

Future of Work: Middle East

Diversification, innovation and the shift to a knowledge economy

April 29th 2015

Madinat Jumeirah Mina A'Salam Hotel, Dubai, UAE

The Economist Events' Future of Work ME Summit will explore the opportunities and challenges ahead for regional governments as they work towards establishing more diversified economies and developing a highly skilled local workforce to support strategic growth. Policymakers are finding themselves juggling the dual strands of promoting innovation and entrepreneurship with the aim of becoming a technological center and manufacturing hub, along with building a local workforce to sustain new knowledge-based industries to drive the region's competitiveness in the global market.

Governments across the MENA region continue to invest heavily in diversification, local talent, innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives, however the challenges cannot be understated. MENA is experiencing a 'youth bulge' with more than 30% of the population currently between the ages of 15 and 29, and youth unemployment averages hovering around 25%. Women in the region still lag far behind their international counterparts, with fewer than 20% of adult women in paid employment. Up to 90% of government jobs in some GCC countries are held by nationals, with a staggering 10% of GDP being spent on the annual government wage bill and IMF and World Bank reports have stated that there is a significant 'skills mismatch' in MENA countries, with education systems not meeting the requirements of the market. Overall, these statistics paint a concerning picture.

However, there are many positive indicators that hint at a future full of promise and potential. The region's focus on new technology, innovation, diversification and education paired with the active move towards becoming a knowledge economy underpins what many hope will be a whole new chapter in the region's history. The Economist Events' Future of Work ME Summit will explore these issues and, through shared experiences and productive discourse, aim to consolidate best practice and put forward recommendations for meeting the ambitious goals of this dynamic region.

Programme

08.15 **Registration and refreshments**

09.00 **Opening remarks from the Chair**

John Andrews, Contributing Editor, The Economist

Morning Keynote Addresses

09.15 **Ministerial Address: Building a knowledge-based economy to foster innovation**

HE Reem al-Hashimy, UAE Minister of State, United Arab Emirates; Director General, Bureau Dubai Expo 2020

- 09.30 **Ministerial Address: Diversification, competitiveness and the shift to a knowledge economy**
HE Abdullah Ahmed al-Saleh, Undersecretary, Foreign Trade and Industry, UAE Ministry of Economy
- 09.45 **Opening Keynote Address: Driving diversification and national competitiveness in Saudi Arabia**
HRH Prince Saud Bin Khalid al-Faisal, Deputy Governor for Investment Affairs, Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA); President, National Competitiveness Center
- 10.15 **Keynote Address: Education, skills standards and laying the foundation for a technology-based knowledge economy**
HE Dr Thani Ahmed al-Mehairi, Director General, National Qualifications Authority
- 10.45 **Keynote Address: The policy framework for a more diversified, knowledge-based economy in Dubai**
HE Sami Ahmad Dhaen al-Qamzi, Director General, Dubai Department of Economic Development
- 11.10 Morning refreshments and networking
- 11.45 **Fireside Chat: Beyond oil and gas: Positioning the MENA region as a global hub for technology and manufacturing**
 The MENA region is well positioned to establish itself as a global leader in heavy and knowledge-intensive industries; building on its ideal geographic location, competitive labour costs, progressive diversification plans and enabling regulatory frameworks. Opportunities exist for markets to examine value chains and illustrate flexibility in order to address local needs and ultimately grow to become exporters. This interview with a preeminent thought-leader will explore the changing dynamics of ‘work’ in the region and what needs to be done to ‘reinvent’ the workforce in order to build the foundation for MENA to become a future global manufacturing powerhouse and knowledge-based economic center.
Nabil Habayeb, President and Chief Executive Officer, GE Middle East, North Africa and Turkey
- 12.05 **Panel Discussion: Enabling the local workforce**
 At the heart of many MENA national development plans are significant localisation programmes designed to up-skill and employ the national workforce across public and private sector roles. Emiratisation through The Absher Initiative in the UAE, Saudisation through programmes such as Nitiqat in Saudi Arabia and increased regulations regarding foreign and expatriate employment in Qatar have been designed to enable locals to support key roles and industry sectors, provide long-term economic stability and sustainability, and ultimately to increase regional competitiveness in global markets. However, public sector labour markets are heavily saturated and there is often still a perceived stigma hovering over many private sector jobs for MENA nationals, leading to concerns of false economies and unsustainable employment structures. This session will examine the following:
- The latest updates and benefits of localisation initiatives;
 - Intended and unintended outcomes of nationalisation labour market policies;
 - The changing role of expatriation in the MENA region;
 - Opportunities in both the public and private sectors to improve employee participation and engagement; and
 - Assessing the sustainability and long-term impact of national employment schemes and incentivisation programmes.
- David Jones, Co-founder, Managing Director and Labour Market Economist, The Talent Enterprise**
Essa al-Mulla, Executive Director, Emirates Nationals Development Programme (ENDP)

