



Center for Mediterranean Integration

The Valmer Series

Policy Brief

**Transforming Arab Economies: The
Knowledge and Innovation Agenda**

A Strategic Vision for the Mediterranean

July 2013

Foreword

The transition taking place across the Mediterranean region underscores the importance of broad-based job-creating economic growth. The ongoing changes not only point to the economic and social dimensions of inclusive development, but also highlight the democratic space, which accommodates deliberation, debate and dialogue throughout the region. It is within this openness that the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) seeks to bolster knowledge and facilitate public policy choices.

We want—with our members and partners—to support and complement the efforts and actions of public and independent institutions on the southern rim of the Mediterranean. The value that we can provide rests in being substantially useful in the transitions and emerging integration of the region—and ultimately supporting the creation of good jobs, democratic participation, as well as an emphasis on social inclusion and equity. Pathways to change are hard, however crucial.

Integration continues to be the defining approach of CMI 2.0. As a collaborative platform for sharing knowledge, CMI 2.0. aims to bring about regional convergence and consensus on reform in a context where partnership is one of the most promising responses to the global crisis and the aftermath of the “Arab Spring”. Acting as a network among networks in support of reforms toward transformation and regional integration, CMI 2.0. strives to offer a forum for dialogue and learning that adds value to the efforts of its members and partners.

For the past three years, we have shared a journey, starting with the aim of supporting development and the integration of practices across the Mediterranean. We pursued this aim by providing a space for evidence-based policy dialogue; producing and disseminating significant knowledge; supporting cross-sectoral, multi-partner regional efforts. Along the way, we welcomed new partners and seized new opportunities.

Moving forward, CMI 2.0. remains a multi-partnership platform building networks and communities of practice around three integrational themes: the development of integrated economies, promotion of sustainable growth, and support for participatory governance. These crucial themes build on the work done over the last years and resonating with the new socio-economic context of the Southern Mediterranean countries.

Our value is embodied in the range of outputs delivered, all designed to stimulate a virtuous circle of mutually reinforcing reflections and actions: the delivery of various products and practices, high-level dialogue in policy forums that broaden knowledge and evidence among Mediterranean leaders and opinion-shapers, including those from the private sector and civil society.

Dialogues have the power to boost the development of vibrant communities of practice, which bring together peoples from the northern and the southern rim of the Mediterranean working on common themes. CMI 2.0. is unique in proposing to its partners a platform and venue for joint collaboration.

In that spirit, the Rencontre Valmer series of events aims to bring together a community of decision makers, experts and journalists from to discuss and reflect on the economic and social implications of the region’s transformation, and ultimately contribute to its long-term development and integration.

Mats KARLSSON
Director of CMI

Introduction

Knowledge has always been central to development and remains so. Thanks to the development of the Internet and a variety of new information and communication technologies (ICT), knowledge is now becoming global and more accessible. Along with this dramatic technological change has come a globalization of economies, with intensified competition and the emergence of more sophisticated value chains in production processes. Across the globe, far-sighted leaders are currently searching for new ideas and strategies to deal with a changed reality and new international challenges.

A thousand years ago, the Arab world led the world in knowledge, prosperity, and development. It is high time for restoring these knowledge-based traditions to the Southern Mediterranean region. Its countries are in the process of revisiting their growth and development strategies and working on acquiring have broad-based and inclusive growth. To cope with the daunting challenges they face, particularly the huge need to create jobs and to develop more productive economies, Arab countries would do well to embrace a renewed economic model, that of the knowledge- and innovation-driven economy. Indeed, the era when natural resources dominated trade has given way to an era where knowledge resources are paramount.

