

THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

CENTRO STUDI INVESTIMENTI SOCIALI (CENSIS*)

1. The importance of this issue

Initiated with the Euro-Mediterranean partnership for harmonious and sustainable development in the region, the process of progressive integration between the Mediterranean countries is just getting underway. The different countries still present very heterogeneous situations in economic, social and cultural terms. As emerged at the Barcelona Conference of 1995 and was subsequently underscored at the meetings of the European Council in Essen and Cannes, however, the countries of the Mediterranean region are reciprocally indispensable if we are to boost production, economic growth and foreign trade, create a larger area characterized by political stability and a functioning state of law and order, and to foster the exchange of human capital, knowledge and culture. Underpinning this study is the conviction that the younger generations have and will have a key part to play in progress toward integrated, harmonious and sustainable development in the Mediterranean area and that the education of young people performs a crucial function in this process. The primary role played by education in the development of a country and of mankind as a whole is now acknowledged at the international level. Two of the eight development targets set by the United Nations in the Millennium Declaration of 2000 are in fact to ensure that all children, female and male, everywhere in the world are enabled to complete the cycle of primary education by 2015 and to eliminate gender inequalities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels by 2015.

Recognition of the key role of education is by now an established fact also for the Mediterranean countries. Education is in fact obviously crucial not only for the well-being of the individual but also for society as a whole. Access to education and successful schooling are key factors for the accumulation of human capital and economic growth, but the benefits of education also extend beyond the individual and national income. Education makes citizens aware. (Only those who know they have rights – be they to adequate nutrition, health and housing, work, active participation in political life or the fruits of scientific and technological progress – can take action to enforce them). Education thus contributes to the development of societies with higher levels of participation and cohesion.

Investing in human capital and hence in education therefore assumes particular importance in political action designed to promote economic prosperity and development, employment and social cohesion throughout the region. This is also confirmed by a recent UNESCO study¹ examining the connection between economic growth and the level of education of the active population in some countries taking part in the World Program on Education Indicators set up by UNESCO and the OECD. Investing in secondary and higher education so as to increase participation in education and enhance the country's human capital can generate solid economic growth. The study shows, for example, that Egypt and Tunisia, which had much lower levels of schooling than the countries of Latin America in the 1960s, also registered lower levels of economic growth.

Since the Mediterranean region includes a large number of Arab countries, specific attention should be focused on female education, which is essential to the process of female empowerment. The last two UNDP reports on Arab human development point out in this connection that the primary obstacle to the real implementation of partnership policies lies precisely in the insufficient attention given by the countries of the Arab League to the three key issues of female freedom, education and emancipation. Even though the Arab countries spend a higher percentage of GDP than other developing countries on education, their school systems are often of poor quality. The rate of illiteracy is still very high with 65 million illiterate adults, two thirds of these being women. Approximately 10 million school-age children (predominantly female) are still deprived of primary education. As a result, the region is very backward in the field of scientific research and information technology and registers little cultural and artistic growth. The rate of female literacy has risen, however, over the last thirty years, and girls today enjoy the same educational opportunities as boys also in many non-European

(1) Unesco-Isu/Oecd (2003), *Le financement de l'éducation. Investissements et rendements*. Edition 2002, www.uis.unesco.org

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countries of the Mediterranean region. The figures confirm a higher probability of school attendance than in the rest of the African continent and Southeast Asia, despite the fact that the degree of female participation in political and economic life is the lowest in the world. The Arab countries are right at the bottom of the table of female emancipation drawn up by the UNDP. While a great deal of progress has been achieved in the field of education over the last few years, the information drawn from international sources in this connection shows that further efforts must be made in the Mediterranean region to promote education as a fundamental right of children, to improve the quality of educational structures and programs, and to stimulate experimentation, innovation and political dialogue. The primary purpose of the overview presented here is to use a set of quantitative indicators to describe the situation as regards education in the different Mediterranean countries in various respects. As shown below in the explanatory graphs and tables, the indicators considered regard the following areas (adopting a scheme of classification proposed by UNESCO):

- literacy
- access to and participation in the education system
- investment in education

The question is then examined in greater depth to show the function performed by the education of children and young people in the broader process of empowerment of the human capital represented by the young in terms of social development, expanding personal opportunities, and reducing poverty. To this end, after identifying a set of indicators capable of effectively capturing the different aspects of this process of empowerment (indicators reflecting the situations to be describes as accurately as possible given the limitations connected with the availability of data), the study examines some of the connections existing between education and the growth of human capital. Given that the process of female empowerment (especially in the Arab countries) is of crucial importance for the future development of the Mediterranean countries and hence for the integration of the region as a whole, the analyses are undertaken also on the basis of a gender perspective.

2. The available data

It is difficult to describe the education and school systems in the different Mediterranean countries simply on the basis of national sources of data, which are often incomplete, fragmentary and non-homogeneous. International sources of statistics must therefore be drawn upon in order to map out the phenomenon of education and the role it plays in a country's growth process. The statistical data and indicators presented are

thus taken from the major official sources and international agencies working to provide information that is as reliable, comparable and up-to-date as possible. The problem of the different standards of measurement used in the various countries and hence of the comparability and reliability of the statistics available is, however, always present when international comparisons are undertaken, and especially with countries in transition. In particular, the marked heterogeneity characterizing the Mediterranean region (which includes advanced countries like Italy and France alongside less developed countries like Yemen and Iraq) makes the choice and comparison of indicators a delicate matter in that, given the presence of highly differentiated economic and social structures, it is not always correct to attribute the same significance to the same indicator.

