

## Leading career development services into an uncertain future: Ensuring access, integration and innovation

### Country paper: Syria

In advance of the symposium, all attending countries are asked to produce a country paper setting out the key issues for their countries in relation to the key themes of the conference.

Please use this template to enter your information. You should aim to be concise. Use bullet points and links rather than providing a lot of local detail. **The paper should be no more than 10 pages in length.**

How to submit:

- Download the Country Paper Template, save this on your computer.
- Prepare the country paper based on consultation within the country team and preferably with relevant national authorities and information sources.
- Submit the Country Paper by sending it to [jmc@iccdpp.org](mailto:jmc@iccdpp.org) (John McCarthy, director ICCDPP)
- Deadline: **31<sup>st</sup> of January**

If you have questions concerning the country paper, please contact John McCarthy ([jmc@iccdpp.org](mailto:jmc@iccdpp.org))

### Background information

1. List all of the members of your country team with their organisation.

- Neruda Barakat, Director of theSkills and Career Center, Tishreen University, Latakia, Syria.

2. What are the key aims your country has for participating in this symposium?

- Meeting key policymakers and representatives from participating countries and discuss with them possible and hopefully deep and high level cooperation in career development and enhancing linkage between higher education and labour market.

- Trying to find practical/innovative solutions for high unemployment rates in Syria especially underemployment (or at least try to minimize its effects on society).

- Benefitting from the outcomes of the symposium in suggesting new actions and introducing new services related to career development into sectors of education, employment, and guidance in Syrian associations and institutions.



## Theme #1 - Context and challenges for career development policy.

In your country...

3. Is the level of policy interest in career development:

- Growing?
- Shrinking?
- Staying about the same?

Comment

Many articles on the local (government) media shows a big interest and cooperation with local and international NGOs in enhancing people's career status and fighting poverty BUT on the ground you barely see a change and most people can't even make enough money to survive.

4. What are the key political, social, economic and technological issues that are likely to have an impact on people's lives and careers in your country?

Give up to five of the most important issues as you see them.

1	The war in Syria
2	Most men are either at the military service or hiding so they don't go to serve there or (please see 3)
3	Most men (and women if they can) are seeking refugee or immigration elsewhere even in countries that are not of good life standards (Iraq, Lebanon, ....)
4	Most available jobs in Syria now do not require high skills except working in high positions with international organisations
5	Problems in access to employment especially to governmental associations/organisations/companies....(most people want to be employed by the government in various ministries and their directorates because they consider it a stable employment that has an end with retirement and does not involve sacking at all BUT in fact, the salaries given to employees of the government are so small that almost all of these employees seek another job somewhere else, hence they need to be absent from their original government job to do their other jobs, and this impacts on opportunities for work for everyone....)
6	Low spending on employability skills (from the government) and that is mainly because the many sanctions on Syria from the West meant the Syrian government has excuses not to spend on developing people's lives/education/skills/career development...etc.

5. What roles do career development programmes and services play in addressing these political, social, economic and technological challenges?

Almost, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MSAL) provides all of such programs and services (represented by its directorates in most Syrian cities) along with their partners from some local NGOs and some International organisations (UNDP, UNHCR, etc....).

That includes a few events, fairs, workshops, programs for training vulnerable people (women, especially widows and divorced with children), unemployed young men and women and people with disabilities (PWDs).

Still, such programs are not that well achieved or welcome by many people from the target groups mentioned above as they provide very little financial help that is not enough for surviving.



## Theme #2 - Aims for, and access to, career development

In your country...

6. What are the key policy aims for career development programmes and services?

- To try to raise the employment of all national capacities through strategies and programs that promote individual productivity, active labour market trends, and microfinance to ensure maximum productivity of individuals and adapt their skills to labour market needs, and link education outcomes to labour market needs and productive sectors of various economic forms.

- To achieve social and environmental development enabling the full integration of society segments into the development process with a focus on poor and vulnerable groups, particularly in rural areas through rural development programs, empowerment services and capacity building provided by rural development centres and units of rural industries run by the ministry in all Syrian governates.