Traveling the road to the knowledge economy can ensure a sustainable growth trajectory, one that generates the jobs the region critically needs to keep its people, particularly the young, productively employed. It is not an easy road. Choosing it means expanding and deepening reforms in key policy areas to develop more entrepreneurial economies, creating more innovative industries, preparing a cadre of better educated and more highly skilled people, and nurturing societies that are more open and competitive. The implantation of this new model would need to be adapted to each country's specificities and capabilities and inspired by a pragmatic approach, which gathers low-hanging fruit—relatively easy opportunities to create new wealth and jobs—in order to build trust and confidence in the reforms. Deeper integration within the Southern Mediterranean region would help considerably in making the transition to this new model.

CMI 20.0 is acting as a catalyst to mobilize interest, including resources, of different actors who are concerned by this process in the various partner countries. The *Transforming Knowledge Economies: Traveling the Knowledge and Innovation Road* report is a first step in that direction. It was prepared together with the World Bank (MENA region and the World Bank Institute), the European Investment Bank (EIB), and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). In parallel, CMI 2.0. is set to work on different country-based consultations, as in Morocco and Tunisia, and will continue to engage its members to take this agenda forward.

The Second Rencontre Valmer on Transforming Arab Economies: the Knowledge and Innovation Road held on October 18, 2012 in Marseille convened international experts and officials from rims of the Mediterranean, as well as researchers, journalists, and civil society representatives to share their views and discuss ways to move towards implementation of the knowledge economy agenda.

This policy brief draws from the rich discussions and exchanges that took place on that occasion, and lays out a set of strategic recommendations for countries of the Southern Mediterranean, engaged in a historic transition.

Moving onto the Knowledge and Innovation Road

The application of knowledge—manifested in areas like entrepreneurship and innovation, research and development, education and skills—is now recognized to be one of the critical sources of growth in the global economy. However, sustainability of growth is a challenge in many countries both due to internal pressures linked to emerging skills shortages and to external competitiveness pressures linked to the intensified market rivalries brought on by the knowledge and ICT-spurred globalization process. These trends make it very important for economies to be well prepared to be able to adapt, create, use, and disseminate knowledge.

Many countries are already seizing opportunities to move ahead on the knowledge economy, and are seeking new and innovative ways to boost their growth and competitiveness. A knowledge economy is one that has the policies, institutions, and capabilities in place to make effective use of knowledge to further its economic and social development. It is not the domain of only the few that have moved ahead; developing countries must exploit the opportunities presented by the knowledge revolution to reduce poverty and promote economic and social development. By building on their strengths and planning appropriate investments in human capital, effective institutions, relevant technologies and innovative and competitive enterprises, they too can capitalize on the knowledge era and make the transition to the knowledge economy.

For the greater part of the last millennium, countries of the Southern Mediterranean were socially, economically, and technologically very advanced. Beyond their differences, they shared an openness to knowledge and other cultures. They represented the predominant civilization from the 8th to the 13th century and remained very powerful until the 18th century. These countries made innumerable contributions in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, architecture, and philosophy. The Islamic world was the main “global” provider of knowledge. It reactivated and added to the discoveries of Greece and Rome, India and China. The hunger for knowledge does not, by itself, account for the golden age of Islam, but it was a major driving force. Progress on the intellectual front was paralleled by the development of an economy based on a monetary market and commerce, along with technological advances such as better and faster ships to service the merchant fleets.

Furthermore, the Southern Mediterranean region was faced with considerable economic challenges. It declined because it was unable to find its place in an economy of iron, coal, and steam, an inability shared by all Mediterranean countries. Scientific thought and the principles of the modern scientific method—based on the questioning of dogma and on systematic experimental research—shifted to northern Europe. This is one reason why the Southern Mediterranean region, and the Mediterranean region more generally, dropped behind. It suffered the same fate as other regions bypassed by the industrial revolution, namely a significant setback lasting over two centuries. At their independence, most Southern Mediterranean countries became dependent on oil and other resources. Encouraged by galloping demographics, they invested income from the oil boom in large infrastructure projects, education and public health. Their economic and institutional frameworks, however, left much to be desired in terms of governance, competition and transparency. Economic performance declined and poverty increased dramatically throughout the region.

