



# GEMM

GOVERNANCE FOR  
EMPLOYABILITY IN THE  
MEDITERRANEAN

# COMPENDIUM OF PILOT PROJECTS



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\* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.



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# SKILLS FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Most people, schools and companies are in and around big cities. As a result, metropolitan areas receive the bulk of attention in education and training policy development. In countries that rely heavily on central planning this can be problematic because vocational education and training (VET) traditionally serve a labour market that is more local than that of universities. Local employment opportunities away from the main cities may be limited to just a few sectors beyond the professions that are needed everywhere, such as retail services and car mechanics. When the design of curricula and training programmes is not decentralised, skills mismatches are often deeper, and have more grave consequences, outside the main metropolitan areas.

One typical consequence is high unemployment, particularly among women and youth and away from metropolitan regions. This in turn can be a catalyst for a host of other social problems, such as poverty, migration and social unrest.

Local people know best what is needed locally. But in most of the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, local people have no tradition of making decisions together, precisely because decisions are made centrally. And because they lack the capacity, the central authorities are not keen to devolve responsibilities to them. This circle must be broken.

Past initiatives supporting local governance in education and training have often focused on grassroots projects. These may have developed some local capacity, but they often lacked the required base for sustainability because they bypassed the central authorities whose support would have been needed to sanction changes.

To address this, in 2012 the European Commission asked the ETF to design a project to improve the governance of VET systems in nine countries of the region. The ETF responded with its proposal for the project Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean (GEMM). The project ran from January 2013 to August 2016.

The project was designed around three axes: (1) mapping and analysis of current VET governance systems; (2) capacity building for national and local stakeholders involved in multi-level governance;

and (3) country-specific small action-oriented pilot projects addressing the quality and relevance of VET at the sub-national level.

This publication looks primarily at the lessons learned from the pilot projects. In practice, however, these turned out to be inextricably linked to capacity-building issues. As we will see in the project descriptions, many of the problems encountered were rooted in lacking capacity and much of the progress made was a direct consequence of either improved dialogue or, again, capacity building.

The pilot projects were an opportunity to test governance models that operate at two levels: local and national. While they built on formal cooperation agreements among local partners with a stake in education and training, the partnerships had a strong link to national partnerships among relevant authorities and umbrella organisations representing employers and social partners.

Often, local authorities, employers and social partners have very limited or no history of playing an active role in education and training governance. One important goal for the projects was therefore to help them with this.





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# THE GEMM PILOT PROJECTS

Because pilot projects too often risk to remain just that: pilot projects with no follow-up action, the GEMM pilots also had to look at the feasibility and challenges of upscaling their results to other geographic regions or sectors.

Eight pilot project designs were based on country needs. They were selected at the national level and discussed and agreed with local people, including training providers, local authorities, employers, social partners and NGOs. The local partnerships interacted with national partnerships through a setup where the national committees typically acted as a steering board for local project management and coordination. In order to tailor the pilot projects to specific country needs, GEMM national committees organised workshops and group discussions to define the pilot project activities and partners. All pilot projects have been designed at local level and approved by the national committees to ensure national coherence and sought pathways for their sustainability.

GEMM national committees were established in all partner countries. These coordinated GEMM activities with the ETF and oversaw local project management. They were composed of the most important national VET stakeholders: typically authorities, employer organisations and social partners.

The different projects covered a wide variety of subjects. These were selected for local relevance and spanned from agriculture to retail, automotive to logistic and construction to tourism.

While all projects focused on matching the local supply and demand of skills, six of the projects actually developed tools specifically for this. One project (Lebanon) looked at career guidance and employment orientation and a final one (Palestine) at methods for tracking graduates.

Most of the projects were designed and implemented in cooperation with social partners, NGOs and government agencies and some followed up on the results of previous projects. All EU Delegations were directly involved in the identification and design of the pilot projects. Other international organisations such as GIZ, the ILO, the World Bank and the Anna Lindh Foundation were consulted for the design of some of the pilot projects.

The actual processes of project identification, launch and dissemination were intrinsic components of all projects and an important part of capacity building through GEMM.

## Lessons learnt

The GEMM pilot projects tested different forms of multi-level governance structures for VET. Some of these are tried and tested in very different settings but had never been used in the country concerned. Others were variations of models that have been tried before in different settings or with a different scope. What they all had in common is that they operated at two levels – a national level and a local level, with a strong link between the two levels. It is here that the most powerful lessons were learnt.

