the Ministry of Youth in Jordan and the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, discussed with Ministers, policy makers and youth from the MENA region and

youth and international partners from 21 MENA and OECD countries.

Participants engaged in a policy dialogue on **the findings from the OECD Country Reviews<sup>1</sup>** and discussed ways to turn recommendations

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2021), Empowering youth and building trust in Jordan, [bit.ly/3iZAyef](https://bit.ly/3iZAyef); Renforcer l'autonomie et la confiance des jeunes en Tunisie, [bit.ly/35HDpAz](https://bit.ly/35HDpAz); Renforcer l'autonomie et la confiance des jeunes au Maroc, [oe.cd/il/3OG](https://oe.cd/il/3OG).

into practice through the **"Our Youth Takes Initiatives" Programme of the OECD**. The session **"Building resilience with and for youth in the MENA region"** was organised jointly with the MENA-OECD Governance Programme Training Centre of Caserta. Policy makers and youth representatives from civil society in Denmark, Egypt, Lebanon, Oman and the Arab Youth Center reflected upon ways to build resilience with and for young people, such as by including youth in the collection and use of open data, leveraging digital technology to building young people's skills, offering peer-to-peer trainings on sustainable development and involving youth in addressing climate change.

Closing remarks were delivered by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Youth in Jordan, Dr. Hussein Jbour, and the co-chairs of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, Minister Hasna Ben Slimane from Tunisia and Ambassador Antonio Bernadini, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OECD.

### To build a resilient recovery for youth after COVID-19, participants highlighted the need to:

- ▶ **Adopt an integrated approach** to delivering policies, programmes and services to young people, for instance through national youth strategies that follow the principles of good governance.
- ▶ **Build administrative capacity** among the ministries in charge of youth affairs in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of youth policy and programmes at central and subnational levels.
- ▶ **Anticipate the challenges and trends** that will impact on the wellbeing of youth and future generations, such as digitalisation and climate change, through the use of age-disaggregated evidence and governance tools to assess the "youth impact" in rulemaking and public budgeting.

- ▶ **Empower youth in building resilience** through the collection and use of open data, the design of national volunteering programmes and respective legal frameworks, peer-to-peer training programmes in the field of sustainable development; and the creation of youth advisory bodies in areas such as climate policy.

### WAY FORWARD

- ▶ MENA countries welcomed the regional dialogue and invited the OECD to prepare the **next editions of the MENA-OECD Youth Event** to discuss ways of lifting young people out of the COVID-19 crisis as highlighted by Tunisia.
- ▶ In response to the call to further strengthen the evidence base and regional comparative evidence on youth in MENA by MENA countries, the OECD will elaborate **a regional youth report for the MENA region from a public governance perspective**.
- ▶ In response to calls by Egypt to **enhance young people's literacy of sustainable development** and Tunisia to enhance **regional dialogue and spaces for voluntary work among youth**, the OECD stands ready to support these efforts.
- ▶ The OECD will disseminate a **survey among youth-led organisations** that will feed into the second edition of a Policy Paper on the impact of COVID-19 on youth and countries' response and recovery plans. The survey was welcomed by the participants.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:

- The ["Youth after COVID-19" Event Website](#)
- [OECD work on youth empowerment in MENA](#)
- [OECD work on youth empowerment and intergenerational justice](#), featuring the OECD report ["Fit for all generations?"](#) and Policy Paper ["Youth and COVID-19"](#)