

# MINUTES GOVERNING BOARD MEETING 23 NOVEMBER 2018\*

The ETF Governing Board (GB) meeting took place in Turin on 23 November 2018, and was chaired by Lluís PRATS, Head of Unit for International Affairs in DG EMPL, European Commission (EC). He congratulated and thanked the ETF for the interesting and wonderful “Skills for the Future” conference held over the two previous days.

## 1. Adoption of the agenda

On a proposal of the Chair, the Board adopted the agenda for the meeting. No other business points were suggested.

## 2. Introductory remarks from the Chair

The Chair welcomed the new GB members: Henk VAN LIEMPT, the new member for Germany, and Mrs Melanie BURBACH, the new German alternate member (absent due to illness); and Alexander LUDVA, the new alternate member for Slovakia.

Mr Jean-François MEZIERES, a non-voting expert representing the European Parliament was absent.

The partner country observers from Serbia and Tunisia could not be present.

Six Member States were not represented at the meeting: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Greece and Malta.

Denmark was present through remote participation. This was the first time a GB member attended the meeting on-line.

The EC was represented by Mr Stefano SIGNORE, Head of Unit (DG DEVCO), Heidi NIDETZKY and Aristotelis MARGOS (DG EMPL), and Christophe MASSON (DG NEAR).

Martino RUBAL MASEDA represented the ETF Staff Committee.

## 3. Follow-up to previous meetings

The Board unanimously adopted the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 June 2018.

The Chair presented the follow up to the action points since the last GB meeting and informed about the written procedure that took place in August.

## 4. Programming Document 2017-20 – Annual Work Programme 2019

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) outlined the ETF’s 2019 work programme, focussing on continuity with the past in line with the ETF’s multiannual work programme, and, in parallel, stressing the growing areas such as career guidance, centres of excellence, digital and on-line learning, digital and transversal competences.

He also mentioned that Eurofound, as a result of reduced resources, had revised its 2019 work programme and that the analysis of company survey results from ETF partner countries was cancelled as a result. This was an area where the ETF had planned to cooperate with them in 2019.

He informed the GB Members about the strengthened partnerships with international organisations, including the proposed renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the International Training Centre of the ILO with which the ETF intends to continue to cooperate on training programmes, events of mutual interest and exchange of relevant information.

Lluís PRATS (DG EMPL) thanked Mr ONESTINI for his presentation and for the support provided to the European Commission and the other institutions, showing much flexibility and expertise in fulfilling their common objectives.

Karl WIECZOREK (Austria), representing the Presidency, in the name of all the other GB members, congratulated the ETF with its forward looking and ambitious work programme, presented in a comprehensive way and with clear outlines.

He collected several questions during the informal meeting of the evening before, the first was related to the interaction of the ETF with the Erasmus programme and how the ETF could intervene and interact with it.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) confirmed that the Erasmus Programme was already active in the Western Balkans and in Turkey, and parts were related to vocational education and training. Expansion to other countries is foreseen in the future. The Centres of Excellence project demonstrates how the concept works: as soon as an action is developed, the ETF analyses what it means for the partner countries in terms of participation, impact, eligibility and priorities. If positive, the ETF cooperates with the EC, in this case DG EMPL. In future, there is a proposal to seriously increase the funding for the Erasmus programme. As mentioned by the Director-General of DG EAC at the opening of the Skills for the Future conference, a discussion will be launched on the implementation of the next phase of Erasmus, and what it can mean for VET. Overall, the policy outlook for programme is positive, although the absorption capacity of the partner countries and the ETF should be taken into account.

Karl WIECZOREK (Austria) reported another question from the informal meeting related to the ETF's bilateral and multilateral projects, and how EU countries could possibly cooperate with the ETF and seek synergy with their own national projects.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) confirmed that the ETF is always striving for complementarity, and gave the example of Tunisia, where, there is good cooperation between the ETF, the EU Delegation, and the German and French cooperation agencies. Cooperation is very country specific, while regional cooperation is more related to the EC through platforms for interaction, such as the Euromed Platform. He also mentioned that the Torino Process is open to participation and to requests from member states and their development agencies.

