ETF Working together Learning for life

LEBANON

VET GOVERNANCE
ETF PARTNER
COUNTRY PROFILE

1. GENERAL GOVERNANCE

Lebanon is a parliamentary democracy. The president is head of state, as well as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. No president has been elected since 2014, when the current acting president was appointed. Elections have not happened despite being announced several times. The legislative process distributes powers across the country's religious groups. Legislative power rests with the Parliament elected democratically every four years. The Chamber elects one of its members as President of the Chamber for a similar term. Executive power rests with the Council of Ministers, which draws up and implements public policy. The prime minister is appointed through parliamentary consultations. The cabinet is formed in agreement with the president after parliamentary consultations by the Prime Minister-designate. Judicial power rests with courts.

There are six governorates, including Beirut. Five are split into districts, which in turn are subdivided into towns and villages. In each district, the District Administrator represents the central authorities. So ministers not only manage their own ministry in Beirut, but also bodies that fall under their authority, even though officials themselves are responsible to the Minister of the Interior. By law, governorate councils should be appointed by the central authorities in an advisory role and give recommendations on issues affecting the governorate. But no council of this kind has yet been set up.

Professional organisations include the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Lebanon (FCCIAL), the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut, local chambers (e.g. Tripoli, Saida and Beqaa), and the Association of Lebanese Industrialists. The Confederation of General Workers of Lebanon (CGTL) is the main trade union federation. Employers and employers' organisations are largely absent from VTE governance, though employers are involved in some public sector initial training initiatives. The trade unions are only involved in skills development in an extremely limited way.

2. VET GOVERNANCE

Key roles and functions

VET (or VTE, in Lebanon) governance and policy are highly centralised. The system is administered by the Directorate General for VTE (DG VTE), comprising seven departments in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). DG VTE is responsible for managing schools and centres; developing and implementing the curriculum and qualifications; employment; overseeing private sector training schools; and state examinations and the inspectorate. DG VTE is involved in decision-making on funds, curricula, inspectorate, examinations and accrediting training centres. It does not cover continuous training, except for short or accelerated courses for employed people needing retraining or extra skills. These are coordinated by DG VTE's curriculum development unit, yet are also within the mandate of the Ministry of Labor.

MEHE initiates policy, contributes to decision-making and funds the public VTE system through the government. The government established the Higher Council for VTE to advise DG VTE. It includes all the main actors in VTE, including business, and is meant to advise on laws and policy, budgets, decrees to open new schools. But it has never met. The Centre for Education Research (CERD) was intended to supply research and analysis on the VTE curriculum, training and standards for teachers, and management of VET providers. But so far it has been given little if any effective role in supporting policy making or implementation.

Financing

The main source of funding is the public budget. It should be calculated based on providers' needs, but in the absence of an elected government, budget is set by adding 10% to the previous year's budget. So there is neither incentive for employers to support VTE, nor tax breaks or training levies. MEHE and DG VTE decide how to use funds and are responsible for monitoring and evaluation. By law, the directors of VTE schools and institutes and the DG VTE submit their budget needs to DG VTE, which

submits the overall budget to MEHE. The minister consolidates all requests from the ministry and submits the whole MEHE budget to the Council of Ministers for approval. It then submits the complete government budget to parliament. This process, linking finance to reforms, is transparent in theory, but the political situation means it is not currently being followed.

Coordination mechanisms for VET policymaking

Laws regulating education date from 1959. MEHE and DG VTE' policy roles have a legal basis, but decrees and acts mean delineation between them is complicated. CERD and the Higher Council for VTE's roles are also legally defined, but have not been put into practice. In 2010 the government approved a National Education Strategy Framework and an Education Sector Development Plan 2010-15, which includes the vision of MEHE and more detailed strategy, policy and development objectives. This did not include VTE, but a Strategic Multi-Annial Action Plan for VTE reform was approved in 2011 to review and modernize the system. But national strategies are often changed or modified, or not applied. So their importance to policy is limited.

In institutionalised policy advice-orientated mechanisms, the Ministry of Vocational Education merged with the Ministry of Higher Education, but DG VTE's integration with the new ministry has been limited. VTE administration, organisation, schools, curricula, teachers, and data are all managed separately from different buildings. DG VTE manages public and private VTE including technical education, vocational training, control and exams, information systems and statistics, management and implementation, accounting and auditing, and the regional educational departments (schools, institutes and training centres).

The Higher Council for VTE is an advisory body chaired by MEHE. Its members represent educational sectors, other ministries, public administration bodies and the private sector. The council is intended to formulate policy and develop strategies for VTE, but as mentioned above it is not operating currently. CERD is responsible for developing strategy, curricula, programmes and planning for education, as well as training and upgrading staff. The body comes under the jurisdiction of the MEHE. In practice, in the last 10 years CERD has concentrated on the general education sector, using a hands-on approach to develop and update curricula and upgrade human resource programmes. The IPNET teacher training facility was founded in 1965 under MEHE and the DG VTE to provide pre-service and in-service training for VTE teachers. IPNET currently provides a few continuous training programmes, but doesn't fulfill all its mandate. There are currently three operational IPNET offices.