Left behind by the industrial revolution, overly dependent on oil resources, and on the fringes of the globalization process, a number of Southern Mediterranean countries have embarked on structural reforms to overcome economic stagnation, mounting unemployment, and increasing poverty. At the same time, there has been growing awareness worldwide that the knowledge revolution offers new opportunities for growth resulting from the availability of information and communication, and from the

advent of a new form of global economic development rooted in the concept of the knowledge economy, which is based on the creation, acquisition, distribution, and use of knowledge.

A slow change is under way, with Southern Mediterranean countries gradually strengthening their economic systems. Over the past decades, several Arab countries have taken positive steps to spur growth and improve their global competitiveness by cultivating and using knowledge. In the past ten years, some of them made progress in terms of rolling out education access and information and communication technologies, improving the institutional environment for private sector led growth. Some have worked to support innovation through the creation of technoparks and industrial zones that have attracted foreign direct investment and advanced manufacturing operations. Others have embarked on a major effort to transform the education system at the early childhood, basic, and secondary levels to produce graduates with the skills needed for the knowledge economy. Lastly, a few countries have launched a host of education reforms and invested in the development of new universities to boost science and technology.

However, most Southern Mediterranean countries are still not keeping up with the pace in the rest of the world and cannot hope to do so under the present conditions. To progress, the region must face its internal challenges and become part of the knowledge and information revolution. Countries that fail to become part of this revolution risk becoming even more marginalized than those left aside in the earlier industrial revolution. If the region's new governments wish to take advantage of opportunities that lie within their reach, especially after the Arab Spring and the new era of openness and creativity that it has spurred, they must become the architects of new institutions and promoters and regulators of economies based on the purchase, production, and dissemination of knowledge. To cope with the daunting challenges that they face, particularly the huge need to create jobs, develop productive economies and ensure a sustainable growth trajectory, these countries must adopt a new economic model driven by knowledge and innovation.

This will neither be an easy road, nor a short-term dynamic. Choosing the knowledge economy will, indeed, mean expanding and deepening reforms in key policy areas to develop more entrepreneurial economies, fomenting more innovating industries, preparing a cadre of better educated and more highly skilled people, and nurturing societies that are more open and competitive.

CMI 2.0. Strategic Policy Recommendations

Since it was created, CMI's *raison d'être* has been to serve as a knowledge platform for dialogue and discussion. Quite naturally, it has embarked on the knowledge economy agenda in order to address this crucial topic. In 2013, a new report was released, building on the Rencontre Valmer exchanges, and launched at a high-level international conference that took place in Rabat on June 4-5¹. The idea was to discuss the concrete actions to help Southern Mediterranean countries move forward to a knowledge economy in their national contexts, as well as within the regional context.

Titled *Transforming Arab Economies: Traveling the Knowledge and Innovation Road*, this report was prepared in close consultation with policy makers and representatives of the private sector and civil society, as well as the World Bank's MENA region, WBI, EIB and ISESCO. It was designed with decisive information on the different policy pillars—education, innovation, information and communication technologies, and the overall governance and business climate—and on diversification initiatives to attract the interest of the different policy communities concerned with the new development model, along with partners and interested stakeholders in private sector and civil society.

The approach retained reflects the rich differences in challenges and opportunities across the region. Given the diversity of the Southern Mediterranean, it does not provide a cookie-cutter approach, but offers examples of good practices from countries around the world and policy recommendations to help guide efforts that should be customized to the specific circumstances of each country. It mainly shows how an economy based on innovation and knowledge can help promote greater economic growth and spur competitiveness, and underlines that greater investment in a knowledge-economy model is needed to meet the job creation challenge common to the region. It mainly aims at helping Southern Mediterranean countries imagine a new kind of development strategy with a knowledge and innovation-driven model at its very heart and lays out helpfully how this approach can help them diversify their economies and innovate, creating new enterprises and jobs.

