

# THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT OFFICE (NEO): AN ANSWER TO UNEMPLOYMENT?

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The National Employment Office (NEO) is an old/new governmental organization under the umbrella of the Lebanese Ministry of Labor. Its mandate enables it to conduct statistical, economic and social studies and to offer guidance and training. Established in 1979, it closed down four years later in 1983. It was reactivated in 1995, by the Ministry of Labor, upon the recommendation of the International Labor Office (ILO).

NEO has a board of directors and an executive committee. The former is headed by the Minister of Labor, and his Vice-President is the Director General of the Ministry in question. It includes representatives of governmental institutions (the Lebanese University, the Directorate General of Technical Training, and the Educational Center for Research and Development), employers,<sup>1</sup> as well as employees.<sup>2</sup>

In order to obtain more information on the work done at NEO an interview was conducted with Mr. Moussa Gedeon, Director General of NEO. Gedeon explained: "Among the most important duties of the NEO is the creation of employment centers in Beirut and all Lebanese regions. Our basic aim is to curtail the rise in unemployment rates. In order to do so a study on the situation of the labor market and its needs was carried out in collaboration with the International Labor Office (ILO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The first employment center was established in Beirut in January, 1998. The first month served as a trial period, and the center has been operational since February. Initially, we faced a lot of difficulties because the employees at NEO lacked the proper training needed. So we organized training sessions for them which were supervised by the International Labor Office and the Tunisian Office of Employment."

The trained specialists at NEO visit, on the basis of the study results, the establishments that are in need of employees, and an application form is filled out for the

available vacant positions. The application forms are later matched with the job application forms filled by the applicants.<sup>3</sup> This process tries to equalize the demand for with the supply of labor.

Gedeon affirms that the NEO's target audience is the Lebanese citizen and maintains that the free services offered at the NEO should be an incentive for people to apply: "I would like to call upon employers and employees to come forth and make use of the services we offer. They ought to have trust in us for their trust will allow our office to grow and prosper. Through our work we aim to refute the saying that everything free of charge is a flop." Gedeon admits that one employment center is not enough and attributes the opening of this center in greater Beirut to the fact that 45% of the Lebanese labor force is clustered in this area. Gedeon clarifies: "It should be noted here, however, that this center receives job application forms from all over Lebanon. In the future several employment centers will be established and each one of them will deal with a specific district. Our long term objective is to find work for Lebanese citizens including those living abroad to encourage them to return to their country."

The National Employment Office has received, so far, numerous job application forms and requests from employers. The data has been codified and computerized. The figures below give an idea on the sort of applications and requests received.



## DEMAND FOR JOBS

Family Status	Male	Female	Total
Widowed		4	4
Single	412	218	630
Married	220	66	286
Divorced	4	6	10
Total	636	294	930

**DEMAND FOR JOBS**

Sex	Working Presently	Not Working Presently	Total
Female	33	261	294
Male	94	542	636
Total	127	803	930

**DEMAND FOR JOBS**

Age	Male	Female	Total
<=19	46	9	55
20-25	165	91	256
26-30	117	68	185
31-35	93	50	143
36-40	66	38	104
41-45	55	15	70
46-50	40	10	50
51-55	21	7	28
56-60	19	4	23
>60	14	2	16
Total	636	294	930

**DEMAND FOR JOBS**

Reasons Behind Unemployment	Male	Female	Total
Economic Reasons	229	80	309
Resignation	82	55	137
Looking for a Job for the First Time	97	67	164
End of Contract	65	21	86
Termination for Other Reasons	58	34	92
No Answer	96	35	131
Sickness or Work Accident	9	2	11
Total	636	294	930

**DEMAND FOR JOBS**

Type	Male	Female	Total
Senior Officials & Managers	49	9	58
Professionals	118	73	191
Technicians & Associate Professionals	123	71	194
Clerks	63	112	175
Service Workers & Shop & Market Sales Workers	62	9	71
Craft & Related Trade Workers	110	8	118
Plant & Machine Operators & Assemblers	65		65
Elementary Occupations (Non Qualified)	46	12	58
Total	636	294	930

**DEMAND FOR JOBS**

Caza	Male	Female	Total
Batroun	6	1	7
West Bekaa	1		1
Chouf	25	7	32
Koura	2		2
Metn	120	42	162
El-Minieh	4		4
Nabatiyeh	1		1
Baabda	168	65	233
Baalbeck	2		2
Beirut	178	146	324
Jbeil	7	2	9
Jezzine	2		2
Rachaya	5		5
Zahlé	8	2	10
Zghorta	2		2
Tyre	2	1	3
Saida	23	5	28
Tripoli	20		20
Aley	31	4	35
Akkar	6		6
Kesserwan	23	19	42
Total	636	294	930

**DEMAND FOR JOBS**

Educational Level	Male	Female	Total
Elementary	54	10	64
Licence Technique	4	1	5
Technicien Supérieur	43	20	63
Baccalauréat Technique	77	38	115
Certificat Accéléré Professionnel	1	1	2
Brevet Professionnel	4		4
Illiterate	9	1	10
Intermediate	122	25	147
Secondary	84	41	125
University	225	152	377
No Answer	8	3	11
Post Graduate	5	2	7
Total	636	294	930

**ENDNOTES**

- 1 The employers have five members representing the banking, industrial, and commercial sectors as well as hotels and hospitals.  
 2 The employees have five members chosen from the Labor Union.

3 The matching is executed according to the classifications and descriptions of professions that were prepared by NEO in conformity with international standards. This division reconciles the discourse between employer and employee.