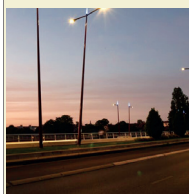


# L'ECONOMISTE

Le premier quotidien économique du Maroc

## Census 2024

# The machine is in motion



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## EDITORIAL

## Fighting the battle

Ahlam NAZIH

**B**ACK-to-school time is expensive for parents. In the private sector, the price of a schoolbag with supplies and textbooks can cost three times as much as in the public sector (see our survey, [www.leconomiste.com](http://www.leconomiste.com), August 30, 2024). Not to mention the associated costs (transport, catering, activities, etc.). But parents are willing to bleed, as long as their children have access to an education that acts as a real social ladder. A role that public schools have long since ceased to play.

Anyone with an education budget tries to «save» their offspring, each opting for the standard that suits his or her purse. The golden age of private primary-secondary schools is not about to end. More and more families are opting for them, despite the occasional switch to public schools in difficult times. According to a recent L'Economiste-Sunergia survey, 50% of parents would enroll their child-

ren there if they could afford it. Parents' first reflex is to prevent their children from boarding a sinking ship. But they could also fight to transform their local school. Until now, they have been the least involved in change. Parents, through their associations, could become true partners in the reform.

By investing even a quarter of what they pay in private schools each month, or even less, they could achieve a great deal. For example, some public elementary school operate on budgets of less than 5,000 dirhams (USD 500)... per year (for around 400 pupils). And if they present good development projects, they could land up to around 30,000 dirhams (USD 3,000) a year. With the contribution of parents, these schools could have un hoped-for funds at their disposal. Schools are everyone's responsibility, and everyone must take responsibility for their own. □



## Weekly highlights

### Census 2024: The machine is in motion

**A**HMED Lahlimi chose the right timing to organize a press conference on Thursday August 29 at the headquarters of the High Commissioner's Office for Planning (HCP). This coincided with the final stage of the face-to-face training and the eve of the launch of the household data collection operation for the 2024 General Census of Population and Housing (RGPH). The census began on September 1 and is due to end on September 30.

In any case, during the meeting, Ahmed Lahlimi insisted that the questionnaires do not include any questions relating to family income or expenditure, nor the CIN number. For the high commissioner, the data collected during this census cannot be linked to personal data included in other administrative registers, such as the National Population Register or the Unified Social Register (RSU). «These data have no role in determining the eligibility or entitlement of families to benefit from direct social assistance programs», said Lahlimi, to reassure people against some fake-news circulating



On August 30 and September 1, census enumerators returned to their areas of operation to familiarize themselves in preparation for the start of the census on Sunday September 1, which is scheduled to end this September 30

on social media claiming that the information gathered by the census will be used to calculate the RSU indicator. «As was the case in previous operations, the goals are determined according to national priorities that require statistical data, and in line with United Nations recommenda-

tions», said Lahlimi. The overall budget for the census over the four years from 2022 to 2025, from preparation with mapping and training to completion, amounts to 1.460 billion dirhams (USD 146 million). The largest part of this budget is absorbed by the compensation paid to participants, i.e. nearly 970 million MAD (USD 97 million).

This represents around 67% of the total. As the 2024 census is totally digital, the HCP has invested in technological solutions such as 55,000 tablets, security software, platform hosting, and other solutions.

All this has channeled nearly 200 million dirhams (USD 20 million), representing 14% of the budget.