## Partnership must be formalised

If the pilot projects taught two crucial things about partnership for VET governance in the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, these are that multi-level partnership works and that the exact composition of these partnerships and the division of roles and responsibilities may vary considerably depending on the specific setting.

Multi-level partnership works because it satisfies two of the most crucial prerequisites for sustainably improving the relevance of VET. First, it safeguards the involvement of central authorities who traditionally have had the decision-making power in the countries concerned. For the sustainability of local innovation, the importance of their seal of approval is not to be underestimated. Secondly, it safeguards the application of local knowledge in local education and training development. This knowledge is indispensable in any training setting, but even more crucial in local settings whose labour markets may have a much narrower scope than those of larger urban areas.

The projects also showed that if local partnership can be enshrined in existing legislation, this is the preferred way to go. Otherwise, cooperation must be formalised in other ways. The key point here is that if sustainability is pursued, as it obviously should be, partnership must be formalised, rather than ad hoc.

In Israel, the pilot project established for the first time a formal platform, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) National Committee, for dialogue between all TVET-related stakeholders, but also in other countries the establishment of a formal national platform for dialogue was a novelty that significantly improved the outlook for sustainability of some of the project results.

All projects have shown that there is a lack of legal frameworks and political support for creating and managing project partnerships. Finding both is essential. Partnerships can either be linked to economic or industrial structures (sector-based) and led by sector organisations, or created as a local and multi-sector VET council or committee and managed by a public VET authority (system-based). In both cases, however, it is important to create multi-stakeholder partnerships representing both the demand and supply side of skills, as well as social partners or other organisations that promote the interest of students and workers.

The support of neutral partners, such as NGOs or international organisations, that have a long history of working in the national VET sector can add value to innovative developments. The most prominent example of this in the GEMM pilot projects came from Lebanon, where the pilot built on extensive work by the European Institute for Cooperation and Development (IECD). The projects in Jordan and Palestine also benefited significantly from the involvement of international organisations with a proven track record in the countries.

## **All partners must have clear, realistic and relevant expectations, roles and targets**

Participating stakeholders need clear roles and responsibilities, and these roles and responsibilities must be related to their professional interests and functions. Schools are good at teaching, employers are good at identifying labour market needs and can be made good at training. All stakeholders have functions in which they excel and others in which they must recognise and trust the excellence of other partners.

The keyword here is trust, which often must be built up from the ground where no traditions for broad partnership have existed before.

The projects in Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia were all able to set up collaborative approaches to management, which contributed to their success and potential pathways

for their sustainability. For different reasons (see the project fiches below), the projects in Egypt and Algeria remained at a pilot level where more work would be needed in order to reinforce partnerships and bring forward the work done and create conditions for upscaling.

## **School autonomy remains a challenge**

The centralised approach to VET management in the GEMM partner countries limits the autonomy of training providers to experiment, innovate, make independent decisions and create flexible cooperation mechanisms with local industry.

To increase VET relevance and attractiveness, local training providers must be able to find local answers to local needs. They can only do this if they collaborate closely with the labour market they serve, which will typically be local too. But such collaboration and acting on its outcomes also requires more room for manoeuvre than most central authorities in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries are currently willing to give.

Some of the pilot projects gave providers and their partnerships considerably more autonomy than they had traditionally been given and this immediately showed encouraging results. New training programmes that were set up in, for example, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine targeted urgent needs that hitherto had been poorly addressed and showed how much the relevance of the training supply can benefit from increased autonomy.

In this context, financing has to be mentioned too, even though no projects specifically focused on it. If some decision making is devolved to local stakeholders but all funding decisions continue to be taken at a central level, this will likely thwart the efforts. Freedom to earmark block funds and freedom to generate own funds can be hugely motivating factors for local innovation as is obvious from examples such as the Productive Schools system in Egypt. The opposite is true too, as we could see in projects where applying for funds beyond the most basic expenses was still a very cumbersome process. This can all but drain the motivation to engage in innovative practice.

## **Political support is a basic necessity**

Increased autonomy and indeed a basic recognition of the often desperate need to increase the local relevance of VET requires political support. As simple as this may sound, it is often the greatest hurdle that stands in the way of much needed innovation.

Having learnt from past experience, the GEMM project made a conscious effort to overcome this hurdle in all pilot projects by establishing two levels of partnership: one national and one local. Both were formalised, as was their mode of interaction. This setup pursued a sense of shared ownership.