Despite these limitations, which should be borne in mind in the following analysis, examination and interpretation of the data presented did make it possible to obtain a sufficiently detailed and in-depth picture of the situation as regards school education. The primary source of international data on education is the UNESCO bureau of statistics, whose task it is to provide the most up-to-date and reliable data and indicators possible at the world level on education, science and technology, culture and communication (statistics constituting an indispensable database for the political decision makers). The bureau is also responsible for supplying data and indicators for the two millennium objectives of education for all and gender equality. It proved possible to use the world data on education up to the school year 2001/2002 gathered by the first Charting the Mediterranean Child report in 2004. The statistical indicators supplied by the UNDP (the 2004 edition of the Annual Report on Human Development), UNICEF (the 2005 edition of the Annual Report on Children), the United Nations and World Bank were instead used to measure social development, the broadening of personal opportunities, and the reduction of poverty.

3. The indications of international organizations

The last year has seen work at both international and regional level on the development and planning of political strategies to achieve the millennium objectives of education for all and gender equality, the deadlines for which are now drawing close. In the Mediterranean area, the Arab world is seeking to develop strategies to achieve these goals and promote its own culture. The Arab ministers of the education met in June 2004 for the regional conference on education for all, where they stressed the importance of teacher training, evaluation, child development, integrated education, and community

participation in order to ensure the effective spread of education all through the population. They also underscored to commitment of the Arab countries to developing a quality education system through the creation of partnerships, networks and centers of excellence. The data circulated in January 2005 by ALECSO, the Arab League organization to combat illiteracy, paint an alarming picture of the extent of illiteracy in the Arab world, showing that the number of people unable to read and write has risen considerably in absolute terms despite a substantial decrease in the actual rate of illiteracy. The Arab organization thus points out the inadequacy of the action taken so far, attaches crucial importance to political determination to make literacy a priority, and stresses the urgent need to overhaul programs and tackle the serious gender inequalities still existing.

4. Map of education in the mediterranean

4.1. Literacy

Basic schooling provides both the essential tools of learning (reading, writing, arithmetic, oral expression, and the solving of simple problems) and the fundamental elements of education (knowledge, skills, values and aptitude) that human beings require not only in order to survive but also to develop their faculties, to live and work with dignity, to participate fully in the development of society, to make independent and individual choices, and to go on learning. Literacy thus plays an essential role in improving living conditions for people, opening up possibilities for greater security in terms of health and income, enriching society through the development of human capital, promoting cultural identity and tolerance, and fostering civic and political participation. The problem of illiteracy has yet to be solved in many non-European countries of the Mediterranean region. While great progress has been achieved over the last few years in the field of education in general, and especially in ensuring the same opportunities of access and participation for female children, one man in three and one woman in two are still illiterate today in the Arab countries. The most critical situations are found in Yemen, Morocco and Egypt, where only half of the adult population can read and write (the literacy rates being respectively 49%, 51% and 56%). The percentage of literate women is still considerably lower than men in most of the Arab countries, with a gap of over ten percentage points between the rates of male and female literacy in Syria, Turkey, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Algeria, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. The particularly widespread illiteracy of the

adult population in Yemen, Morocco and Egypt is also combined with the most critical situation for women and the widest gender gap (Table 1). The data on literacy rates for the 15-24 age group, which are considerably higher than for adults, show that the national and international policies in support of education are achieving appreciable results. The difference between the young and the previous generations is particularly marked in the Arab peninsula and North Africa, primarily as a result of major advances in female education. The gender gap is narrower among the young (Table 1).

4.2. Access to and participation in the education system

As regards access to and participation in the education system at the world level, the net enrolment ratio² for primary school (the indicator giving the clearest picture of access) increased during the 1990s in every region of the world and reached an overall average of 81% in 2002. The gender gap in primary school enrolment has also narrowed substantially since the 1990s. As mentioned above, one of the millennium objectives of the United Nations is in fact to eliminate every form of discrimination in primary and secondary education by the end of 2005 and to achieve complete gender equality by 2015 as regards the different aspects of education: enrolment, completion of cycles, and level of learning. Despite the many disparities and gaps currently existing in the Mediterranean area, not only between the European and Arab countries but also between the societies of North Africa, the Middle East and the Arab peninsula, the data available do show a certain homogeneity as regards access to primary school. Apart from a few exceptions (Oman, Saudi Arabia and Yemen), the net enrolment ratio for the first level is generally high, ranging from 81% (the United Arab Emirates) to 100% (Israel, France, Spain and Italy). The same homogeneity is not found for access at the second level, where the enrolment rates of the European countries are higher on average than the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean. No great gender differences emerge in enrolment at either level, as girls in the Mediterranean countries are increasingly able to

(2) The net enrolment ratio is the number of pupils in the official age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

enjoy the same opportunities of access to basic education as boys, in accordance with the trends at the world level (Table 2). Comparison of the data on school life expectancy for the younger generations and the average number of years of schooling for adults makes it possible to estimate the progress achieved over the last few years as regards educational access and participation. Having a population that is capable of reading and writing and enjoys free access to basic education is unquestionably a crucial stage in the growth of a country, but not sufficient by itself. If these improvements are to generate larger resources of human capital enabling the country to undertake or continue a process of development toward an economy based on knowledge, it is essential to have an efficient and high-quality system of universities and

higher education. The significant gap between the school life expectancy of the young and the real level of education of the present adult population in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries indicates that the efforts made in this direction must move beyond basic education and aim at the specific knowledge and skills that the adult workforce lacks (Figure 1). While no great gender disparities are found in access to basic schooling, effective participation for both sexes is instead still a distant goal. The phenomenon of educational wastage is in fact still widespread in many of the countries in the area and often regards girls more than boys. For example, the problems connected with female education constitute a "latent crisis" in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as in other central and eastern European countries.