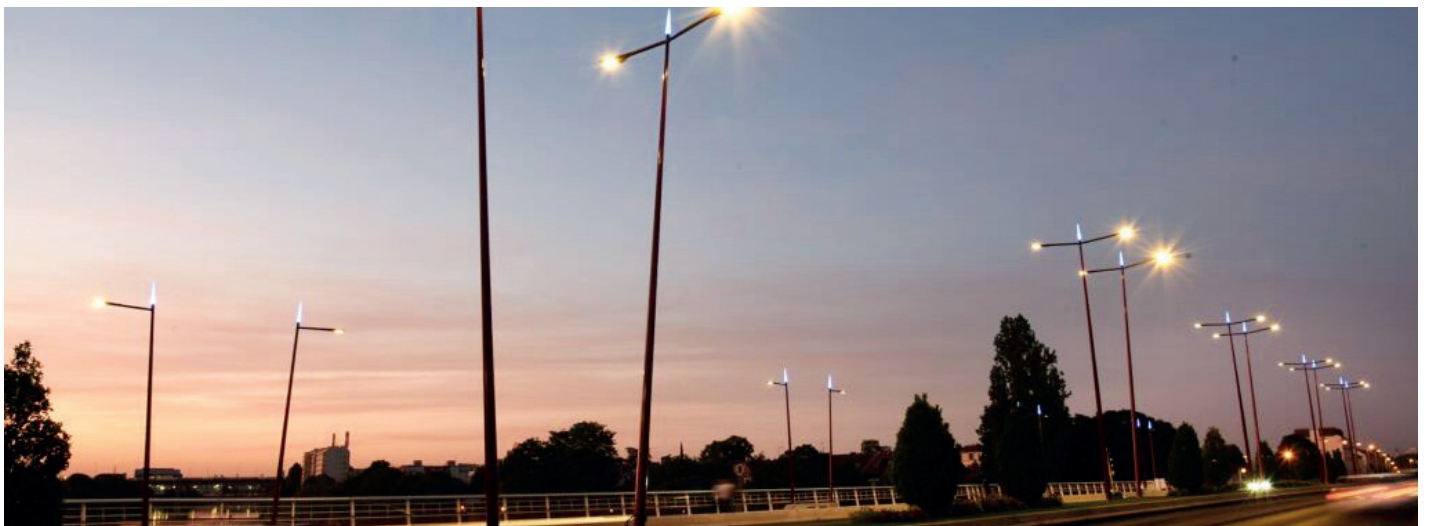
Added to this are other purchases of goods and services, including car rentals. As for mapping, it took one year of work (2023), involving almost 2,000 researchers, not to mention communication, development work, and insurance... all this is estimated at almost 280 million dirhams (USD 28 million), or nearly 20% of the total expenditures. □

Mohamed CHAOUI

### Street lighting: Legal battle in prospect

**N**EW anti-dumping complaint against China. After plywood, refrigerators and mechanical carpets, this time it's the turn of LED street lighting fixtures from the China. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce launched its investigation on September 2, 2024. The complainant is Lux Lighting, based in the Moulay Rachid industrial zone in Casablanca. The company alleges «the existence of dumping», relying in particular on invoices and import price quotations from a Chinese manufacturer. Lux Lighting's arguments include the average normal ex-works value and the average export price adjusted at this stage.....

«The estimates of export price and normal value are objective and sufficiently documented. The dumping margin calculated is high and far exceeds the de minimis level of 2% (allowed by the World Trade Organization)», says the Directorate of Defense and Trade Regulation. Opinion number



This is the second time that street lighting has found itself at the heart of an international trade law dispute

DDC/06/2024 cites other statistics such as those relating to national production.

Between 2020 and 2023, domestic production fell by 31% compared with imports from China. Their volume is not mentioned in the ministerial opinion of August 28, 2024.

However, the Department of Foreign Trade states that imports are «the direct cause of the deterioration in the situa-

tion» of the Moroccan manufacturer. In terms of sales volumes, market share and profits...

An important point: «Lux Lighting's production accounts for 82% of national output», indicating a high level of economic concentration in the sector. In any case, the company represents the «national production branch» for LED fixtures. This status is of the

utmost legal importance. It enables a company to invoke the law on trade defense measures. This means it can lodge a complaint against alleged unfair competition. Until then, nothing is certain. The National Federation of Electricity, Electronics, and Renewable Energies (Fenelec) is «closely monitoring this thorny issue», according to one of its officials. □

Faiçal FAQUIHI



## Wealth concentrated in three regions

**W**HAT contribution will the regions make to wealth creation in 2022, and what is their respective GDP? The answer is provided by the High Commissioners' Office for Planning (HCP), which recently published regional accounts for the year 2022, a year marked by a marked slowdown in economic growth against a backdrop of rising inflation. Analysis of the regional accounts for 2022 highlights a complex mosaic of economic performance across the country's different regions. National GDP reached MAD 1,296 billion (USD 129 billion) in volume terms, recording moderate growth of 1.5% compared with 2021. This growth masks significant regional disparities, both in terms of growth and contribution to national wealth.

