

## Call for papers:

*Maghreb-Mashreq International* is the English edition of the *Maghreb-Machrek* journal, published since 1964 and indexed in Scopus.

The next issue of *Maghreb-Mashreq International* is dedicated to:

**“*The Informal Economy in the MENA Region: Scale, Trends and Formalisation.*”**

Eds.: Philippe Adair and Jacques Charmes.

Call for papers: <https://www.journaleska.com/index.php/mmi/announcement>

This issue will include six to nine papers selected through a double-blind process of peer reviewing.

Papers complying with the journal guidelines (See the Appendix), should be submitted to [agpaedit@eska.fr](mailto:agpaedit@eska.fr) and [adair@u-pec.fr](mailto:adair@u-pec.fr) at the latest by **May 12, 2025**.

Preselection of papers: **May 12-19, 2025**.

Notification to authors: **May 20, 2025**.

Workshop/Webinar in Valence (Remote/in person): **June 13, 2025**

Selection of the papers, final draft: **July 28, 2025**

Copyediting and formatting: **September 22, 2025**

Publication of the issue: **November 10-24, 2025**

### **1. Informality: a heuristic concept and a “fuzzy set”**

More than half a century since the pioneering work on the informal sector (Hart 1973; ILO 1972), research agrees that the heuristic concept of informal economy (henceforth informality) covers distinct theories and methodologies without real consensus. Informality is a “fuzzy set” in the sense of the set theory or multidimensional analysis which comprises three components: the informal sector, informal activities in the formal sector and within households. Data remain disparate, and statistical coverage insufficient (Charmes & Adair 2022).

However, estimates of the magnitude of these «forms» of employment have been made in a very large number of countries, followed and prompted by a regular adaptation of working population concepts and survey methods by the International Labour Organization (ILO), in 1993, 2003, 2013 and 2023.

The informal sector (the largest component) includes (micro)unincorporated enterprises run by unregistered self-employed, self-employed and employers with fewer than five permanent employees.

Informal employment includes all precarious jobs, both in the informal sector and in formal enterprises and households (including domestic workers and members of households producing goods and services for their own use), workers are not subject to labour regulations, income tax collection or social protection provided by the employer (Charmes 2019).

Informality is a three-fold spectrum of theories. The dualist theory (Lewis, 1954) is based on labour market segmentation - formal versus informal jobs resulting from barriers to entry into the formal economy.

Segmentation theory of is not congruent with neo-institutionalist theory (De Soto, 1986), which emphasizes enterprises and institutions, or with structuralist theory based on the hierarchy of job statuses (Castells & Portes 1989).

## **2. The direct approach: microeconomic analyses**

The direct analysis of informality can exploit two sources covering the two components ,respectively (i) informal employment and (ii) informal sector. (i) the cross-sectional employment surveys of households, as well as panel data surveys carried out in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia; (ii) the business surveys carried out on cross-sectional data in Morocco and Tunisia.

Studies uses transition matrices and investigate occupational mobility, earnings functions and decomposition models, addressing both labour supply and demand behaviours.

Results show that the labour supply behaviour of women is different from that of men.

## **3. The indirect approach: macroeconomic analyses**

Global approaches to the so-called “shadow economy” have multiplied. They are based on (i) structural models (MIMIC) that are calibrated by monetary measures or electricity expenditure (Medina & Schneider 2019). Two other categories of models are mobilised, (ii) stochastic or non-stochastic general equilibrium (or disequilibrium) models (DSGE or DGE), or (iii) autoregressive vector models -VAR (ARDL). These models are intended to measure informality rather than explain it. There are many estimates for a large number of countries (110) over relatively long time series: 1997-2022 (Asslani, Dell'Anno & Schneider 2024).

## **4. Formalising informality and decent job creation policies**

The formalisation of informality through the promotion of decent work is displayed as a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 8), whose issues and outcomes are diverse.

Formalisation is a three-player game, aimed at distinct targets, whose stakes are potentially contradictory.

(i) Why formalize? Improving the well-being of workers (benefit from social protection); business activity (access to credit, including public markets); the fiscal balance of society and the state (broadening the tax base, reducing tax rates)?

(ii) The aforementioned issues may prove inconsistent. The extension of social protection is an advantage for informal workers, at the expense of increasing labour costs for enterprises (informal and formal). There is unfair competition between informal and formal firms. There

is a dilemma: increase tax revenues to finance public goods vs. *laissez-faire* to avoid social unrest? Is formalisation able to combine the removal of barriers to entry, compliance with labour regulations and tax consent?

(iii) What are the targets? Entrepreneurs and employees. Will formalization reconcile the entrepreneurial spirit advocated by the World Bank with extending social protection claimed by the International Labour Office?

Formalization policies are based on incentives and constraints, which proved effective (i) for training and education and training, conducive to economic growth, and (ii) for tax incentives that support the creation of formal jobs, including for women, through social and solidarity economy (SSE) cooperatives (Adair et al 2022). Macroeconomic policies produce positive and modest effects, generally more effective than those resulting from a policy targeting one category or region.