Table 1. Literacy rate of adults (15 and over) and young people (15-24) by gender, 2002 (%)

Country	Adult			Youth		
	Male*	Female*	Total	Male*	Female*	Total
Bahrain	-	-	88.5	-	-	98.6
Iran	83.5	70.4	77.1	-	-	-
Iraq	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kuwait	84.7	81	82.9	92.2	93.9	93.1
Oman	82	65.4	74.4	99.6	97.3	98.5
Qatar	84.9	82.3	84.2	94.1	95.8	94.8
Saudi Arabia	84.1	69.5	77.9	95.4	91.6	93.5
United Arab Emirates	75.6	80.7	77.3	88.2	95	91.4
Yemen	69.5	28.5	49.0	84.3	50.9	67.9
Israel	97.3	93.4	95.3	99.6	99.4	99.5
Jordan	95.5	85.9	90.9	99.3	99.5	99.4
Lebanon	-	-	86.5	-	-	-
O. Palestine	92.2	79.7	90.2	96.9	97.2	-
Syria	91	74.2	82.9	97.1	93	95.2
Algeria	78	59.6	68.9	94	85.6	89.9
Egypt	67.2	43.6	55.6	79	66.9	73.2
Libya	91.8	70.7	81.7	99.8	94	97
Morocco	63.3	38.3	50.7	77.4	61.3	69.5
Tunisia	83.1	63.1	73.2	97.9	90.6	94.3
Albania	99.2	98.3	98.7	99.4	99.5	99.4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	98.4	91.1	94.6	99.6	99.7	99.6
Bulgaria	99.1	98.1	98.6	99.8	99.6	99.7
Croatia	99.3	97.1	98.1	99.6	99.7	99.6
Romania	98.4	96.3	97.3	97.7	97.8	97.8
Serbia and Montenegro	-	-	-	-	-	-
Slovenia	99.7	99.6	99.7	99.8	99.8	99.8
TFYR Macedonia	-	-	-	-	-	-
Turkey	94.4	78.5	86.5	97.8	93.2	95.5
Cyprus	98.6	95.1	96.8	99.7	99.8	99.8
France	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greece	-	-	97.3	-	-	-
Italy	-	-	98.5	-	-	-
Malta	91.8	93.4	92.6	97.6	99.8	98.7
Spain	-	-	97.7	-	-	-

Source: UNESCO data processed by Censis, 2004.

(*)The most recent figures available in the period 2000-2004 are given for women and men.

Even though the high values registered for female enrolment and attendance are such as to rule out any excessive concern at present, the increasingly high dropout rate, especially in rural areas, demonstrates the existence of the problem. In Serbia and Montenegro too, the general statistics are not alarming but do show that girls suffering discrimination for reasons connected with poverty, problems of development or ethnic factors (e.g. the Romany populations) are doubly disadvantaged as

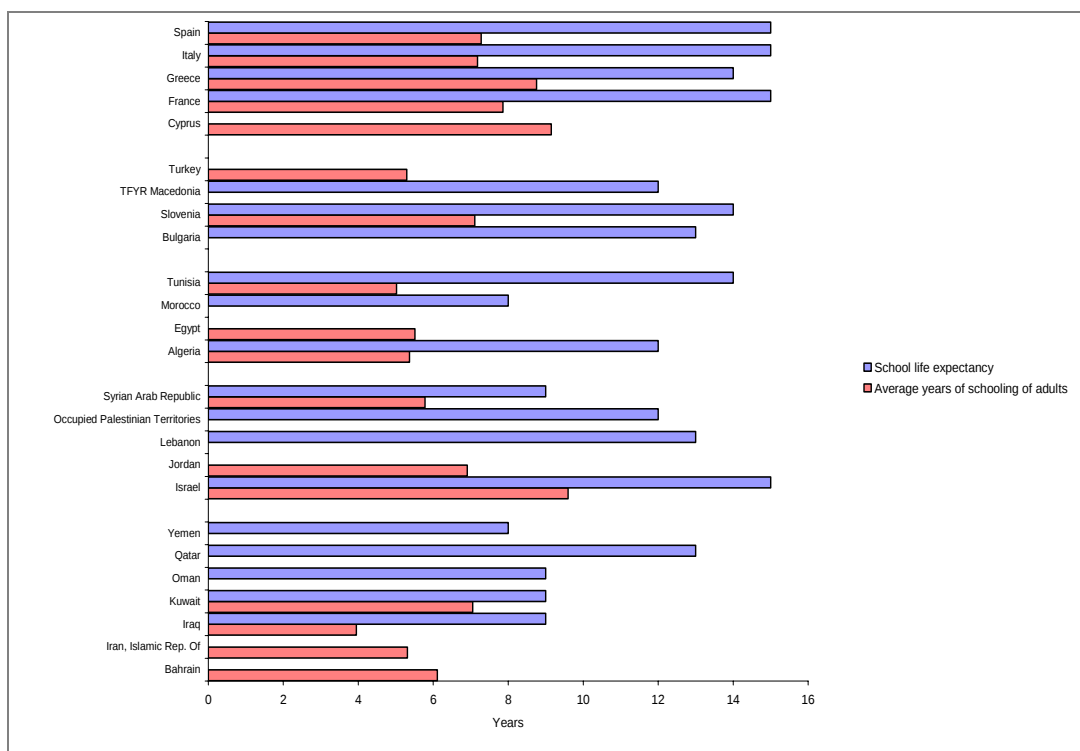
regards access to education. Female school enrolment is obviously not sufficient by itself to ensure the empowerment of the women of tomorrow. On the contrary, social discrimination is strengthened if the traditional gender roles are incorporated into school teaching. Importance thus attaches to adequate public policies that not only ensure access to the education system for girls but also make female education socially and culturally acceptable to the general community.