7. What groups of people can access career development programmes and services and what groups are excluded?

People with access (theoretically but not always practically):

1- Unemployed people (but those registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour) MSAL and its directorates in the Syrian cities [http://www.msal.gov.sy/Ar/SitePage?sysCode=2#tab\\_205](http://www.msal.gov.sy/Ar/SitePage?sysCode=2#tab_205) (translated by Google from Arabic).

2. State employed people (for few IT training courses, social services, insurance, retiring services, etc....).

3. Internally displaced people (but mainly for services related to providing food and shelter and rarely for education and/or career development).

People excluded

1. University students

2. Unemployed people (who did not register with MSAL and its directorates).

3. Private sector employees

8. How are the opinions of citizens and service users heard and incorporated into policy and practice?

Theoretically, the following are the ways in which citizens and users' voices are heard: feedback forms after each training workshop, complaints boxes distributed at the directorates of MSAL, meetings on specific days between citizens and managers of MSAL directorates and sometimes with the minister herself.

9. Is there a framework for ethical practice in career development? How does this framework balance the interests of the individual with the demands of policy and signals from the labour market?

Practically, there is no formal framework available for that BUT the policy priority that MSAL and its partners usually have is for people with disabilities (PWDs), divorced/widowed women, and poor young people with no higher education.



### Theme #3 – Integrating career development into wider society.

In your country...

10. Which ministries or jurisdictions are responsible for career development programmes and services? Clarify what programmes and services each ministry or jurisdiction has responsibility for.

Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MSAL):

[http://www.msal.gov.sy/Ar/SitePage?sysCode=2#tab\\_205](http://www.msal.gov.sy/Ar/SitePage?sysCode=2#tab_205)

All the programs run by MSAL are done with partnerships with some local NGOs, International organisations, and very few times with the private labour market; these programs include training specific vulnerable target groups on how to learn a certain profession (usually handcrafts, computer and mobile maintenance, sewing, hairdressing, soap and wax making, etc....)

UNDP in Syria

[www.sy.undp.org](http://www.sy.undp.org)

Programs vary between the above-mentioned (MSAL programs) and sometimes projects where target individuals are given a full set of equipment to start a small business (encouraging entrepreneurship).

UNHCR through local NGOs and churches (but very little career development programs and services are delivered by them)

[www.unhcr.org/sy](http://www.unhcr.org/sy)

- There are no policies from Ministries of Education nor Higher Education to link education with the labour market although there are few universities who opened a career centre and there are continuous mentioning of strategic plans to support students transfer from HE to work but with no effect at all.

11. What leadership, co-ordination and collaboration approaches exist within the career development system to ensure collaboration across different sectors and different types of clients. For example, how are career development systems within the education system connected to those within employment, health and youth work?

There are some partnerships between MSAL directorates and the private labour market along with NGOs supported by international organisations such as UNDP or UNHCR or the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The support given to beneficiaries is limited in general and doesn't last more than 6 months of training on how to run small businesses or learn a handcraft (usually 6 months is so little for that) but during such training, those trainees are given some money or equipment to help them start their business or profession (sewing, repairing computers and mobiles, etc.....).

On the other hand, the Skills and Career Center at Tishreen University for example has organised and initiated some agreements between the university and some labour market companies (mainly private) to run internships (mostly unpaid) for students from a couple of faculties (fields of study).

These internships are of at least 3 months after which we had few cases of employments for these students at the companies for monthly-based contracts which satisfy all sides.

There are no well established partnerships nor clear cooperation between ministries in Syria about linking young people to the labour market. Most of the cases of cooperation are conducted by international organisations working in Syria now and such events usually target people with disabilities, internally displaced people and women with little or no education.

12. What are the main challenges to leadership in the field and the main obstacles to effective collaboration?

Lack of interest from leaders of institutions either from education and/or private labour market.

Also, international organisations along with their partners from MSAL usually prefer to run little projects and mainly they target poor people with limited number of beneficiaries and with little budget and all such projects are just a response to the Syrian crisis.

13. What kind of cooperation (if any) is there between the career development services and stakeholders like employers, trade unions, the media, NGOs, professional organisations etc?

There is theoretically a lot of cooperation between MSAL, local NGOs and the private labour market but very few cases are available and seen on the media.

There are no trade unions in Syria at all. There are though syndicates for engineers, doctors, pharmacists, etc... but their main job actually is related to organising the professions and set rules related to retirement and insurance etc.. but not for career development.

