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ESCWA

40  
YEARS

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

# **YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN THE KNOWLEDGE- BASED ECONOMY : Perspectives of the Arab region**

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# Content

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- General aspects of knowledge-based economy and employment
- Youth today: world-wide
- Youth employment in knowledge-based economy
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- Conclusion

*“Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation.*

*Empowered, they can be **key agents for development and peace**. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished.*

*Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies.”*

-Kofi Annan, 2001

-Former United Nations Secretary-General

**General aspects of  
knowledge-based economy  
and employment**

# Knowledge-based economies

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- Focused on the generation and exploitation of knowledge
- Knowledge and knowledge-rich products are necessary for the creation of wealth
- To create knowledge, **innovation, creativity and research for development** are needed
- In a KBE, knowledge is the main commodity and driving force behind productivity and economic growth.

# Employment in the knowledge-based economy (1)

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- Basic skills are no longer enough, more and different skills are required:
  - Analytical and critical thinking skills
  - Technological skills
- 42 million jobs are needed every year
- Government can not do this alone, but should act as facilitator connecting people to industry

# Employment in the knowledge-based economy (2)

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- Greater research and development capacities are needed for:
  - Applying knowledge in creative and innovative ways
  - Finding applicable and actionable solutions to challenges
  - Creates new jobs

# Youth and employment



# Youth world-wide

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- In 2014, there were 1.8 billion people aged between 10 and 24 years in the world
- About 500 million survives on less than \$2 a day
- Youth population growth is outpacing economic growth in some countries
- Public institutions cannot deliver alone the basic services of the growing numbers of youth

# Youth employment world-wide

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- In 2014, the global youth unemployment rate was 13.1%
- 200 million youths reach working age annually
- 73.4 million youths are unemployed world-wide
- About 60% of youth in developing regions do not work or go to school or only have irregular jobs

# Youth employment in KBE

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- Provide skills relevant to the new economy is needed
- Education systems need to support KBE through programmes and special courses
- Bridging the digital divide so that youth in the country can access KBE in a better way
- Public-Private partnerships is important to develop human capacity required for KBE