Table 2. Net enrolment ratios at the primary and secondary levels, 2001/2002 (val. %)

Country	Primary		Secondary	
	Totale	Female	Totale	Female
Bahrain	91	91	81	86
Iran, Islamic Rep. Of	87	78	-	-
Iraq	-	-	-	-
Kuwait	85	84	77	79
Oman	75	75	68	68
Qatar	94	94	78	80
Saudi Arabia	59	57	53	51
United Arab Emirates	81	80	72	74
Yemen	67	47	35	21
Israel	100	100	89	89
Jordan	91	92	80	81
Lebanon	90	89	-	-
O. Palestine	95	95	81	83
Syria	98	96	39	37
Algeria	95	94	62	64
Egypt	90	88	81	79
Libya	-	-	-	-
Morocco	88	85	31	28
Tunisia	97	97	68	69
Albania	97	97	74	75
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	-	-
Bulgaria	93	92	86	85
Croatia	88	88	86	87
Romania	93	92	80	81
Serbia and Montenegro	-	-	-	-
Slovenia	93	93	96	97
TFYR Macedonia		93	-	81
Turkey	88	85	-	-
Cyprus	95	95	88	89
France	100	100	92	93
Greece	95	95	85	86
Italy	100	100	88	85
Malta	98	98	80	80
Spain	100	100	94	96

Source: UNESCO data processed by Censis, 2004.

Figure 1. Average years of schooling for adults and school life expectancy, 2002



Source: UNESCO data processed by Censis, 2004

4.3. Investment in education: public expenditure and political priorities

Planning and implementing effective policies to support education clearly entail large amounts of national expenditure. Examination of the major items of expenditure of the different countries therefore gives an idea of their real priorities and the place of education on the policy makers' agenda.

The comparison of public expenditure on health, education and defense (as a percentage of GDP) shows a substantial difference between the different areas of the Mediterranean region. It can be observed in general that the military spending of the European countries is equal to approximately 33% and 50% respectively of expenditure on health and education. This situation is reversed in the Arab countries, where military expenditure is the major item followed by education and then health, with very small percentages.

The public expenditure on education in the Arab countries varies considerably from country to country, ranging from 10% of GDP in Yemen to 2.7% in Libya, but failing in many cases to reach 6% of GDP, regarded as UNESCO as the minimum that should be allocated for

education by the governments of the countries in transition (Table 3). The latest Arab report on human development regards the immediate adoption of a policy of intensive investment in education leading to a rapid increase and qualitative improvement in the general level of education as the prerequisite for development in the region.

The report suggests that the Arab countries should follow the example of the "Asian Tigers", which have achieved a considerable increase in income and living standards over the last thirty years through sustained investment in education, research and scientific and technological specialization. Dependency on petroleum and the management of resources characterizing this productive segment have instead obstructed investment for innovation and production in the local context, especially in the Arab peninsula.

One serious result of this state of affairs for the Arab countries is the "brain drain". The emigration to western countries of a great many qualified Arab professionals due to the lack of jobs and a suffocating political context is a serious obstacle to the development of the region. For example, over 15,000 Arab doctors emigrated to foreign countries between 1998 and 2000. The data for

the third level of education bear out the above observations. The gross enrolment ratio in the countries of the Arab peninsula is no more than 23%, which is very

low and indeed below the rate registered in the other countries (except Morocco and Tunisia), where a higher percentage of young people enrol at university.

Table 3. Public expenditure on education, health and defense as a percentage of GDP (%)

Country	Public expenditure on education (% of GDP)	Public expenditure on health (% of GDP)	Military expenditure (% of GDP)
	1999-2001	2001	2002
Bahrain	-	2.9	3.9
Iran, Islamic Rep. Of	5.0	2.7	4.0
Iraq	-	-	-
Kuwait	-	3.5	10.4
Oman	4.2	2.4	12.3
Qatar	-	2.2	-
Saudi Arabia	-	3.4	9.8
United Arab Emirates	-	2.6	3.7
Yemen	10.0	1.5	7.1
Israel	7.3	6.0	9.2
Jordan	4.6	4.5	8.4
Lebanon	2.9	-	4.7
O. Palestine	-	-	-
Syrian Arab Republic	4.0	2.4	6.1
Algeria	-	3.1	3.7
Egypt	-	1.9	2.7
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	2.7	1.6	2.4
Morocco	5.1	2.0	4.3
Tunisia	6.8	4.9	-
Albania	-	2.4	1.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	2.8	-
Bulgaria	-	3.9	2.7
Croatia	4.2	7.3	2.5
Romania	3.5	5.2	2.3
Serbia and Montenegro	-	-	-
Slovenia	-	6.3	1.5
TFYR Macedonia	4.1	5.8	2.8
Turkey	3.7	-	4.9
Cyprus	5.6	3.9	1.6
France	5.7	7.3	2.5
Greece	3.8	5.2	4.3
Italy	5.0	6.3	2.1
Malta	4.9	6.0	0.9
Spain	4.4	5.4	1.2

Source: Data from UNESCO (2004), the World Bank (2004) and Sipri (2004) processed by Censis.