Some private sector companies do organise events to support students but this is done at a very small scale.

Very few career fairs were organised in Syria (here at Tishreen University, we are trying to organise quite a big one soon with local and national companies along with the students union at the university).

Some of the cases that are worthy of mentioning is that some huge companies like AMAN Holding Group <http://www.aman-holding.com> (owner is SamerFoz, one of the richest people now in Syria) have established their own NGO in Latakia.

14. How is the professionalism of career development workers developed and maintained whilst working with other professionals?

Training and study visits by professionals and university lecturers sometimes. Also, private training schools are invited to do that but for a high cost. Participation in study visits and conferences in the EU (the director of the Career Center of Tishreen University had 3 different visits to EU universities within Erasmus+ for career development study visits; Barcelona, TU Berlin, Santiago de Compostela)..

15. Do other types of professionals (e.g. teachers and social workers) deliver career development? How is a professional service ensured?

Rarely.

There is no professional service in career development delivered in Syria!

There are no formal or informal links between those who are working in career guidance in public or private universities. In fact, the number of those who work in this sector is so little.



#### Theme #4 - Leading innovative change for the future.

In your country...

16. What are the key innovations or ways that career development programmes and services have changed over the last 10 years? This could include changes relating to technology, practice, management and governance and the use of new theories and evidence.

Before the war started in 2011, the Ministry of Higher Education had career guidance as one component of an EU project Upgrading HE in Syria that had a labour market policy and career guidance provision as a component. Plans were developed for career guidance corners on public university websites and for a national website for HE graduates. The MSAL also was developing career guidance centres in major cities with the help of UNDP. None of this has progressed because of the war.

Skills and career centres were established at few governmental and private university to provide career guidance service to university students. This did not work well except for Tishreen University, Latakia city and Damascus University, Damascus.

In these 2 university, much of the career development services were focused on training workshops for skills required by the labour market so students could improve them.

A separate paragraph will be provided for Tishreen University career center.

Other universities such as Aleppo, Al-Furat (Der Azor) did establish career centers but they didn't work well because of the war and specifically because the number of students and also staff was limited and the main interest of these 2 universities were just to accomplish teaching and exams and research etc.....

17. How do national policies and initiatives, where they exist, ensure and support the development of innovation in career development services provision?

At the moment, it is a struggle to obtain any resources for career guidance at an institutional level and there is no mention of career guidance at a policy and programme level in the ministries of education, higher education, and labour. It's not a priority in a country devastated by war.

18. What new, innovative and promising interventions in career development programmes and services is your country planning for the future? How are such innovations making the most of open data initiatives, online technologies, artificial intelligence and other forms of innovation?

When the war ends, there will have to be a review of pre-existing policies and proposals e.g. national and institutional career guidance provision including websites and helplines etc.

19. How is the training and continuing professional development (CPD) of careers professionals encouraging innovation and taking account of new evidence as well as changes in technology and the labour market?

There is no formal training programme for career professionals in Syria and no national association of practitioners. These were proposals before the war started.

## Final reflections

20. Is there anything else that you could like to address through participating in this symposium?

I would like to provide few details about the Skills and Career Center at Tishreen University which I head since its establishment in 2011 upon a TEMPUS project with the EU.

The main activities we run at the centre can be categorized into three:

1. Designing and delivering high quality training workshops on transferable skills required by the local and international labour market such as communication skills, teamwork skills, IT skills, problem-solving, critical thinking, leadership, etc....and also CV and cover letter writing, job interview skills and job search skills. These workshops are delivered by volunteers (students/graduates/staff from university and experts from the labour market)



who are well equipped with required competences either from volunteering in general and/or from working with the labour market. More than 10,000 students have attended such workshops (2011-2018)

2. Internship programs with local and national companies/associations for various fields of study. These internships last for at least 3 months. So far, the career center along with faculties and the local labour market has send around 500 students for internships for 1 month and 3 months. (2014-2018).
3. Meetings with labour market experts at the university premises (faculties). Because the weekly schedule for lectures at most faculties is so tight, we couldn't organise a lot of such events but the ones we did proved to be very successful. Students appreciated that the graduates of their own university are now employed by certain companies and taking responsibilities in many aspects and progressing in their career. Around 30 events like this we organised (2014-2018).