# **Situation in the Arab region**

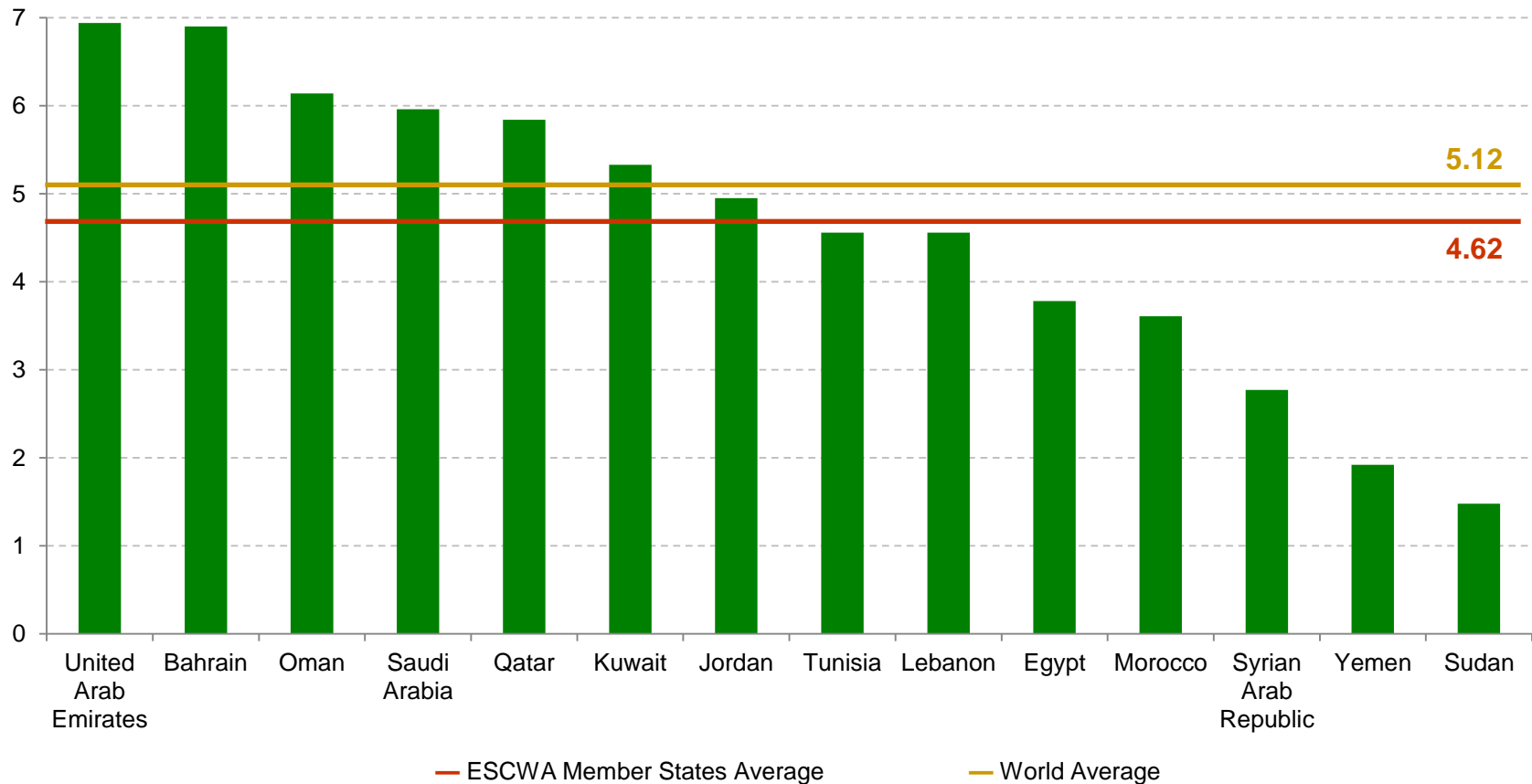
## KBE in the Arab region

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- Prices of energy and energy related products are decreasing.
- Growth in non-oil sectors is necessary.
- Ongoing political instability and unrest has a negative impact on the tourism, investment and trade.
- In 2014, the regional unemployment rate was about 13%

# KBE in the Arab region (1)

## Knowledge Economy Index for ESCWA Members States



# KBE in the Arab region (2)

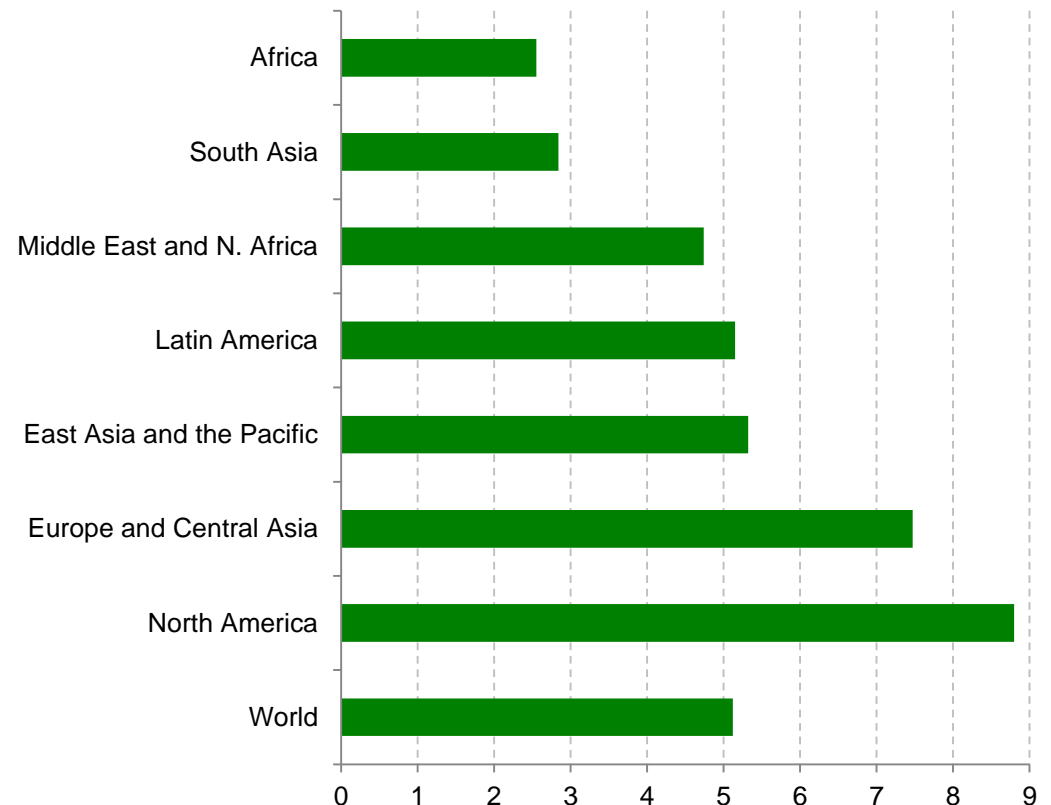
- **ARAB REGION**

- Lies 5<sup>th</sup> in world rankings
- Rank has not changed since last update

- **COUNTRIES**

- Most of the countries have moved down in world-wide rankings
- UAE highest at 42, and Sudan lowest at 137

## Regional Knowledge Economy Index



## Status of youth in the Arab region

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- More than half of the population in the region are less than 25 years old
- Highest youth unemployment is in North Africa and Western Asia
- 25% of youth (15-25) were unemployed (2014)
- Youth unemployment is estimated to rise further (28% in 2018)





# Youth employment in KBE – Arab region

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- Enhance education system to prepare young people to market-related skills in innovation, entrepreneurship and business management
- Increase research for development to find appropriate solutions for sustainable development and developing KBE
- Building appropriate ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship
- Address the scarcity of employment opportunities through partnership with the private sector and civil society

**Conclusion**

## Fostering the potential of youth for KBE requires....

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- Good education systems
- Appropriate policy, eco-system, legislation and institutions for facilitating the youth participation in KBE
- Research for development and innovation
- Incentive programmes, such as awards & funding opportunities
- Public-private cooperation to deliver services such as mentoring, incubation and internships
- Building cross-regional entrepreneurial youth networks and peer-to-peer mentoring services for knowledge sharing and skill transfer.



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**THANK YOU**