The year 2022 was characterized by significant growth disparities between regions, with only four exceeding the national average of 1.5%. Leading the way was the Souss-Massa region, with a remarkable growth rate of 7.5%,



driven mainly by the preponderance of services, which account for 59.2% of its GDP. Agriculture and fisheries, although less dominant, nevertheless account for 17.4% of the regional economy. The Rabat-Salé-Kénitra (5.2%), Marrakech-Safi (4.6%), and Laâyoune-Saguia Al Hamra (2.9%) regions also outperformed. Conversely, two regions suffered a contraction in GDP: Béni

Mellal-Khénifra recorded a significant drop of 4.7%, while Fez - Meknes saw a decline of 1.9%. These declines can be partly attributed to increased dependence on primary activities, which are particularly vulnerable to climatic and economic hazards.

The Casablanca-Settat region, despite being a national economic powerhouse, has seen its growth almost

stagnate, with a rate of 0.2% in 2022. The region's economy is largely dominated by the secondary sector (37.2% of regional GDP) and the tertiary sector (48% of regional GDP). Casablanca-Settat, the country's main source of wealth, contributes 31.4% to national GDP, confirming its status as the powerhouse of the Moroccan economy.

The breakdown of GDP by value highlights the predominant role played by certain regions in the creation of national wealth. Casablanca-Settat, Rabat-Salé-Kénitra, and Tangiers-Tétouan-Al Hoceima stand out clearly, together accounting for almost 58% of national GDP. This concentration of wealth in a few regions has a direct impact on widening regional disparities. The average absolute gap between the GDP of the various regions and the average regional GDP has increased from 72 billion dirhams (USD 7.37 billion) in 2021 to 73.1 billion (USD 7.49 billion) in 2022, reflecting growing economic polarization. □

Khadija MASMOUDI

## Real estate: New pressure on developers!

**C**ONSUMER protection measures vis-à-vis suppliers are being strengthened. Article 573 of the «dahir» (Royal Decree) establishing the Code of Obligations and Contracts (DOC) has just been amended. Customers who discover a redhibitory defect or a problem of non-conformity in the property they have purchased now have 2 years from the date of delivery to take legal action to claim compensation. In all cases, this period has been extended to 5 years from the date of sale of the property, failing which the right to claim will be forfeited. Under the previous system, this period was limited to one year. The consumer can also take legal action if the real estate does not meet the promised quality conditions.

In the case of movables and animals in general, this period remains unchanged at 30 days from the date of delivery. However, whether in the case of real estate or movables and animals, and as stipulated in the same article of the DOC, these time limits may be extended or reduced by mutual agreement between seller and buyer.

This is in fact a partial adjustment to the provisions of article 65 of law no. 31-08, enacting consumer protection



measures. This article sets a 2-year time limit for taking legal action in the real estate sector in the event of a defect requiring a warranty, or if the property sold does not conform to the promised quality. This adjustment is partial, since in the case of movable property, this period is one year from the date of delivery, but this has not been extended to the DOC, since it remains set at 30 days..

Bringing the two texts into line with each other has not eliminated a number of major inconsistencies that are likely to give legal experts a hard time.

The DOC provides for the possibility of extending or reducing the time limit for taking legal action, provided there is agreement between the two parties. In the case of law no. 31-08, this is out of the question, as the provision is a matter of public policy.

Another disparity between the two laws is that, unlike the DOC, the Consumer Protection Act contains no provisions concerning the sale of animals.

The provisions of article 573 of the DOC obviously apply to property built before the law was published in the Official Gazette. However, second-hand

real estate is excluded from the new provisions.