The importance of seeking early support from authorities at all levels cannot be understated. The pilot projects taught that their involvement in discussions on objectives, target sectors and project members improved their support during the implementation phase and, even more importantly, increased the impact and sustainability of the project results.

The often close coordination with the GEMM national committees strengthened the connection between local and national efforts and has in the cases of Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia led to national spin-offs of the project results.

## Capacity building is a must

A shift of responsibilities from the central level to the local level requires capacity building at both ends. Tasks that were never carried out locally must now be. But the capacity-building needs are not limited to local actors. Increased autonomy also comes with a need for increased accountability, which typically requires learning at both ends: those who devolve certain tasks and need to monitor them and those who receive these tasks.

Likewise, a shift of responsibilities from schools to other (local) stakeholders requires capacity building among these stakeholders.

Indeed, engaging local schools and employers in new forms of governance is a time-consuming process that requires skills such as negotiation skills, project management skills and communication skills that may not be locally available at the start of a partnership. These must be developed.

Among the many different outcomes of the learning and sharing activities of the GEMM project, capacity building has led to a better understanding of roles and responsibilities of the various local and national stakeholders and of the importance of creating and properly managing sustainable and flexible local partnerships for relevant VET.

The methodology used for evaluating capacity building shows that this is a common outcome of all the projects. It applies both to national and local VET governance and dialogue and it has affected

decision-makers, employers, social partners and training providers.

The projects have given participants hands-on experience in developing and using different tools for collecting, analysing and using labour market information to improve education and training. In the GEMM project in Jordan in particular, capacity-building activities also raised awareness of the importance of collecting and using data on female participation.

## Developing true partnership is a slow process

Changing people who are used to taking orders from above into wells of creative solutions is necessary, but also ambitious and time-consuming. Convincing people who are specialists in production and services to contribute to the training of their future employees, and the employees of their immediate competition, requires a massively changed mindset.

Particularly in countries where the responsibility for technical and vocational education is fragmented, other hurdles must be overcome, such as power struggles among different authorities in charge of different sections of VET.

Capacity must be developed. It cannot be implanted. Trust and partnership also must be developed, not forced. Together, these can change mindsets. But this needs time and there are very few shortcuts.

All of the pilot projects promoted the active involvement of local stakeholders – from authorities to employers – in the identification and formulation of project activities, in their implementation and dissemination, and in planning sustainability of the project results. This experience showed that it is extremely important to continuously raise awareness among local employers and social partners of the importance of investing in skills development.

Across the board, the partnerships created within the pilot projects showed that it will need time and continuous effort for their dialogue to be effective and sustainable. On a positive note, they also showed that progressively gained interest in the work of the local partnerships steadily increased engagement from other local and national stakeholders. Some projects that took off slowly, such as the project in Egypt, actually gathered momentum surprisingly quickly once this interest grew.

## Develop effective tools

The pilot projects showed that relevant tools for labour market analysis are still largely lacking in most countries. This includes skills anticipation as well as matching processes and tools.

Sometimes data are not gathered at all. More typically, data are gathered but not consolidated and readily available. Sometimes data are gathered by so many different sources that incompatibility considerably reduces their statistical value. And almost without exception, data are gathered that lack just a few essential parameters to make them usable for improving VET.

In short, there is still an almost universal need for appropriate data gathering and analysis tools and all pilot projects have developed these. Some focused on the identification of skills gaps and mapping the current supply of training opportunities, others on tracking the performance of graduates and guiding students in their choices of training and professions. The project in Tunisia created and supported a local process called 'training4insertion', which involved employers, employment services and schools and provided traineeships for recent graduates.

In some cases, such tools to analyse and reduce the gaps between local skills supply and demand were developed specifically for the GEMM pilot projects and in other cases existing national or international tools were adapted to the projects' needs.

One lesson worth noting here is that it appeared worthwhile to make use of existing tools that can be used in a more local context or to adapt national approaches, methodologies and tools for matching. This was done, for example, in Morocco to support the Tangier-Tétouan region, where a skills mismatch analysis was completed using adaptations of national tools.

In all cases the tools and methodologies were elaborated, thoroughly discussed and validated by the project teams consisting of all relevant stakeholders.

Many of the tools developed through the project are sufficiently generic to require little adaptation for further dissemination to other sectors, regions, or even countries. This is extremely important as it significantly enhances the sustainability of project results.

## Gender equality remains a challenge

Even though the GEMM mapping report clearly mentions the need to address low female

employability in the region, it has been difficult to integrate approaches and measures for gender equality in the pilot projects. A specific focus on female employability and understanding labour market integration of young women was applied in the Jordanian and Palestinian projects.