Lluís PRATS (DG EMPL) added that the EC is willing to cooperate with member states on all these issues. He suggested that GB members inform the EC (DG EMPL), about possible cooperation, to ensure better coordination.

GB members also asked about the priority assigned to partner countries and, in particular, why Turkey is a high priority despite recent developments, and why Russia is a medium priority.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) explained that Turkey is a regional player and a key country in the EU neighbourhood and therefore it is an important country for the ETF. With the support of the EBRD, the ETF supports the integration of refugees as part of EU-funded programmes as well as in other VET related, sectorial areas. The political context and political discussions are the responsibility of the EC. The same logic is followed for Russia where, despite the political situation, other types of cooperation related to people-to-people activities are not sanctioned. Although the level of priority has decreased, cooperation is still ongoing: the ETF coordinates closely with the EEAS to ensure that our activities in Russia are fully in line with EU policy.

Christophe MASSON (DG NEAR) confirmed the approach of the ETF, which is in line with the EC approach. The unit in charge of Turkey in DG NEAR follows the EU position strictly: Turkey is not a high priority, apart from support to Syrian refugee crisis. Concerning Russia, he confirmed that the country is involved in the Erasmus Programme, which offers young Russians the opportunity of mobility and contacts with other countries.

The last question from Karl WIECZOREK (Austria) related to EC requests to the ETF. He asked if there was a strategy behind the high workload and to what extent the requests hinder the ETF's work

in other fields. The GB members suggested that such requests should be better reflected in the Work Programme.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) clarified that the ETF is not obliged to accept requests from the EC and that it is indeed a matter of resources and prioritisation. Over the years, for the sake of transparency, the monitoring of these requests has become more systematic and priorities discussed in the Structured Dialogue meetings. The overview of all requests, which was tabled at the meeting, clearly demonstrates that the ETF and the EC have strengthened their approach to ensure better prioritisation.

Lluís PRATS (DG EMPL) added that during the discussions in the “Skills for the Future” conference in the previous days, the issue of partnerships came up regularly as a complex but important level of cooperation. The EC requests issue can be considered as a partnership between them and the ETF, keeping in mind that the ETF is independent, but that this complex level of cooperation also provides a clear added value for everybody, including EU citizens.

Katalin ZOLTÁN ORDÓDYNE (Hungary) congratulated the ETF for the excellent work, and for the highly logical and clear presentation of the document. She asked for a clarification about COVE, which is not yet that far advanced and limited to the mapping of the centres in EU countries. She was not aware that the partner countries were included in the exercise, an initiative she warmly welcomed, and requested more information.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) thanked her for the compliment and congratulated Manuela PRINA (ETF), acting head of the ETF Strategic Development Department and her team for the good work.

Concerning COVE, he informed the GB members that the EC mapping would be finalised by March 2019, and the ETF is considering complementing the mapping with information about the centres of excellence in the eligible ETF partner countries, including the Western Balkans, and possibly others once the concept is better defined.

Henk VAN LIEMPT (Germany) thanked the ETF for the knowledge provided. He confirmed that South Eastern Europe and Turkey should be considered as priorities, as a lot of work still needs to be done. Germany is also looking at expanding its activities e.g. to Africa, and in terms of more bilateral cooperation with several other countries, including Russia. While policies change, people stay. He asked about the ETF’s experience on how qualifications and recognition, more specifically recognition related to migration, can help in supporting migration and how the ETF supports national bilateral activities, and whether it should not play a more coordinating role with the donor countries, making cooperation more transparent.

Thanking Germany for its support, Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) replied that all the points raised are valid for the ETF’s post 2020 strategy. Whilst many agencies and other bodies work already on migration, the ETF mainly contributes to the Mobility Partnerships and the pilot projects in the area of skills and regular migration launched by DG HOME. On a coordinating role for the ETF, Cesare explained the cooperation with the EU Delegations, which can play a role of local coordination in the countries, but he stressed that coordination is often difficult due to different calendars and intervention logics of various donors. However, cooperation through Ministries of VET in the partner countries can be enhanced, bearing in mind that the ETF is an expert organisation and not a donor.