Table 4. Public expenditure on education by level as a percentage of expenditure for all levels ('99-'01) (%)

Country	Pre-primary and primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Bahrain	-	-	-
Iran	26.8	36.3	18.5
Iraq	-	-	-
Kuwait	-	-	-
Oman	36.4	51.4	1.8
Qatar	-	-	-
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-
United Arab Emirates	51.9	46.4	-
Yemen	-	-	-
Israel	45.2	29.7	17.9
Jordan	51.7	48.3	-
Lebanon	-	-	-
O. Palestine	-	-	-
Syria	-	39.2	-
Algeria	-	-	-
Egypt	-	-	-
Libya	17.8	14.2	52.7
Morocco	48.0	51.5	0.3
Tunisia	33.3	45.0	21.7
Albania	-	-	-
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	-
Bulgaria	-	-	-
Croatia	-	-	-
Romania	-	-	-
Serbia and Montenegro	-	-	-
Slovenia	-	-	-
Macedonia, TFYR	-	-	-
Turkey	37.8	30.1	32.2
Cyprus	32.6	50.3	17.1
France	31.2	49.8	17.6
Greece	30.2	40.7	24.0
Italy	33.8	48.7	16.4
Malta	-	-	-
Spain	35.4	41.8	22.8

Source: UNESCO data (2004) processed by elaborazione Censis.

5. The function of education in empowering the human capital of the younger generations

5.1. Education and the broadening of personal opportunities

Education should foster the broadening of personal opportunities, understood as the development of

individual abilities, freedom of choice, and the possibility of being acquainted with and adopting innovative behavior.

As a proxy indicator of the broadening of personal opportunities, it was decided to use the UNDP index of human development, which encompasses some of the important possibilities in the life of an individual: leading a long and healthy life, being educated, access to the resources required for a decent standard of life, and participation in the life of the community. The

connection existing between the two indicators, education and the index of human development, is clearly shown in Figure 2.

5.2. Education and the reduction of poverty

The development and empowerment of the human capital of the younger generations should play a crucial part in the fight against poverty, understood both as economic deprivation and in a broader sense. The following graph correlating the rate of literacy and per capita GDP shows a weak degree of dependency between of the two, although it is possible to see a tendency toward greater economic well-being in the countries where basic literacy is more widespread (Figure 3).

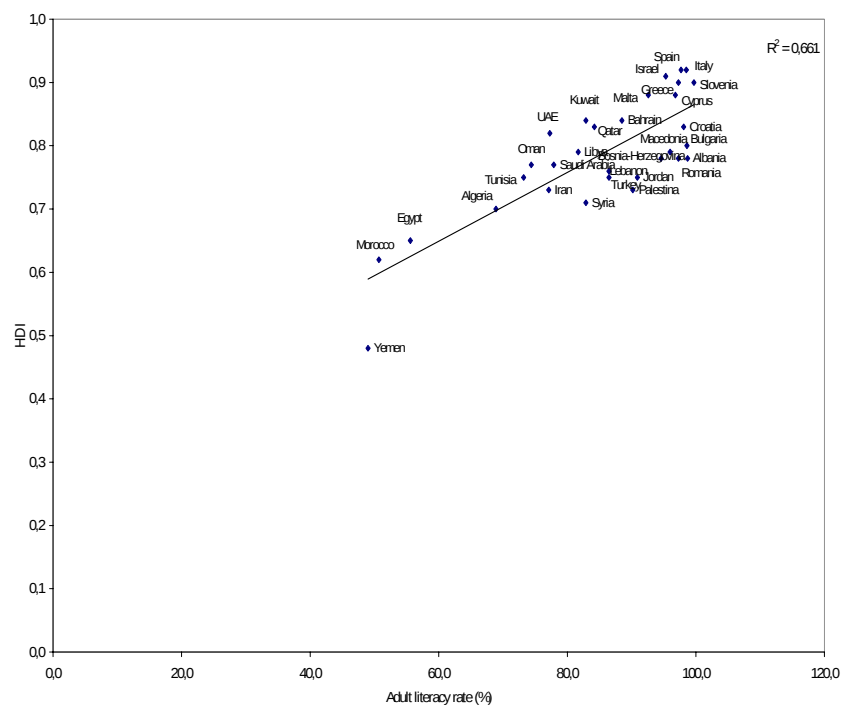
Although the connection is weak, closer examination makes it possible to distinguish a number of different groups of countries:

- The most backward countries (Morocco, Egypt and Yemen), where a low rate of literacy is associated with low per capita income. As with the other indicators examined, Yemen again proves to be particularly backward. (Among other things, it is the only one of the countries considered to present such an extremely low index of human development.)

- Three other different groups of countries can be found beneath the threshold income of 10,000 dollars per capita a year. Iran and the other countries of North Africa present a slightly higher rate of literacy, followed by the countries on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, with a medium-high rate, and then the countries of East Europe, with a high rate.
- The last two groups are in the high or medium-high income bracket, namely the countries of southern Europe and Israel, where nearly all the adults are literate, and countries of the Arab peninsula, where wealth is instead not combined with widespread literacy. This bears out the picture emerging also from the data described above. The marked economic growth of these countries connected with oil exports has not been combined with proportional investments in higher education and thus benefits only a small section of the population, creating a social system marked by severe inequality.

