



July 2019

med dialogue series | no. 21

KAS Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean



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ADENAUER  
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## Executive Summary

# The Maghreb's Got Talent, but it's leaving the region

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*This Executive Summary is based on the full version of the article in French "Quand le Maghreb perd ses talents"*

The phenomenon of skilled workers departing from the central Maghreb has accelerated considerably over the last twenty years. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the average share of Maghrebi immigrants with a university education has increased, on average, from 9.2% in 1990 to 22.3% in 2010. This situation can be firstly explained by the standardization of diplomas, which has made young graduates eligible for integration into the international labor market, as well as the difficult socio-economic situation in their countries of origin.

This situation raises questions in certain strategic sectors threatened by this massive loss of skills. In medicine, the National Order of Tunisian Doctors claims that 45% of new registrants have left the country. On the Algerian side, more than 25% of graduates, who are candidates to leave, come from a medical school. Even though the direct consequences of this exodus are difficult to quantify, they will most certainly contribute to medical desertification and the privatization of the health sector, which is being done at a sustained pace in countries like Tunisia or Morocco. It is also in the technology sector that the phenomenon generally known as brain drain is a concern. While more than 600 engineers leave Morocco each year, Tunisia suffers an annual loss of more than 1,500 engineers.

When it comes to positive returns, it seems that the balance between losses and gains for the sub-region is uneven. Among Tunisian migrants, for example, the probability of returning home decreases with the level of education. When it comes to remittances, skilled immigrants do not seem to be making remittances as their less skilled counterparts do. Among Moroccan migrants living in Spain, for example, the level of education is inversely proportional to the probability of making remittances to their country of origin.

With an unemployment rate ranging from 9% to 15%, according to the World Bank, the desire to integrate into a more dynamic labor market seems to be the most obvious factor explaining the skills drain in the Maghreb. Among more subjective considerations, a Moroccan employment portal reveals that 56% of respondents are dissatisfied with the country's quality of life and working environment. In Tunisia, a student association reports that one out of three departures is motivated by the country's situation and a demise of trust in institutions.

While it is difficult to compete with the professional opportunities offered by foreign countries, the Maghreb countries can still work on the willingness of emigrants to undertake business in their country of origins. A survey reveals that more than 54% of expatriates want to return to Morocco to contribute to its development. In Tunisia, almost 40% of emigrants want to do the same. However, in both cases, it is a lack of stimulating professional sectors and failing institutions that constitute the main obstacle to return.

## Key facts

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- The average share of immigrants with a university degree has increased, on average, from 9.2% in 1990 to 22.3% in 2010.
- In 2017, 45% of newly licensed Tunisian doctors left the country.
- More than 600 engineers leave Morocco each year; Tunisia suffers a loss of more than 1,500 engineers.

## Potential returns for the countries of origin

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- Among Tunisian migrants, the probability of returning home decreases with the level of education.
- The level of education among Moroccans in Spain is inversely proportional to the probability of making remittances to their country of origin.

## Reasons for leaving

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- 56% of respondent to the survey conducted by the Moroccan employment portal *Rekrute*, are dissatisfied with the country's quality of life and working environment.
- In Tunisia, one out of three departures is motivated by the country's situation and a deterioration in confidence in institutions.

## Potential improvements

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- 54% of expatriates want to return to Morocco to contribute to its development.
- In Tunisia, almost 40% of emigrants want to do the same.

In both cases a lack of stimulating professional sectors and failing institutions constitute the main obstacle to return.

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