Also the Israeli project has integrated data on gender equality into the methodology for labour market forecasting that was developed within the project. Sectors chosen in the other pilot projects were often traditionally male-dominated. The limited focus on gender equality shows that a lot remains to be done to better integrate gender aspects not just into the tools developed and used, such as data collection methodologies and career guidance approaches and instruments, but also in the composition and priorities of local VET partnerships.

## Institutionalise and mainstream for sustainability

Although pilot projects results are diverse, a common need for their continuity and sustainability emerges in all countries. Pathways and actions proposed could be grouped in two main axes: (1) institutionalising local partnerships; and (2) upscaling outcomes into the national level.

It should be considered that in most of the cases the two axes are combined, meaning that the institutionalisation of partnerships would include its national mainstreaming and vice-versa. The examples below provide the prominent features of the pilot projects' sustainability.

### *Institutionalising local partnerships*

In order to oversight and coordinate the pilot projects' implementation, dedicated local committees were set up and, in line with multi-level governance principles, they included all relevant and concerned actors. Throughout the GEMM project implementation, these committees have progressively gained interest and increased engagement.

The implementation of some pilot projects has shown that institutionalisation requires putting in place specific mechanisms and actions to lead to a sustainable partnership model. It needs as well willingness from central governments to give more space to local partnerships to be active and effective.

So far, priorities identified by local actors include (1) enlarging participation to other relevant stakeholders; (2) being equipped with tools such as observatories; and (3) benefiting from capacity-building support. Two countries are clearly going

into this direction: Morocco and Tunisia. This can be linked to the on-going VET and employment decentralisation process in both countries.

Furthermore and in both countries, the European Union has decided to follow up and further develop the concrete experience of the pilot projects through important and structuring bilateral projects.

For Algeria, given the national scope and importance of the pilot project and because of the reluctance of the VET Ministry to endorse and disseminate the final deliverable (national guideline and tools on enterprises' training needs), the EU Delegation will propose to the Ministry of Labour to include it in the upcoming AFEQ (adéquation formation-emploi-qualification) programme (programme implemented in cooperation with the VET, education and higher education ministries).

Israel, where a territorial skills needs analysis approach and tools have been developed, intends to create a local institutionalised platform that would provide regular reporting with recommendations on skills needs analysis and matching that would feed the national reflections on the creation of local partnerships.

Egypt would potentially go into this direction although this needs to be further analysed when the project will be more advanced.

### ***Upscaling the pilot project outcomes into the national level***

The recognised interest and value of the methodologies, tools and products developed through the pilot projects led to several proposals to mainstream their use at national level or enlarge it to other localities.

In the case of Jordan, the pilot project plans to institutionalise and enlarge the project partnership to other localities and actors. At the Zarqa training institute, the local committee set up for this pilot project will be "officially" established and extended to other sectors representatives to give advice on courses and curricula. It is already decided that the course implemented with the support of GEMM will be offered in other training institutes.

In Lebanon, the pilot project supported the setting up of guidance employment offices in six VET public schools. For the first time in Lebanon, a ministerial decree was issued to create the guidance employment officer function. This provides the legal framework to mainstream this function to all VET schools in the country and donors already expressed interest to continue this initiative. One component

of an EU-funded project (CLOSER) includes specific activities to mainstream and consolidate the guidance employment offices' services.

In Palestine the pilot project has developed a model and tools for tracer studies of graduates (free-to-use software) at all levels of the education system, including VET. The project is already inscribed in the national VET monitoring and evaluation system. In 2016, the model will be mainstreamed in all VET schools through the support of the ETF, GIZ and the Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC).

Beside the achievements of the project mentioned above, the experience of the GEMM project has provided important lessons.

### **Develop local and national partnership simultaneously**

Past experiences have time and again shown that local reforms for local development are unlikely to have significant impact if there is no national support for it. Likewise, national reforms for local development without local support are likely to be a drawn-out uphill struggle.

Most pilot projects delivered compelling evidence that the best results are achieved in setups where all partners feel ownership of the parts of the process that are relevant to them and as such find it easier to recognise and acknowledge other partners' ownership of other parts of the same process. This applies not only to the different stakeholders at each respective level, but also between the different levels. If local and national stakeholder partnership forums can work together on common targets, such as regional development, each will find it easier to respect the work and achievements of the other.

The formalised multi-level foundation on which the GEMM pilot projects rested appears to have promising potential as a framework for the sustainable reforms in VET governance that the countries in the region urgently need to improve the employability of their youths.