## 5. What about MENA?

The concept of informality has always suffered from an ambiguous and ambivalent status in the MENA region and public authorities have often preferred terminologies such as crafts and small trades (a traditional sector that needs to evolve) or on the contrary, the underground economy or the shadow economy (an illegal sector that is to be eliminated). The result is a certain reluctance to carry out systematic data collection on these forms of employment, and even their outright abandonment in the recent period.

However, recent macroeconomic studies have been carried out on Egypt, Iraq and Jordan (OECD/ILO/UNDP 2024), and on Morocco by the Policy Center for the Global South (Saoudi & Ouhnini 2023), while microeconomic investigations developed in Algeria and Egypt, through tailored surveys conducted by academics or Labour Market Panel Surveys (LMPS) designed by the *Economic Research Forum*.

## References

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This call for papers aims to gather articles on political economy or socio-economic issues at regional, national or multi-country level. Comparisons and case studies, sociological, anthropological and political investigations are welcome. We invite contributions to address in particular but without restrictions the following issues.

**Topics and issues** (not exhaustive)

*Relevance and limits of investigation methods: transversal vs longitudinal approaches (panel surveys), temporal vs experimental analyses: what measures of informality?*

*The macroeconomic analysis of informality trends: Are there robust stylised facts?*

*Rise and decline of informal employment: before vs after the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic*

*Does microeconomic analysis explain informality behaviour with respect to gender?*

*Actors and sectors of informality: what are barriers to entry into formal employment?*

*Youth occupational mobility between and within the formal and informal sectors*

*Is the informal sector innovative?*

*Informal sector, informal employment and labour productivity: does informality hold back growth?*

*Is financing of the informal sector endogenous?*

*Does informal employment absorb unemployment?*

*Actors and informal sectors: the role of youth*

*Informal employment: voluntary choice or constraint?*

*Decent job creation and formalisation policies: a comparison of countries*

*The formalisation of informal employment Is it effective, is it relevant?*

*Assessing the performance of formalisation schemes: costs and sustainability of job creation*

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We gratefully acknowledge the support from the *CREG* research team, the University of Grenoble-Alpes, the University Campus in Valence, the Technology Institute of Valence, the *Maghreb-Machrek* and *Maghreb-Mashreq International* journals, *EuroMediterranean and African Network for Economic Studies* (EMANES) and *Association Tiers-Monde* (Third World Association).



## Authors Guidelines

Authors should send their revised full paper to [agpaedit@eska.fr](mailto:agpaedit@eska.fr) and [adair@u-pec.fr](mailto:adair@u-pec.fr)

The full paper must not exceed 7,500 words, or approximately 48,000 signs (including spaces), in MS Word format (.doc or .docx, or rtf).

First page: Name(s) and first name(s) of the institution(s), professional address(s), email(s) and the last two publications of the author(s).

Second page: Title of the article, no mention of the author(s), an Abstract in French and in English (up to 200 words), six keywords (alphabetical order), and JEL codes, followed by the text and a list of bibliographic references.

Text: Times New Roman, size 12. No more than three levels, using Arabic numerals (1.; *I.I.* and *1.1.1.*) for the title of each section (no indentation) with a 1.5 line spacing.

Please use full sentences and refrain from any listing with hyphens, bullet points or else.

Each paragraph is indented (0.5) as this one.

Figures (tables, graphs, diagrams and maps) in Times New Roman, size 10, simple spacing. no indentation. All must be labelled and numbered in Arabic numerals; their location must be indicated in the text. Source should be indicated as well as notes if any. No colours. No gridlines but very few horizontal dividing lines for Tables.

Box (es): Times New Roman, size 10 (no indentation), single spacing; title and Arabic numerals.

Footnotes in Times New Roman, size 10, no indentation, simple spacing. For very limited use, they must not contain references, which are included within the text and refer to the list of references.

References within the text are included as follows: (Abdou 2013), (Abdou & Salman 2015) or (Abdou et al 2017), if there are three or more authors. Otherwise, Abdou (2013) studies, or Abdou et al (2013) examine, or according to Abdou (2013).

Punctuation: Appropriate use of quotation marks and moderate use of capital letters according to typographical rules.

Bibliographic references: Times New Roman, size 10 indented as shown below.

Book: Name(s), Initial(s) First name(s) (year). *Title* (in italics). Location, publisher.

Abdel Ghafar, A. (2018). *A Stable Egypt for a Stable Region: Socio-Economic Challenges and Prospects*. Strasbourg: European Parliament, Policy Department.

Chapter: Name(s), Initial(s) First name(s) (year). Title. In Name(s), Initial(s) First name(s) authors. *Title* (in italics), location, publisher, pp.

Article: Name(s), Initial(s) First name(s) (year). Title. *Journal* (in italics), vol. and n° in numerals, pp.

Abdou, P., Salman, D., & Zaazou, Z. (2013). The Egyptian Revolution and Post Socio-Economic Impact. *Topics in Middle Eastern and African Economies*, 15(1), 92-115

Thesis: Name, Initial(s) First name(s) (year). Title. Discipline. University.

Working paper: Surname(s), First name(s) (year). Title, Research Team, University or Institution.