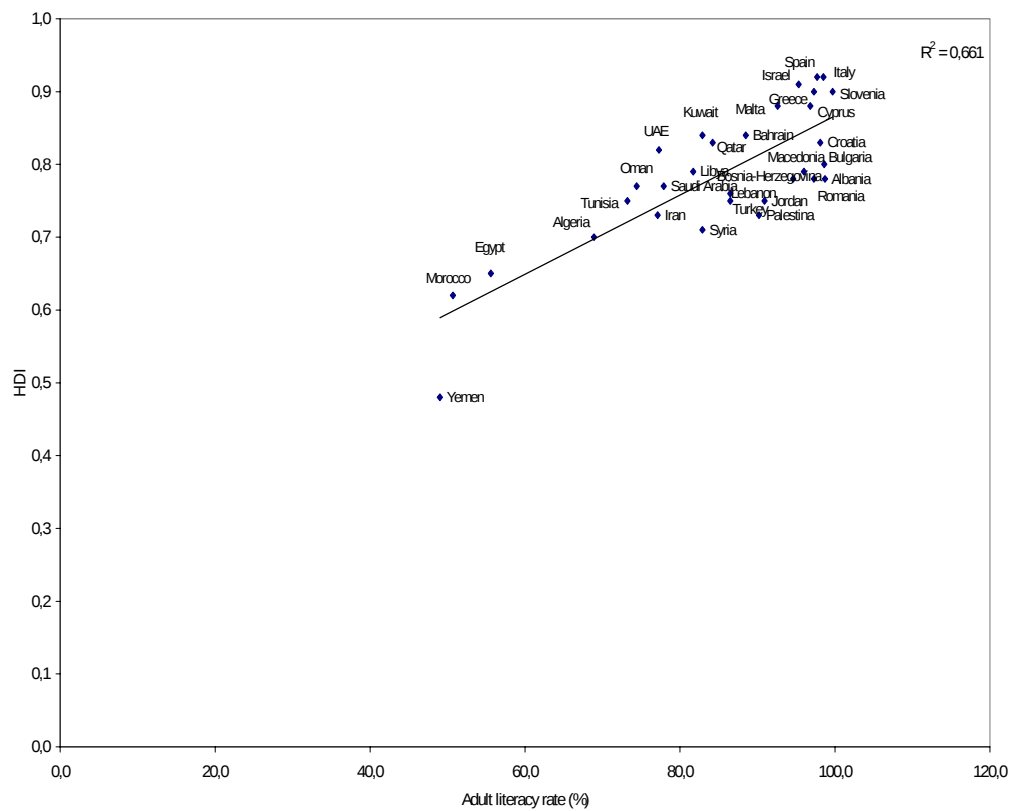
In point of fact, the link with education becomes obvious when the UNDP index of human poverty is used to consider poverty in broader terms and not only as economic deprivation. The two indicators are in fact strongly correlated and inversely proportional (Figure 4).

Figure 2. Correlation between the index of human development and the adult literacy rate, 2002



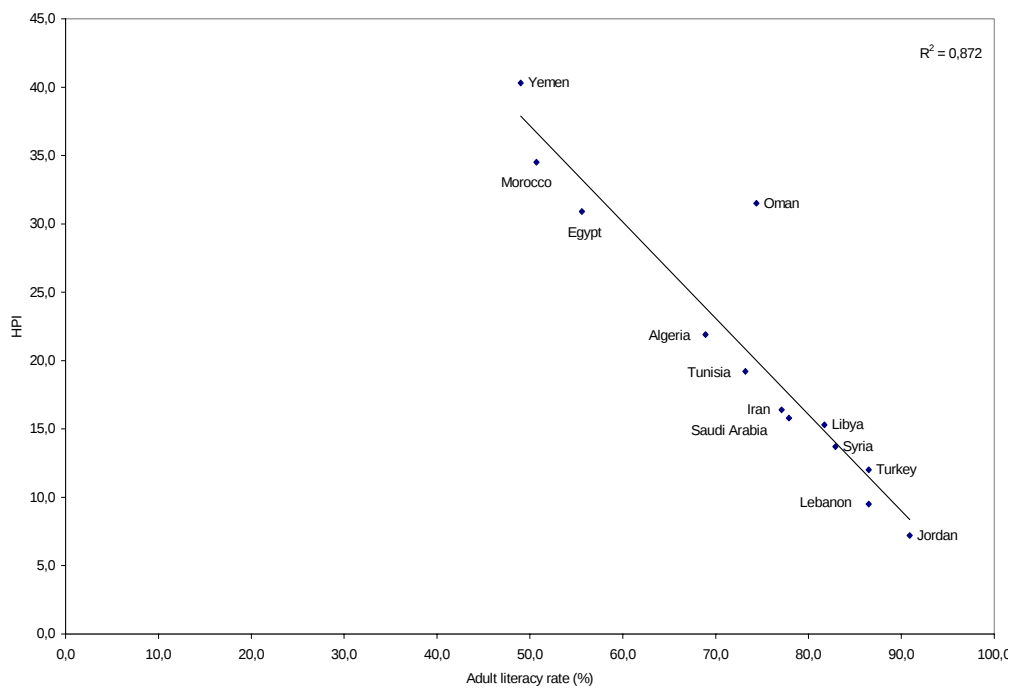
Source: data from the UNDP (2004) and UNESCO (2004) processed by Censis.

Figure 3. Correlation between GDP per capita and the adult literacy rate, 2002



Source: data from the UNDP (2004) and UNESCO (2004) processed by Censis.