# THE PROJECTS

## ALGERIA – TUNING TRAINING TOWARDS THE REAL NEEDS OF THE LABOUR MARKET

Algerian VET has traditionally been driven by national planning, more than by actual local demands. Increasing changes in the labour market now call for closer collaboration between local training providers and enterprises so as to fine-tune training opportunities to the actual needs of local labour markets.

The Algerian ministry responsible for VET operates a public agency with counsellors that maintain and improve the link with employers. This is the National Fund for the Development of Apprenticeship and Continuous Training, or FNAC. The 13 FNAC counsellors were the main target of the Algerian GEMM pilot project.

Originally focusing on the Blida region in the central north of the country, the project helped FNAC counsellors to develop a methodology and guidelines for assessing the training needs of companies and tools to translate these into training plans.

The project was coordinated by FNAC in close cooperation with the VET ministry. Enterprises were involved in testing the methodology and the tools for the training needs analysis.

The methodology and tools were tested locally and then tuned and adapted to make them more generically applicable on a broader, national scale. This fit into the FNAC's development plan, which points towards closer relationships with local enterprises, decentralised training development and the establishment of local counselling agencies throughout the country.

Implementation of the results of the project across Algeria now awaits validation by the VET ministry (still pending at the time of writing).



# EGYPT – LOCAL ANSWERS TO NATIONAL FRAGMENTATION

The Egyptian GEMM pilot project addressed VET in the agro-food sector in the Monufia region, northwest of Cairo.

The project aimed for a broad cooperation platform, taking in the ministries of (general) education and of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), social partners, national and regional labour market observatories and training providers. It aimed to build a regional partnership to identify skills needs and gaps in agro-food employment and find ways to address these.

The project was designed by the Ministry of Education, which was looking to address two key challenges of the TVET sector in Egypt: the lack of systemic analysis of labour market skills needs and the inefficient use of the Capital/Productive Schools system.

Starting off with the latter, many vocational schools in Egypt have actual production lines to prepare students for their jobs. Some of these have been run only by the schools through the Capital Project, which dates back to the 1950s. A more recent form, referred to as Productive Schools, takes in a private investor who supports training and production, but also takes out some of the profits.

The GEMM project analysed both and assessed their potential for developing skills that are relevant to the labour market. In summary, the project concluded that their long history lends them a powerful potential which, however, appears to be better exploited in the Productive Schools because of the stake that private investors have in them. The Capital Project school that the project looked at suffered from the fact that there are no teachers under the age of 55, that their workload hardly allows them time on the production line, and that Egypt's school financing system makes school earning and spending beyond the regular budget lines a cumbersome process.

The aim for broad cooperation exposed many of the challenges brought about by the fragmentation of education and training in Egypt. Cooperation among national institutions was difficult to achieve. A study covering the agro-food sector in the Mounefia region was abandoned when existing data could not be accessed for procedural reasons. This in turn hinted at another problem: most data required for labour market analysis exists, but is gathered and managed by different bodies that have no history of sharing it with each other.

While national fragmentation presented challenges, local cooperation initiated through the project has been very encouraging. The regional observatory of Sadat City supported the pilot project from the very beginning. The local Investors' Association helped to establish links with the enterprises selected for a survey of training needs. They also supported its implementation. All this support was given on a voluntary basis. This strong local support presented a good argument for promoting decentralisation processes. Local cooperation can tap into personal commitment and engagement. This, in turn, can effectively override the limitations of institutional hesitation.



## ISRAEL – FORMALISING PARTNERSHIP

Many employers in Israel find it hard to recruit mid-level professionals to fill existing vacancies. The problem is worse in the south of the country, which is poorer than other regions and has higher unemployment. There are vacancies, but existing VET schools cannot match the demand, partly because of the gap that exists between what is taught in schools and what is needed in the labour market. As an added consequence, VET schools are not very popular.

The Israeli GEMM project set out to tackle this problem by increasing the involvement of all labour market partners in education. The project operated as a local trial around the cities of Ashdod, Be'er Sheva and Ashkelon, but was set up in a way that can, and likely will, be reproduced in other parts of the country.

The pivotal point of the project was a TVET National Committee, which was created to formalise the partnership among authorities, labour market partners and schools. During the pilot project, this committee oversaw the implementation of activities which were coordinated and managed locally. The project had the full support of the relevant ministries, the relevant education networks that offer VET programmes, the regional worker councils of the General Federation of Labour (Histradut), the Manufacturers' Association of Israel, and the school managers of several of the main educational institutes providing VET in the south of Israel.

