



Tunisia ICT Competitiveness Project Newsletter

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PROJECT VOICES

FROM THE CHIEF OF PARTY

I am pleased to introduce the first issue of the new biweekly newsletter of the USAID Tunisia ICT Competitiveness Project. With each issue, we hope to present the Project's activities and accomplishments, as well as developments in Tunisia's dynamic ICT and ICT-enabled sectors, and in the economy as a whole.

Our Project team is dedicated to helping the ICT sector and related industries to improve their competitiveness and to create jobs, presenting Tunisia on the international arena at its most competitive and innovative, and to helping workers become well prepared for those jobs.

Together with our partners, we strive to accomplish this through a diverse range of activities that span three broad areas: ICT and ICT-enabled entrepreneurship, workforce development, and improving the business enabling environment.

Today, Tunisia is well on its way to becoming an active information society. We are confident that the USAID ICT Competitiveness Project will help to build on the existing communication infrastructure and leverage communication tools to further expand access to information, accelerate the exchange of knowledge, create jobs, and fuel economic and social development in this critical time of transition.

ICT Job Fair Organized by the USAID Project Links Jobseekers to Employers

Resumes in hand, jobseekers queued in front of recruiting tables representing Tunisia's leading ICT companies. An employment fair organized by the USAID ICT Competitiveness Project attracted over 3,000 aspiring ICT professionals to the Tunis Science City on November 8.

For the candidates, the job fair, "Tunisi@Work," represented a welcome chance to offer their skills and enthusiasm to the leading suppliers and consumers of ICT services. Jobseekers received advice from career counselors on CV writing and interviewing, attended seminars on how to use IT to find a job, and heard career tips aimed at addressing skills gaps.

Over 80 ICT and ICT-enabled companies were present, offering over 875 jobs around the country. Attendees

praised the scope and breadth of recruiting companies and expressed hope that similar events would be offered in the future, including outside of the capital.

Speaking after the event, Mr. Amine Bakkar, a student at Tunisia Polytechnic School, was optimistic about his career prospects. "All participating companies were serious about their intentions to hire," he said. "They had real jobs to fill, so their attitude was really focused on screening and interviewing, which was different from previous events I attended."

And for the potential employers, the fair represented an opportunity to match available vacancies with best candidates. "Overall organization was excellent, and the jobseekers we



Right: Aspiring ICT professionals talk with a recruiter during the Tunisi@Work employment fair organized by the USAID ICT Competitiveness Project.

received mostly met our expectations,” said Mr. Alexandre Taisne, director of a Tunis-based company Phone World. “We have already preselected 300 candidates for our job openings and have been interviewing since the event.”

“We are impatiently waiting for similar events in the future so that we can be among the participants again,” he added.

Sixty-three ICT students from three universities served as volunteers at the event handing out maps, forms, and job search tips. A five-minute report on the job fair was featured during the evening news on Télévision

Tunisienne 1, the most watched TV channel.

The Project will tabulate exit questionnaires of participating employers and jobseekers and use them as a baseline to track subsequent job hires in one month.

The fair was sponsored in collaboration with local counterparts: the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the National Agency for Employment and Independent Work, Education for Employment Tunisia, and the Elgazala Technopark.



Over 3000 jobseekers and over 80 recruiting firms attended the job fair.

Project Highlights

- The Project and its anchor partner Microsoft Tunisia co-organized a recruitment event for a range of local SMEs participating in the Microsoft BizSpark enterprise support program. Microsoft and the Project agreed to jointly provide business consulting services, cost-shared technical assistance, and training for selected Microsoft partners.
- The Project conducted an Open Forum on ICT Entrepreneurship at WOWZAPP, a 48-hour nonstop global event sponsored by Microsoft for young software developers held simultaneously in 30 countries.
- The Project and its anchor partner BFPME, the SME finance bank, co-sponsored a SME recruitment event at the bank's Tunis headquarters. Eight BFPME clients reported plans to fill 38 positions in the near future.
- By invitation, the Project has embedded a SME banking expert in the Banque Internationale Arabe de Tunisie (BIAT) to help the bank formulate SME segment strategy, review client assessment processes, and provide training in SME lending.
- The Project launched equity finance consulting for three ICT firms, two

private equity firms, one leasing finance company, and the government export promotion agency CEPEX.

- Two companies in Sousse have committed to train 29 new hires in the areas of business English and workplace success. This pilot training is planned for late November.
- To ground the Project's policy and regulatory reform activities, work continues on mapping key business procedures, evaluating processes, meeting government stakeholders, and identifying initial constraints and barriers in the enabling environment.
- The Project participated in several presentations by the Institut Arabe des

Chefs d'Entreprises (IACE), a think tank focused on enterprise promotion, on specific proposals for the new Investment Code.

- The Project met with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to define future collaboration, which will include training and mentoring of AfDB's young Souk At-tanmia entrepreneurs and coordination in preparing policy recommendations.
- The Project conducted several meetings with stakeholders in telecommunications, including the Agence Tunisienne de l'Internet, Tunisie Telecom, the regulatory agency INT, and independent internet service providers.

Right:
Partnership with Microsoft (MS) Tunisia enables USAID ICT Competitiveness Project to assist SME partner companies and MS system integrators.

