



COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2019 UPDATE

ISRAEL

1. A brief summary of key developments in VET and skills and EU and donor cooperation during 2017–18

Vocational training and lifelong learning can help provide the skills the economy needs. The Strategic plan to strengthen professional technological education in Israel 2017–22, developed with key stakeholders, should help relaunch vocational education and training in cooperation with industry. Priorities include better quality technological education and recognition of practical engineering qualifications, as mid-career professionals are in high demand in industry.

Israel has the most educated population in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and leads international innovation rankings. This is due partly to university-industry collaboration providing human capital, scientific capacity and technological skills, supported by government research and development. Nevertheless, the education system is fragmented and not fully inclusive. According to international tests, education quality is relatively low, especially in ultra-Orthodox and Arab populations, which have the lowest education and labour force participation rates. Evidence shows that education alone does not translate to better employment.

Poverty is high especially among ultra-Orthodox and Arab populations, including the elderly. Income inequality and the need for greater inclusion are the most widely discussed subjects in Israeli public discourse. Youth and adult skilling, reskilling and upskilling are levers to improve this situation.

A national qualifications framework (NQF) was officially launched in August 2018 to increase the relevance, quality and availability of skills for the labour market. State agencies and the Manufacturers' Association of Israel will develop this framework for joint definition and recognition of qualifications to boost the labour force's professional and geographic mobility. The project is supported by EU twinning and ETF expertise sharing.

The Small Business Act assessment was completed in 2018 with the support of the European Commission (EC), the ETF and the OECD. It highlighted progress in promoting entrepreneurial learning across secondary education and support for women's entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship as a key competence is the main challenge for the future.

Considering Israel's high socio-economic status and OECD membership, EU and ETF cooperation has a specific nature. Israel has limited access to the European Neighbourhood Policy, mainly through multi-country or regional programmes. Due to the high economic level, EU Member States and international donors are not active in Israel.

2. An assessment of mid-term progress towards the ETF's 2020 objectives

In line with the EU-Israel political agenda, the ETF provides stakeholders with knowledge of EU policy orientations and access to EU cooperation instruments and programmes, including technical assistance and information exchange (TAIEX) or twinning projects, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and the EU Research and Technological Development Framework. The ETF supports policy dialogue between the EU and Israel through policy and system analyses and input to discussions.

Israel participates in ETF initiatives such as corporate conferences, the Torino Process, Small Business Act assessments and the Quality Assurance Forum.

The Israeli Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Committee, comprised of all major stakeholders, is the ETF's main counterpart for sharing knowledge on EU policy orientations and organising participation in ETF initiatives. The TVET Committee reflects the vocational education system's diversified structure and gives each actor room to manoeuvre. Working with the TVET Committee allows the ETF to reach all relevant stakeholders.

Specific objective 1: advise on the NQF within the framework of EU twinning and TAIEX instruments on qualifications

Israel's commitment to establishing a NQF was confirmed by implementation of an EU-funded twinning project. Twinning with Italian partner authorities formally began in August 2018. This positive development will help improve the quality and relevance of education and training to increase employability and the productivity

of the non-high-tech economy. Greater visibility and portability of qualifications will help professional and geographic mobility and satisfy economic needs. The initiative's success is based on sound governance and full stakeholder involvement.

3. Actions planned for 2019

ETF cooperation with Israel in 2019 will focus on EU external policy orientations and country requests. The aim is to reinforce Israel's links with the EU via participation in EU programmes and tools and in expert communities.

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Building on the country's plan to establish an NQF and expertise in this field, the ETF will provide policy advice to Israeli authorities, especially in relation to NQF implementation and the related twinning project with Italian partners. ETF support will include actions such as the organisation of a workshop and backstopping work. The ETF will advise the Israeli NQF working group. It will share lessons learned from EU Member States and other ETF partner countries and raise Israeli awareness of the building blocks required to establish an NQF. The ETF will update the Israel country fiche and may follow up the 2018 reflection on Level 5 qualifications.

The Torino Process report could contribute to reflection on qualifications and NQF through specific sections supported by ad hoc questions and indicators. A consultation with NQF stakeholders will be organised to define how the Torino Process report can help NQF implementation. The Quality Assurance Forum's work will also aid reflection on the Israeli approach to its NQF.

The ETF country coordinator will continue to share upcoming EU recommendations and policies on increasing employability. The ETF will share Israel's good practices and expertise in the design and provision of technical education and vocational training. Successful elements could form the basis of reforms in other ETF partner countries.

On request of the European Commission or the EU Delegation, the ETF will support the European Neighbourhood Instrument programming and project cycle, EU-Israel policy dialogue, European Neighbourhood Policy action plan monitoring and bilateral subcommittee meetings. The ETF will deliver the annual country fiche on labour market and vocational education and training developments to DG Employment.