This report also suggests that the extent of change depends in good part on how well the knowledge economy will take hold throughout the region. Creating jobs entails more investment in knowledge-related sectors and new emphasis on how to develop more competitive, productive, and sustainable economies. Just like other countries—Finland and Singapore, medium-sized ones like Malaysia and the Republic of Korea, and large like Brazil, China, and India—have been able to harness the power of technical change, countries of the Southern Mediterranean can do so too. However, patience and determination are required, because the fruits of investments in knowledge may not begin to appear for a few years.

The report further describes how engaging in a knowledge-economy model involves the adoption of a number of key cross-sectoral reforms that can create an incentivizing environment for innovation and growth. This will require the adoption of a combination of policies, including the development of more open and entrepreneurial economies, preparation of a more skilled labor force, improvement of innovation and research abilities, and expansion of information and communication technologies and their applications.

Knowledge transfer is another important element of this model, essential in organizing, creating and disseminating knowledge, especially through foreign direct investments and international trade in goods

¹ <http://beta.cmimarseille.org/highlights/rabat-declaration-moving-towards-new-development-strategies-countries-arab-world>

and services. Managing knowledge is a critical driver for enhancing productivity that, in turn, offers higher and sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, regional integration can be a positive asset to develop a stronger knowledge-economy development model in the region, which will help expand trade and develop more efficient labor markets.

In addition to structural reforms, CMI 2.0. recommends that governments in the region establish the appropriate conditions for the development of specific promising sectors and sites that can generate new activities and jobs. The development of dynamic “growth spots” will indeed help build trust and confidence in the new economic model and attract investments, economic activities and enhance knowledge sharing and innovation.

Last, the implementation of a true knowledge and innovation-based development strategy requires a vision, strong coordination at the top level of government, and a participatory approach to mobilize the populations to back the needed reforms. Sustained strategic efforts are needed to obtain solid outcomes and to anchor the new practices so that they will endure over the medium to long term. The real challenge, especially for the private sector, is to develop more competitiveness and identify “niche markets” in the global economy.

Appendices

Biographies

Mukhtar AHMED

Deputy Director General, ISESCO



Professor Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed is Deputy Director General, ISESCO since February 2011. With a Bachelor's and Master's of Science degree from the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan and Master's in Business Administration and Ph.D. from the University of California, Riverside, USA, he has over 24 years of educational development and management experience, including teaching, research, policy development, linking educational research to industry/commercialization, and introducing entrepreneurial approaches to education and a diverse range of educational development programs. His distinguished career has been enriched with diverse academic, research and administrative experience, both in the public and private sectors of higher education in Pakistan. He has worked with numerous educational institutions in different capacities as Lecturer, Associate Professor, Professor, Chairman/Head of Departments, Dean, Rector, Member (Operations and Planning), Acting Executive Director, Consultant Coordinator, Project Director, Director Student Affairs, Director Campus, etc.

Jean-Eric AUBERT

Senior Advisor, Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI)



Jean-Eric Aubert, international expert, formerly Lead Specialist at the World Bank Institute, used to manage WBI's Knowledge Economy work. He also managed the World Bank office in Marseille (France) focused on urban development in the Mediterranean area. Prior to joining the World Bank in 2000, Jean-Eric Aubert worked at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) where he used to lead science, technology and innovation policy studies. He has also been consultant for a number of international organizations including UN agencies and the European Commission. Throughout his career, Jean-Eric Aubert has worked as policy evaluator and advisor in more than 40 countries at all levels of development. Jean-Eric Aubert, a French national, holds post-graduate diplomas in Economics and a Ph.D. in Applied Mathematics from Paris Universities.

Ahmed BENGHAZI

Director General, Axis Capital, Tunisia



Ahmed Benghazi held several senior positions at the Ministry of Economic Development, Tunisia (former Ministry of Planning and Finance) where he worked for eleven years and contributed to the development of several macroeconomic reports (Economic Budgets, Development Plans, internal reports, etc.). He has also been involved in designing and monitoring the Tunisian privatization program. He then became the first CEO of Maghreb Rating, a subsidiary of Fitch, the international

rating agency and the first rating agency in the MENA Region. In 2001, he founded Axis with a group of associates. Mr. Benghazi has been member of the Board of several institutions such as Banque Tunisienne et des Emirats, Societe des Berges du Lac, Institut National de la Statistique, etc. He is a graduate of Harvard University, Ecole Nationale d'Administration de Tunis et Faculté de Sciences Economiques de Tunis.

