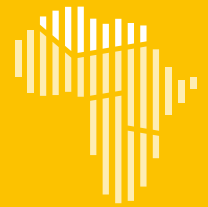


SUCCESS STORY

How Tunisian migrants started a new life back home



EU Trust Fund for Africa - North of Africa

T05.139 - Support the economic and social reintegration of returning Tunisian migrants (ProGreS Migration, Component III)



EUTF PARTNER:
Expertise France.



BUDGET:
EUR 6.4M



COUNTRY:
TUNISIA



Phase I: from **09/2017** to **07/2021**
Phase II: from **12/2021** to **12/2024**

Objective of the project

Returning migrants are reintegrated with dignity and stability in Tunisia, thanks to social and economic support.

Key successes

- > Over 1200 Tunisian returning migrants have been received and supported at the regional branches of the Tounesna facility.
- > 132 social assistance grants have been allocated to returning migrants to support their social integration as well as that of their family members.
- > 251 Tunisian returning migrants' have received financial aid and coaching to create a micro-project for their economic reintegration.

The story of transforming lives

Returning to one's home country after attempting to rebuild a life in Europe is not easy. This is the story of some young Tunisians who succeeded by relying on the Tounesna facility as well as on their own strength and families. Ben left for France irregularly hoping to improve his financial and social situation. After six months without income and without a fixed residence he decided to return to Tunisia. Tounesna, a national facility established by ProGreS Migration III, offered him reintegration assistance through employment at a carpentry, held by Mohamed, a young entrepreneur who is aware of the challenges faced by return migrants, having benefited from startup assistance for his project under a previous pilot project (Lemma, 2018-2019). Ben began with a three-month introductory internship in professional life, allowing him to learn the trade and master the work tools. He is highly valued by his employer. His seriousness and professional qualities facilitated his permanent employment after the internship.

Mehereg has a similar story. Upon his return from Germany, he was able to open a small company that manufactures aluminium frames. *"Thanks to financial assistance, I resumed the work I had already learned from my father before emigrating. My father is no longer with us now, but I was able to rely on an already established network. I am*



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satisfied with this business, but I would need additional resources to move to a larger location". Nadir is another returning migrant who runs a small grocery store in a peripheral neighbourhood of Tunis. Thanks to Tounesna, he was able to open his business with his father. However, his gaze reveals a bit of sadness: "I would have liked to have a job that was closer to my heart. I was a blacksmith, but due to health problems, I can no longer pursue that profession". Despite the challenges and difficulties return migrants face, the stories of Ben, Mehereg, and Nadir illustrate that with the right support and determination, returning home can become a new opportunity. These young men have not only found a new direction for their lives but have also shown that some success is attainable even amidst change and uncertainty.



How did the EUTF help?

One-stop-shop for returning migrants. ProGreS Migration has established and strengthened the Tounesna facility within the Tunisian administration. Tounesna has nine operational branches in the regional offices of the Office of Tunisians Abroad (OTE). OTE counsellors welcome, inform, and guide returning migrants, and they coordinate with counsellors from the General Directorate for Social Promotion (DGPS) and the National Agency for Employment and Self-Employment (ANETI) to facilitate these migrants' access to their socio-economic rights.

Social assistance grants. This is intended for returning migrants in situations of vulnerability and their family members. It may include : housing assistance, provided at the beginning of the beneficiary's enrollment in the programme and continuing for up to nine months thereafter; social health assistance, provided throughout the first 12 months, social education assistance, aiming to enable the children of returning migrants to integrate into a public school; and social assistance for persons with disabilities.

Economic reintegration assistance. Returning migrants are supported in their professional reintegration, either through employment or by starting a business. Financial aid and support to find employment or create an economic project are consolidated through a 12-month coaching scheme.

Keys to Success

Proactivity of operators. In addition to the one-year support period for socio-economic reintegration projects, operators responsible for assistance have sometimes proactively introduced supplementary support practices. These practices are designed to assist projects both during and after the initial period, aiming to enhance their long-term stability. The mutual respect and trust between migrant and operator are also key ingredients for a successful venture.

Family support. The involvement of the returning migrant's family in the socio-economic reintegration project is often correlated with the success of the enterprise. This is due not only to the material assistance provided for entrepreneurial activities but also to the moral support that helps migrants feel accepted in their return experience.

Extensive territorial coverage. The establishment of the Tounesna facility branches in various regions highlights the importance of the geographic proximity of service providers to migrants to effectively ensure the success of their reintegration.

Building on Success

Improving the referral system. The effectiveness of referring migrants to state services or to other national or international programmes depends on both of counsellors' ability to direct migrants to the appropriate contacts and the migrant's capacity to consider the proposals made to them. Developing a referral system would effectively channel specific resources from various programmes to the Tounesna facility.

Providing holistic support and community involvement. Providing holistic support, which includes psychological assistance, is essential to address these vulnerabilities. Extending support to the broader community can greatly enhance the success of reintegration efforts. When communities are involved and prepared, they can play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and acceptance. Mentorship and personalised support from local community members or social workers empower returnees, offering guidance, emotional support, and connections to vital services. This comprehensive approach not only aids returnees but also strengthens the community, ensuring more sustainable reintegration.

Strengthening partnerships with operators. Based on this experience, a platform open to various field actors can greatly enhance the reintegration process for returning migrants. This platform could facilitate experience sharing, capitalize on reintegration successes, and enable better preparation for return by involving migrants and their local support networks in advance. It could also foster joint projects among return migrants, boosting collaboration and overall success.



EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa

Disclaimer

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