When asked by L'Economiste about the implications of this amendment, Taoufik Kamil, President of the National Federation of Real Estate Developers (Fédération nationale des promoteurs immobiliers), remained silent. In any case, the DOC's amendment will put pressure on real estate developers, who will have to pay greater attention to the quality of their products and be more vigilant with their service providers to avoid legal risk as far as possible. □

Hassan ELARIF



## Weekly highlights

### Tourism: Figures that hide other figures

**T**HREE million passengers landed at Moroccan airports in July. These figures are published on the website of the National Airports Authority (ONDA) and in a note from the Directorate of Financial Studies and Forecasting (DEPF), which also refers to a January/July total of 10 million arrivals. However, not every person arriving at the airport translates into an overnight stay in Moroccan hotels. Among the passengers, there are certainly those who opt for Airbnb or Moroccans returning from a trip or pilgrimage. Professionals estimate that 50% of people who arrive at the airport do not go to hotels.

In Agadir, for example, accommodation establishments received 130,000 arrivals last July, while arrivals/passengers at Al Massira airport exceeded 266,000. Should one be pleased or alarmed by the growing popularity of Apart-Hotel and Airbnb accommodation in Morocco?

Faced with rising hotel prices, many holidaymakers, both Moroccan and foreign, prefer this type of accommodation as an alternative thanks to better



value for money, but also more flexibility, especially for families or groups of friends. It has to be said, too, that during the summer vacations and the holiday season, hotel rates are unbelievably high. But here again, hoteliers are putting forward their own arguments, linked to the law of supply and demand and seasonality... For Hamid Bentahar, President of the National Tourism Confederation (CNT), high prices are a global phenomenon, affecting all sectors. «Hotel rates in Morocco are identical to those in Spain or France», he argues. The subject merits further

reflection, as many Moroccans - estimated at over a million - from Morocco and other European countries have chosen to spend their summer in southern Spain. All the more so as there has been a positive trend in terms of number of visas issued by Spain.

For Bentahar, this behavior confirms that Morocco's tourism strategy is on the right track: «We can't aspire to be a major tourist country without also being a tourist-sending country», he points out. «We shouldn't forget that the same Moroccan middle class that travels abroad in summer also travels

within the country to hotels in winter and spring», added the president of CNT. In any case, July's figures should not conceal another reality: domestic tourism was absent in July, at least within 5-to-3 star accommodation establishments (see L'Economiste no. 6833 of August 27, 2024). For Bentahar, it is a question of reservations and capacity. Seaside hotels are booked up to 8 months in advance. He added that August was a totally different month, with a balance between different markets. □

**Badra BERRISSOULE**

### Who are our entrepreneurs?

**T**HE Ministry of Economy and Finance and the African Development Bank have jointly conducted a study to analyze the socio-demographic characteristics and intrinsic capacities of entrepreneurs, and the main constraints and needs in terms of support to create and develop their businesses. In particular, the study covered 9,085 people in 3,034 households, from which 2,297 entrepreneurs (established and potential) were identified, representing a population of 7.4 million individuals throughout Morocco.

#### *-57% of established entrepreneurs do so out of necessity*

The results show that the Kingdom has an entrepreneurial potential commensurate with its level of development. Indeed, this is estimated at 25% of the Moroccan population aged 18 and over, divided between 9% of established entrepreneurs and 16% of potential entrepreneurs who have initiated conceptual or concrete actions with a view to setting up a business.



The study reveals, however, that 57% of established entrepreneurs are doing so out of necessity, through micro and small enterprises in low-productivity sectors and activities (almost 50% are self-employed and 40% are entrepreneurs with up to three employees).

The study also shows that 22% of new businesses are run by women. And 44% of potential entrepreneurs are also women, reflecting their growing desire to get involved in this field.

Meanwhile, informal entrepreneurship stands at over 70% nationwide. The

various laws and regulations (taxation, social charges, and administrative procedures) and the instability of economic activity are perceived as the main constraints to joining the formal economy.

On the other hand, access to health and pension cover is an incentive for entrepreneurs to formalize their activities, which reinforces the major project aiming at extending social protection.

In addition, the study confirms that entrepreneurship and the development of very small, small, and medium-sized

enterprises (VSSMEs) represent an important source of short- and medium-term employment for the country. If only 5% of established and potential entrepreneurs were able to develop their businesses, this could generate an average of 100,000 jobs a year nationwide. With this in mind, the study identified five pillars that should form the basis of a strategy to promote entrepreneurship in Morocco, namely: Markets; Support; Regulation; Education and Financing (M.A.R.E.F.). □

**Aziz DIOUF**