Figure 4. Correlation between the index of human poverty and the adult literacy rate, 2002



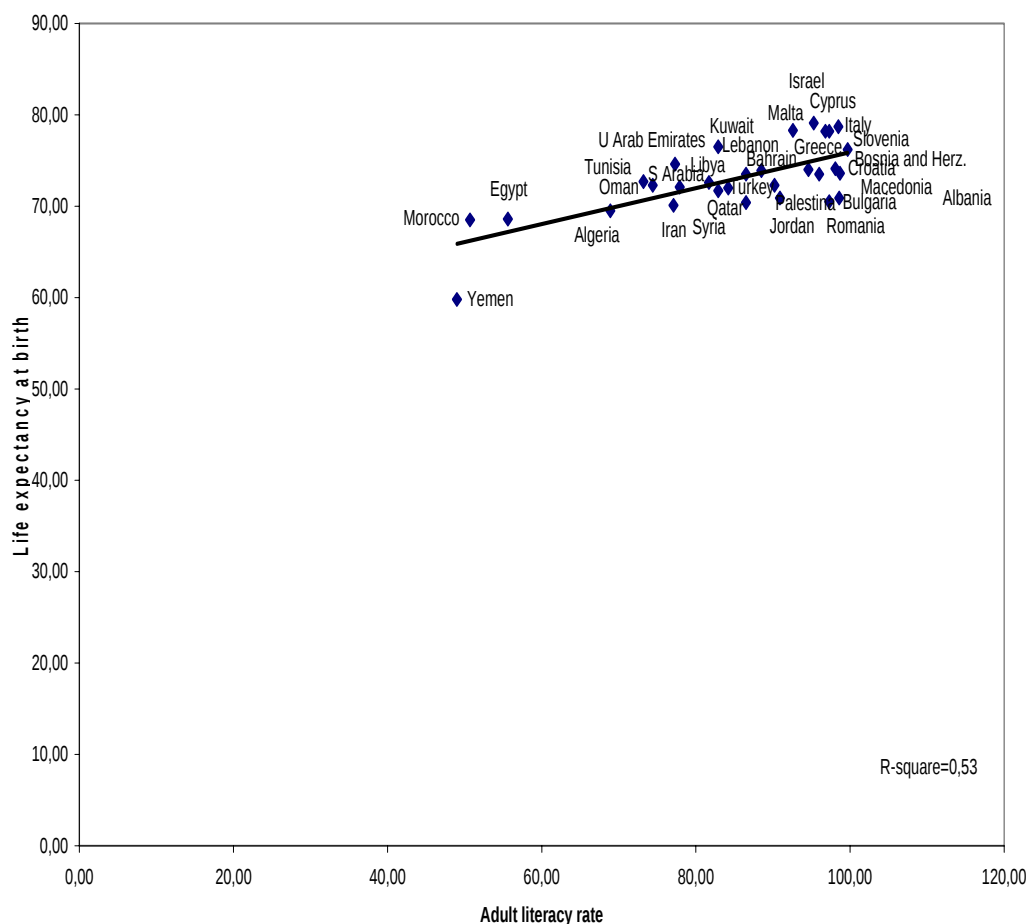
Source: data from the UNDP (2004) and UNESCO (2004) processed by Censis.

5.3. Education and social development

Figures 5, 6 and 7 show the relationship between education and social development, understood as the possibility to live a healthy life in decent conditions and as the absence of discrimination. It was decided to examine the empowerment of human capital in terms of social development through the following indicators: life expectancy at birth, indicating the longevity and hence the general state of health of a population; the under-five mortality rate, which is indicative of child welfare; the UNDP index of gender development, which measure the gender disparities and inequalities present in a society. There is a very strong correlation with education in all three cases.

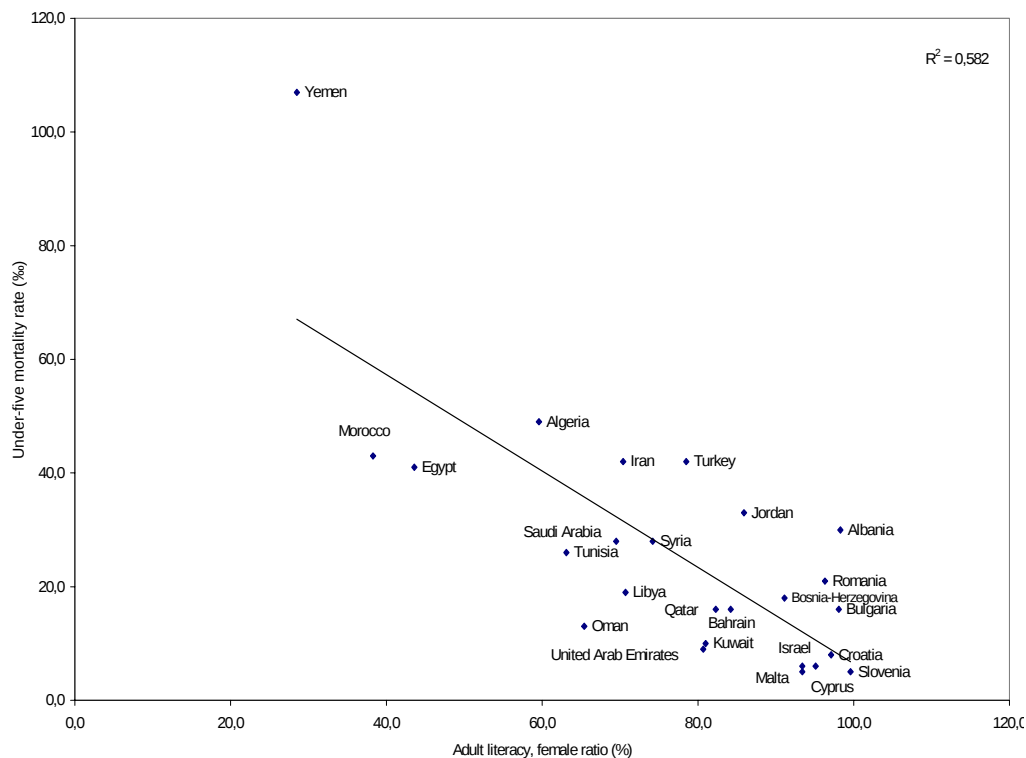
The very high correlation between the index of gender development and adult literacy (which is still higher if the rate of female literacy is taken into consideration) clearly shows that education is a powerful tool of female empowerment. The growth of human capital obtained through female education is the most powerful tool of social development in the very countries where gender discrimination is strongest. Education is in fact a major barrier against child labor and sexual exploitation, phenomena that primarily regard females. The female children attending school are less likely to be involved in dangerous jobs or domestic chores. Girls who acquire greater independence and self-awareness through education are less vulnerable to forms of domestic violence and exploitation.

