

**FIRST ERF-LIS CONFERENCE ON:
"INEQUALITY TRENDS AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN"**

**DECEMBER 5, 2019
ERF PREMISES, CAIRO, EGYPT**

CONTEXT

The rising trends of inequality are hitting developed and developing countries in different ways. Both tails of the income distribution look different: high income countries have seen enlarging top income shares often combined with declining real incomes for the bottom deciles; middle and low income countries record a more limited expansion of top incomes, while the income decline in the bottom tail is partially concealed by the existence of a large informal sector. In order to explore these issues, the Mediterranean area constitutes an interesting case; European countries overlooking the Northern side experienced a pronounced increase in inequality in the last decades, while MENA countries showing on the Southern side faced diverging trends in inequality, often associated with political instability. At the same time, the entire area has been a theatre of a massive inflow of immigrants, for either economic or political reasons. Studying inequality (in either incomes, consumption or wealth) becomes crucial for understanding underlying tensions created by economic incentives and development perspectives.

To exploit the richness of harmonized data offered by the ERF covering the MENA region countries and LIS covering most of the developed countries in addition to parts of the developing world, the two institutions have joined forces to offer access to the largest database available, containing harmonised microdata, mainly on income and expenditure/consumption, to enable researchers to easily conduct socio-economic analysis of various dimensions of inequality (income, consumption, education, employment, possession of durables, ...) using all datasets available from both of the institutions. The call generated eight papers, where the authors were given access to all datasets which are harmonised according to a common template.

This conference is intended to provide a platform for discussing the findings of these research activities, and the perspectives of the different stakeholders: researchers, policymakers and media.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the conference is to provide a platform for the discussion of research findings among a well-informed diversified audience, including international experts, regional academics and policymakers and the media.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

The conference will host participants from the region and abroad. Each session will include two panelists, each will have 20 minutes for the presentation, and the rest will be for open discussion.

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AGENDA

08:30-09:00 **Registration**

09:00-11:00 **Session 1: Opening Session**

Welcome Remarks: Sherine Ghoneim; *Economic Research Forum*
Daniele Checchi; *LIS Cross National Data Center in Luxembourg*
Keynote Speaker: Francisco Ferreira; *Is Inequality Really Increasing Everywhere?*
Lead Commentator: Khalid Abu-Ismael; *UN- ESCWA*
Open Discussion

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-12:30 **Session 2: Inequality, Labor & Migration**

Moderator: Paul Makdissi; *University of Ottawa*
Panelists: Carsten Schröder, Matteo Targa, and Patrick Bureauel; *Job Polarization and Inequality in a Worldwide Perspective*

Björn Nilsson and Racha Ramadan; *The effect of Migration on Income Distributions Around the Mediterranean*

Open Discussion

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:30 **Session 3: Income Inequality**

Moderator: Daniele Checchi; *LIS Cross National Data Center in Luxembourg*
Panelists: Ioannis Bournakis, Antonio Savoia, and Francesco Savoia; *Income Inequality Convergence Across Egyptian Regions*

Vladimir Hlasny, Lidia Ceriani, and Paolo Verme; *Accounting for Negative and zero Incomes from the Welfare and Capabilities Perspectives: the Case of Mediterranean Surveys*

Open Discussion

14:30-15:30 **Session 4: Inequality, Poverty & Education**

Moderator: Hala Hattab; *British University in Egypt*
Panelists: Fateh Belaid; *Fuel Poverty Exposure and Drivers: A comparison of Vulnerability Landscape Between Egypt and Jordan*

Reham Rizk and Ronia Hawash; *Inequality of opportunity in education: Estimates from Recentered Influence Function Regressions in the MENA region*

Open Discussion

15:30-16:00 Coffee Break

16:00-17:00 **Session 5: Income Distribution & Real Exchange Rate**

Moderator: Ahmed Ghoneim; *Cairo University*

Panelists: Francesco Figari and Luca Gandullia; *The Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Income Distribution in the European Union and in the MENA Countries*

Ahmed Mohamed Ezzat; *Income inequality effects on real exchange rate: Do differentials between tails matter?*

Open Discussion

17:00-18:00 **Special Session: ERF-ESCWA Report on "Rethinking Inequality in Arab States"**

Moderator: Sherine Ghoneim; *Economic Research Forum*

Panelists: Paul Makdissi; *University of Ottawa*
Khalid Abu Ismail; *UN ESCWA*

Lead Commentators: Francisco Ferreira; *the World Bank*
Daniele Checchi; *LIS Cross National Data Center in Luxembourg*