Rachid BENMOKHTAR

President, National Observatory of Human Development, Morocco



Rachid Benmokhtar Benabdallah started his career with IBM France in 1967. In 1973, he founded, together with other engineers, the first Moroccan consulting firm specialized in Information Technology. In 1978, he was the co-founder and president of the subsidiary of Parsons Brinckerhoff engineering company (New York) in Morocco, today CID. From 1980 to 1995 he served as Visiting Professor at the Mohammedia School of Engineering. In 1995, he was appointed by Late King Hassan II Minister of Education and in 1998 President of Al Akhawayn University in Ifran.

In July 2006 he was appointed by His Majesty King Mohammed VI chairman and president of the National Observatory for Human Development.

Mr. Benmokhtar is also Vice-chairman of the Moroccan Foundation for Advanced Science, Innovation and Research (MAScIR), member of the Economic and Social Council of the Kingdom of Morocco, member of the Hassan II Academy for Science and Technology, member of the board of the "Foundation of Three Cultures of the Mediterranean" (Spain) and member of the Advisory Board of the Alliance for Research on North Africa (ARENA, university of Tsukuba, Japan), member of the Statistical Advisory Panel (UNDP) and member of the Advisory Council for Science Works (USA). He also served as Chairman of the scientific committee of the Fifty years of Independence Report on Human Development (2003-2006), as member of the Advisory Board of the World Bank Institute (1998-2001), as member of the United Nations Committee of Experts in Public Administration (2001-2009). Rachid Benmokhtar Benabdallah is a Higher Institute of Aeronautics and Space Engineering (Toulouse) and an International Institute of Management Development (IMD Lausanne, Switzerland) alumnus.

A. Hamid EL-ZOHEIRY

President of Heliopolis University in Cairo, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Scientific Research, Egypt



A. Hamid El-Zoheiry graduated from the Medical School at Cairo University in 1985, obtaining a Master's degree in 1989, then a Doctorate degree in 1994. He was at the department of Ear Nose and Throat Surgery at Cairo University School of Medicine and was promoted to the title of Professor in 2004. He then pursued a career in education and research management, obtaining a Master's Degree in Health Professions Education from Maastricht University, Netherlands in 2006.

During the past ten years, he has acquired extensive experience in international cooperation in education, research and innovation, including development of numerous international partnerships with Euro-Mediterranean institutions and organizations and management of numerous collaborative educational and research projects and related activities. Since 2006, he has been

working at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research as the International Cooperation Advisor for the Minister, and from 2007 – 2012 served as the Executive director of the Research Development and Innovation Program at the Ministry of Scientific Research. In September 2012 was appointed President of Heliopolis University in Cairo. He has represented Egypt in several regional/international senior officials policy committees and councils, including the Monitoring Committee for the Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in Research and Technological Development (MoCo), the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST), and the Africa-EU Research Senior Officials Meeting (SOM). He is the Moderator of the Medical Sector Committee at the Supreme Council of Egyptian Universities. He is also the chair of the Technical Committee of the ESCWA Technology Center and an active member of several international societies and organizations, including the International Society for Professional Innovation Management.

Mats KARLSSON

Director, Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI)



Mats Karlsson has been engaged in international development and integration since 1983. After positions in Swedish administration, politics and government, he joined the World Bank in 1999, as Vice President of External Affairs, where he since has been focusing on global governance, African development, and now Maghreb development and Mediterranean cooperation. He is currently Director of the Center for Mediterranean Integration in Marseille. As State Secretary 1994-99, he focused on changing international development cooperation, as well as Sweden's response to European integration. He was Secretary in the Commission on Global Government. He has published four books on the transformation and integration of Central and Eastern Europe. He studied economics and philosophy at the University of Stockholm, and music at the academies of Vienna and Prague from 1978-80.