In public-private structure-orientated mechanisms, government has so far engaged in only a limited way with wider stakeholders. Consultation on some policy issues has introduced the idea of a partnership between government and employers on training issues. But this has not been built up to a level of participation, accountability and transparency that will help make VTE more effective. Once the Higher Council for VTE becomes operational, it can be an effective model for partnership and agree new ways to develop effective partnership forums.

Signs of knowledge creation-orientated mechanisms include steps towards quality assurance, but an integrated approach is lacking. Bottom-up, ad hoc initiatives include discussions with industrialists on meeting labour market needs by improving links between upskilling learners in education and training. But there is no system-wide mechanism to assess learning outcomes, and not all qualifications are described in these terms. Teachers are assessed on annual basis but no clear decision follows the evaluation nor specific actions are taken as follow up.. Although DG VTE accredits new schools and training centres, it does not inspect them once they are open. Nor is there any self-assessment of programmes or teaching staff.

Country typology

VTE governance is centralised. MEHE and DG VTE are the main decision-makers on all VTE management and financing, but there is some overlapping of roles between the two. The

Higher Council for VTE and CERD in theory have roles in VTE management. But those roles are either not fulfilled or very limited. Employers and their organisations are largely absent from VTE governance, except for some public sector initial training initiatives. While limited in numbers and scope, they have engaged with new approaches to industry-supported ways of identifying training needs, more innovative curricula, and cooperation with employers. But trade unions hardly feature in VTE governance.

Development assessment

VTE governance development is 'initial'. The 2011-14 Strategic Multi-Annual Action Plan is in place, which is a good sign for developing a consolidated vision for VTE. But it hasn't been implemented. Wider public consultation is needed on this. The lack of links between government and social partners disrupts the link between skills supply and demand. Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of MEHE, DG VTE, CERD and the various ministries and public-sector units with roles in managing and leading VTE systems and reforms need to be clarified, as do private sector responsibilities. Also, a coordinated vision for developing human resources should be drawn up, involving all relevant stakeholders. Overall, Lebanon needs a VTE national strategy, shared by all stakeholders.

The Higher Council for VTE should be activated to engage more systematically with employers and employer organisations, and bring other organisations into dialogue. Employer organisations, chambers and representatives of the business sector and social partners should review their role and levels of engagement in identifying skills needs. They should work towards playing an active role in VTE policy-making and in the VTE policy cycle. MEHE and DG VTE should set up and improve the VTE management information system, including implementing tracer studies.

Ongoing work in policy development

Basic infrastructure is available for improved governance, including managing VTE provider networks. DG VTE manages 227 private and 108 public institutes, schools and training centres for initial VTE. The national education strategy framework and development plan, and the Strategic Multi-Annual Action Plan are steps towards formulating a VTE national policy framework. But a detailed timing plan, clear accountabilities and more involvement from stakeholders, particularly employers, are needed. In public-private partnerships, employers are involved in an EU-led agri-food training initiative and in DG VTE-funded special projects. While limited in scope and numbers, these initiatives have engaged with new approaches to industry-supported ways to identify training needs, develop more innovative curricula and cooperate with employers. But employers' involvement is still limited and not institutionalised.

3. POLICY POINTERS

These pointers are designed to promote further policy dialogue and/or implementation.

Overall planning and management

1. Clarify the respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of MEHE, DG VTE, CERD and the ministries and public sector units involved in VTE.

2. Activate the Higher Council for VTE to engage more systematically with employers and their organisations, and bring other member organisations into formal dialogue. Negotiate the modus operandi of the Higher Council for VTE with members, so it can act as the umbrella for a partnership-based approach to VTE governance.

3. Set up and improve the VTE management information system, including tracer studies.

4. Activate MEHE's 2011-14 Strategic Multi-Annual Action Plan to update it and make it operational, starting with a wider public consultation on the steps involved. Update the action plan annually and revise it every four years.

Finance and funding

1. Change the regulatory framework so VTE providers take on more devolved management responsibilities, including funding arrangements, forming local partnerships and taking some

devolved responsibility for designing vocational programmes.

2. Consider how best to make financing and funding more transparent, to make sure there is enough funding and that VTE providers have more responsibility for management decision-making. Also consider results-based funding rather just per-capita.

3. Give the private sector incentives to finance specialised VTE schools and training facilities.

4. Consult VTE providers and stakeholders on VTE providers' financial autonomy. Use the results to draft and adopt secondary legislation and regulations giving financial autonomy to VTE providers, even if it is partial.

Coordination mechanisms for VET policy making

1. Improve and regularly update the labour market information base through more efficient interaction between MEHE and DG VTE and Ministry of Labour and the National Employment Office.

2. Use consultation between teachers' professional organisations and their members to assess teacher training and capacity-building needs triggered by reformed school governance.

3. Nurture links and partnerships between schools and local industries through the Higher Council for VTE.

4. Encourage employer organisations, chambers and representatives of the business sector and social partners to review their role and levels of engagement in identifying skills. They should work towards playing an active role in VTE policy making.

For other enquiries, please contact:
ETF Communication Department
E info@etf.europa.eu
T +39 011 6302222
F +39 011 6302200