

PRESS RELEASE

Investing in Digital Technologies Leads to More Jobs and Better Inclusion For Mediterranean Youth

Marseille, 4 November, 2016 – Investing in digital technologies creates employment opportunities for young people in the Mediterranean and increases their inclusion. More generally, digital technologies constitute a driver for economic development in the Mediterranean. These were the main conclusions of the one-day regional dialogue between Mediterranean ministers, youth, private sector representatives and development organizations from across the Mediterranean.

Globally, digital technologies have demonstrated extraordinary developmental benefits notably in terms of growth, jobs, and service delivery. Access to digital technologies has particularly benefitted youth, both young women and men. It provided them with opportunities for self-employment and allowed them to create startups, build professional networks, find employment and strengthen their capacities. In brief, digital technologies increased the inclusion of youth. They also gave the opportunity to break existing gender barriers.

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), while there is significant potential across the region, the take-up of digital technologies has been slow. With half of MENA's population under 25 years old and youth unemployment being the highest in the world, more countries now recognize that digital technologies are crucial to their efforts to reduce poverty and create job opportunities, especially for their young populations.

What should Governments, development agencies, and private sector do to unlock the potential of digital technologies?

This question was at the core of the regional dialogue “Digital Technologies for Economic Development in the Mediterranean”, jointly organized by the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), the French Agency for Development (AFD) and the World Bank Group, in the context of the 10th Mediterranean Economic Week: “Digital Technology for a Connected Mediterranean”.

The dialogue concluded with a ministerial session that drew on local experiences and agreed on the following priorities:

- **Jobs in the digital world are knowledge-intensive and skills-driven:** Fostering the use of digital technologies alone does not create jobs for youth. Investing in human capital and improving soft and entrepreneurial skills through education is a condition and a priority.
- **Digital connectivity is a right for everyone:** For digital technologies to benefit everyone everywhere the digital disparities need to be closed, especially in Internet access.
- **Viewing MENA youth as a dividend not a threat:** There are 200 million young people in the Middle East and North Africa, this constitutes an opportunity and a dividend to the region's digital economy.
- **Investing in ultra-fast broadband (UFB):** It has been estimated that a 10 percent rise in the market penetration of broadband services in developing countries increases the gross domestic product (GDP) by 1.38 percent on average.
- **Ensuring regulatory and legal frameworks:** To get the most out of the digital revolution, countries also need to strengthen their legal framework ensuring competition among businesses. This framework will promote a vibrant business climate and will enable companies to leverage digital technologies to compete and innovate.

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