Leif PAGROTSKY

Former Minister of Finance and of Education, Research and Culture, Sweden



Leif Pagrotsky is member of the Swedish Parliament for the Social Democratic Party since 2006. After getting a [Bachelor of Arts](#) and a [Master of Science in economics](#) from [Gothenburg University](#), he entered the [Central Bank of Sweden](#) in 1975. He was a Swedish Minister between 1996 and 2006. From 1977 to 1996, he worked in the Cabinet and the Ministry of Finance, as well as Under-Secretary of State in 1994. In 1996, Leif Pagrotsky became Minister in the Prime Minister's office. He came back to the Ministry of Finance in 1977 before being Minister for Trade in 1997, which changed into Ministry for Industry and Trade in 2002 until 2004. Then Leif Pagrotsky was appointed Minister for Education, Research and Culture. From 2006 to 2011, he was Vice Chairman of the Council of the Central Bank of Sweden. In addition to these Ministerial functions, he was previously and currently member of several Boards including the European Investment Bank (1995-1996), Swedish Performing Rights Society (since 2006) and the St Petersburg Graduate School of Management (since 2007).

Fathallah SIJILMASSI

Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean (Ufm)



On February 10th 2012, the UfM Senior officials adopted by consensus the nomination of Mr. Fathallah Sijilmassi for the post of the Secretary General of the UfM.

Prior to this post, Mr. Sijilmassi was the Managing Director of the Moroccan Investment Development Agency. This position enabled him to benefit from his diplomatic experience in the implementation of development projects in Morocco.

Fathallah Sijilmassi is a career diplomat. He started in the Public Service in the Moroccan Ministry for Foreign Trade (1992-1999). He then held the position of Director for Multilateral Cooperation at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (1999-2001), then Director for European Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (2001-2003). During this period, he served as Morocco's representative to the Euro-Med Barcelona Process. From 2003 until 2004 he was the Ambassador of Morocco to the European Union and then to France (2004-2009). Throughout his career, Mr. Sijilmassi has been actively involved in the negotiations of Free Trade Agreements, which Morocco achieved with the European Union, the United States, and with several Arab and African countries. He also worked for three years in the private sector as a banker in Milan-Italy (1989-1992).

Mr. Sijilmassi was born on August 21, 1966 in Rabat, Morocco. He holds a PhD in Economics and a post graduate degree in Political Sciences from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Grenoble, France. He has been the recipient of several decorations including Officier de la Legion d'honneur and Grand Officier de l'Ordre National du Mérite from the French Republic. He is fluent in Arabic, French, English and Italian. He is married and has two children.

Anuja UTZ

Senior Operations Officer, Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI)



Dr. Anuja Utz is Senior Operations Officer at the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI). During 2010-2012, she was Deputy Director of the CMI. As Program Leader for the Knowledge Economy, she contributes substantively to the Center's work programs, including leading the work on the Knowledge Economy for Growth and Employment for MENA. Before this assignment, she was the Program Leader of the *Knowledge for Development (K4D)* Program at the World Bank Institute (WBI) from 2009-10 where managed the design and delivery of a variety of analytical pieces as well as capacity building fora for high-level policymakers from Africa, East Asia, Latin America, and MENA related to the knowledge economy. She is the author of the World Bank report on *India and the Knowledge Economy*, and a contributor to *Building Knowledge Economies: Advanced Strategies for Development and Innovation Policy: A Guide for Developing Countries*. She has done work on innovation and competitiveness, and collaborated on country strategy reports on the knowledge economy for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Korea, and Tanzania. In addition to more than 15 years experience as a development specialist at the World Bank, she has also taught and carried out research at Emory University, USA, where she received both her Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Economics.

List of Participants

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