Figure 5. Correlation between life expectancy at birth and the adult literacy rate



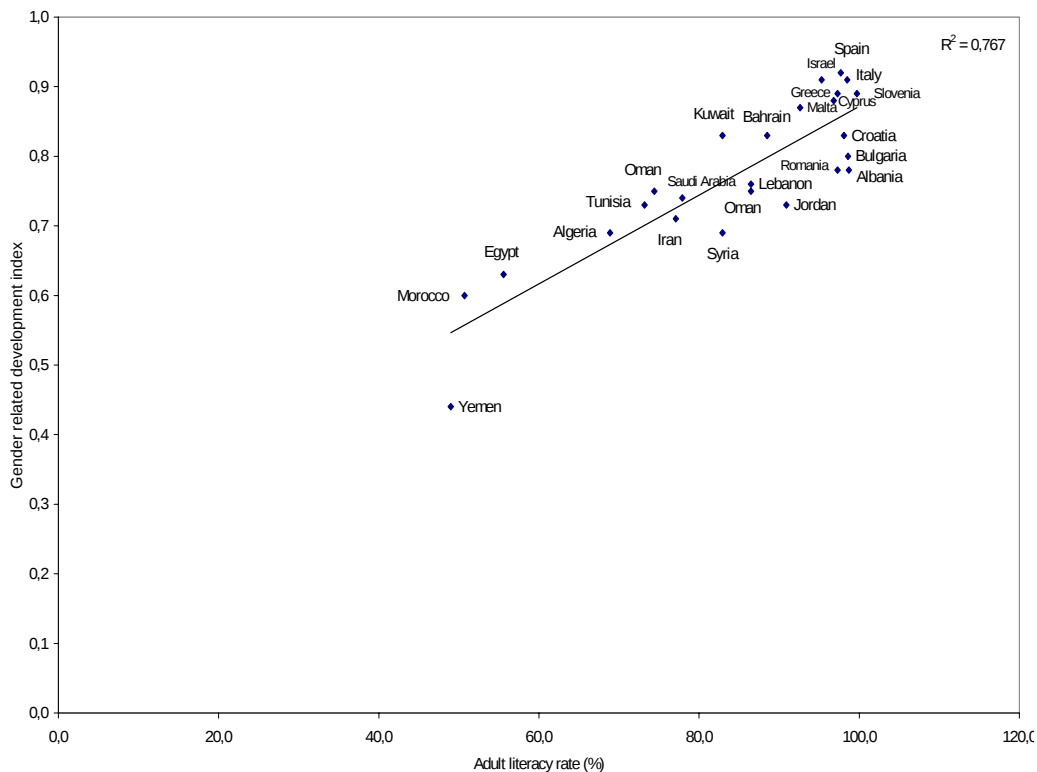
Source: data from the UN (2003) and UNESCO (2004) processed by Censis.

Figure 6. Correlation between the under-five mortality rate and the adult literacy rate (women), 2002



Source: data from UNICEF (2004) and UNESCO (2004) processed by Censis.

Figure 7. Correlation between the gender-related development index and the adult literacy rate, 2002



Source: data from the UNDP (2004) and UNESCO (2004) processed by Censis.

6. An agenda for education in the Mediterranean

Even though a great deal of progress has been achieved in the field of education in recent years, it emerges from this overview that the Mediterranean countries present a highly differentiated range of situations and problems, and that further efforts must be made to promote education as a fundamental right of children, to improve the quality of educational structures and programs, and to stimulate experimentation and innovation.

In particular, if we are to achieve the millennium objectives of basic education for all and gender equality by the set deadlines, it is essential to promote and intensify collaboration between the different countries. The creation of partnerships, networks and joint projects between such very different countries can foster the exchange of best practices and thus serve to stimulate and encourage development.

An example is provided in this connection by the Catania Project, a partnership formed by thirty universities and research centers in the Mediterranean area to pool the fruits of their research and teaching practices. Combining political cooperation at government level and cooperation between universities, the project responds to the need for a new Mediterranean policy of education and research. It could thus provide an interesting model for replication, with the necessary adjustments, in the various spheres of education and with the involvement of bodies and institutions of the different countries of the Mediterranean area.

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