Christophe MASSON (DG NEAR) confirmed that coordination is indeed a key issue in increasing impact. In the EC in general and DG NEAR in particular, processes do exist to foster cooperation, such as the new ones to be launched next year on the future of work, for example with the World Bank. Coordination with the Member States is crucial, and EU Delegations in the partner countries are key actors in this process. He also sees a role for the GB as a tool to improve coordination and cooperation, as shown in the pre-GB conference of 14 June.

**Following this discussion, the GB unanimously adopted the ETF 2017–2020 PD/ Annual WP 2019.**

## 5. ETF Budget 2019

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) presented the ETF budget 2019.

Karl WIECZOREK (Austria), representing the Presidency, and following the informal meeting of the day before, expressed his satisfaction with the 2019 budget. One question from the GB members concerned the requests from the EC, and to what extent these costs are reflected in the different budget posts.

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) replied that this is one of the four key functions of ETF, and therefore the costs for these services are covered by the EU contribution primarily through Title 1 staff costs.

Another question put forward by Karl WIECZOREK (Austria) concerned the costs for trainees as reflected in budget post 117. Malin MENDES (Sweden) noted that the coordination of traineeships was a new item and requested information about the underlying idea and the process of recruitment.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) confirmed that, through a new Director's Decision, a limited number of mainly young graduates could now be recruited, more or less under similar conditions as the "Blue Book" trainees in Brussels. The call will probably be published in the first quarter of 2019.

A last but fundamental question from Karl WIECZOREK (Austria) was about the next programme cycle, and the GB's concern to hold up the ETF's high quality of work whilst caring for adequate resources, including staffing.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) agreed that this was indeed an issue of major concern. As it stands now, the proposal of the EC for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is to maintain a constant contribution for the period 2021-27 without any provisions for inflation. The ETF is the only agency under the external relations budget heading and is therefore in a unique position in terms of funding. Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely that there will be a change in budget policy and in the GB of June 2019 the ETF will provide an assessment of what the new Multiannual Financial Framework can bring in practice.

**Given that there were no further questions nor observations, the GB members unanimously adopted the 2019 ETF Budget.**

## 6. ETF 2018 amending budget

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) presented the second amending budget for 2018.

No comments nor questions were received.

**The GB members unanimously adopted the 2018 ETF Amending Budget.**

## 7. Oral reports

See Annex

## 8. Any other business

### i. Declaration of commitment and interests

The Chair reminded the Board members of the importance of the yearly submission of a Declaration of commitment and interest. The EP requires the publication of this document on the website.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) recalled the importance of Board members acting in the public interest and independently of external influence as a pre-condition for membership of the Board. To this end, the existing procedure for their collection was slightly revised, and as suggested in the previous GB meeting and approved in the minutes, GB members present were asked to sign the Declaration for 2019 on the spot. GB members not present will be contacted individually.

Karl WIECZOREK (Austria) asked whether the bureaucracy around the collection of the Declarations could not be reduced, given that a yearly collection is quite heavy, definitely, when no changes have occurred in your personal situation during the previous year.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) confirmed that this was a requirement from the European Parliament.

Henk VAN LIEMPT (Germany) asked how “interest in the work of ETF” as mentioned on the form had to be interpreted. Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) explained that only private interests need to be mentioned in the Declaration.

### ii. Meeting evaluation forms

The Chair asked GB members to fill in the online evaluation form.

## 9. Date of next meeting

The next regular meeting of the GB will take place in Turin on 14 June 2019.

The Chair thanked the GB members for their active contribution, the Danish GB member for her remote attendance, and the interpreters for their work.

He then closed the meeting.

### Follow up actions:

- To provide the WP 2019 to the budgetary authorities by 30 November 2018.
- The GB members suggested that the EC requests should be reflected more clearly in the WP.
- The ETF will provide an assessment of what the new MFF means in practice at the next GB meeting in June 2019.