Ibrahim al-Moaiqel, Director General, Human Resource Development Fund

12.50 **Education Debate: Are education systems in MENA providing the skills required for knowledge-intensive industries and the diversified economy of the future?**

This session will provide a platform for discussion around the educational opportunities in the MENA region and whether university curricula are providing the right skills for today's – and tomorrow's - workforce. The debate will focus on how universities are changing to meet the needs for a more technologically-advanced future of work, a shift to more knowledge-intensive industries and ensuring the courses available are in line with job market opportunities and the requirements of private sector companies. It will also explore the issue of restrictions on youth employability in the region and the impact on expectations, experience and graduates entering the workforce.

Regulator: Ensuring the right framework is in place to give young people all the tools they need to succeed

University: Adapting courses in line with the shifting economy

Business: What do private sector companies expect from today's graduates?

Gerard Gallagher, MENA Advisory Leader, EY

Kailash Nagdev, Managing Director, UAE, YouGov

Lance de Masi, President, American University in Dubai

Warren Fox, Chief of Higher Education, Universities and Colleges Agency, Knowledge and Human Development Authority

13.35 Lunch

14.45 **Panel Discussion: Empowering women, benefiting businesses**

Women in the Middle East are quickly outperforming men in many areas including higher education, employee engagement and job satisfaction, civic participation and even health, life span and general wellbeing. In a region that has often been criticised for closing doors to women in the workplace, the rapid rate of change in women's employment figures indicates that the tide is turning.

What will men do to keep up and remain competitive against their female counterparts? What more needs to be done to advance women's positions in the business world; from providing equal salaries to exploring flexible work opportunities for mothers? What support networks and initiatives need to be put in place to ensure businesses and economies continue to benefit from a diverse, mixed-gender workforce?

HE Salma Ali Saif Bin Hareb, Chief Executive Officer, Economic Zones World and Jafza

HE Shamsa Saleh, Chief Executive Officer, Dubai Women Establishment

Basmah Mosleh Omair, Chief Executive Officer, Alsayedah Khadijah Bint Khawilid Businesswomen Center

15.35 **Panel Discussion: Innovation and entrepreneurship**

The Middle East is embracing innovation and entrepreneurship, with numerous high profile initiatives in place to help start-ups secure seed capital and professional guidance. Whilst the support framework for new enterprises is certainly improving, the biggest challenge facing most budding entrepreneurs continues to be securing finance not only for initial start-up costs, but also the ongoing investment required to create the right foundation for a successful, and sustainable, business.

What do leading entrepreneurs, investors and financiers forecast for the future of work in the MENA region? What are the new trends emerging and who are the frontrunners in embracing technological change to push the boundaries of innovation? What frameworks are required to sustain the momentum of the innovation revolution that is taking place and to ensure entrepreneurs have the tools they need to succeed in a competitive market?

Bern Shen, Board Member, TechWadi; Board Member, Harvard Business Professor Clayton Christensen's Institute for Disruptive Innovation

Habib Haddad, Chief Executive Officer, Wamda

Heather Henryon, Founder and Managing Partner, Balthazar Capital; Founder and Chair, Women's Angel Investor Network (WAIN)

Mouayed Makhoul, Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa, International Finance Corporation (IFC)

16.30 **Closing Keynote: New horizons: The MENA innovation revolution**

Hear from this noted visionary, entrepreneur, investor and international personality as he shares his views and experiences on entrepreneurship and his forecast for the future of work in MENA.

Fadi Ghandour, Founder and Vice-chairman, Aramex; Managing Partner, Wamda Capital

17.00 Closing remarks and end of Future of Work ME Summit