The project partners first set out to collect information on the discrepancy between labour market demand and supply. In Israel, statistics are plentiful but not always appropriate so existing data were supplemented with the help of local surveys of employers and VET principals and teachers. At the same time, the project mapped the existing TVET structures in the south of Israel.

One key conclusion of these exercises was that the majority of skills shortages are in intermediate and technical occupations in traditional sectors, rather than in occupations requiring higher education. The pilot project showed that labour market relevance of TVET in (southern) Israel needs to be improved and that the best tools to achieve this would appear to be policy measures that drive closer cooperation between education and industry. Some focal areas of TVET reform could be work-based learning, up-skilling teachers, improving the relevance of curricula and nurturing key and soft skills.

The preliminary results of the pilot project were presented during a national workshop in December 2015. This kick-started a broad discussion on the evidence needed to inform TVET reforms in Israel, so the National Committee decided to hold a further meeting one month later where the decision was made to continue the pilot project on a self-funded basis. One of the first priorities should be to plan reforms with the pilot schools and to develop, adapt or select instruments and methods to support skills matching that can be applied in some of the participating education institutions.

Many lessons were learnt through this modest but effective project. The one that stood out, however, was how important it is for VET governance to formalise partnership among all stakeholders, including not only schools and labour market partners but also local and national education authorities.

Indeed, if the political will is there, this formally established and collaborative approach to VET decision making can have significant impact in national policy making. It offers a way of engaging all stakeholders and overcomes some of the problems associated with previous, more ad hoc ways of collaboration.



# JORDAN – TACKLING FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT

In Jordan, some 60% of jobseekers are under the age of 25. Indeed, youth unemployment is one of the main challenges of the country. Unemployment among young women is nearly three times that of their male counterparts, even though 76% of young female jobseekers have an intermediate or higher degree. This indicates either that there are no jobs or that jobseekers are insufficiently qualified to fill existing vacancies.

For the retail sales sector in Zarqa Governorate, east of the capital Amman, the latter appeared to be the case. The GEMM project set out to better match training with the actual needs of the retail sector by promoting closer cooperation between local employers and trainers.

In Jordan, training programmes are normally planned, designed and evaluated centrally by the Vocational Training Corporation, which operates a network of TVET schools throughout the country. A collaborative governance network was therefore set up in which not only local stakeholders were represented but also all relevant national bodies. A local project committee took on the project management guided by a GEMM national committee which had representatives from all relevant public sector institutions and a number of international organisations. The local project committee was made up of local employers in retail sales, the Zarqa Chamber of Commerce, the municipality and the Zarqa Training Institute.

The network developed a retail sales training curriculum. While this curriculum had its roots in existing national standards, these standards were validated for local relevance by local employers and experienced workers using a training needs analysis questionnaire developed by the Amman ILO office.

Eventually, the GEMM project opted for a combined programme of school-based and work-based learning.

The four-month school-based pilot training programme was delivered in the Zarqa Training Institute retail sale workshop with learning materials that were also developed through the project. This was followed by a supervised two-month on-the-job training in local shops and enterprises, following the apprenticeship methodology of the Vocational Training Corporation. Of the first 19 trainees, 17 were women.

Finally, the effectiveness of the training programme was validated with a tracer study. Based on the ETF methodology for tracer studies, it analyses whether the trainees have found employment that can be linked to their training and whether the training has given them the right preparation for the job.

One of the key lessons learned through the project is that reform in governance and management of vocational training institutions requires capacity building of local management staff, as well as the political will to delegate more authority.

The Zarqa Training Institute has confirmed that it will continue working with local partnership in the retail sale sector. More importantly, the model of the pilot project will also be applied to new partnerships with local stakeholders for other training programmes of the Zarqa Training Institute. Finally, the curriculum of the retail and sales training programme will be accredited by the Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance and is going to be implemented in other Vocational Training Corporation training centres and tailored to the needs of local employers in the different governorates of the country.



# LEBANON – GUIDING STUDENTS TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT

Until the start of the GEMM project, Lebanese public VET schools could do little to smoothen the transition from school to work of their students. In a country where less than a quarter of people under the age of 25 are employed and from which an estimated 30% of young people emigrate to find employment, this is problematic. Proper guidance and counselling, backed up by current labour market research, can help students to choose training tracks for competencies and professions that are in demand.

A recent project by the French development organisation IECD (European Institute for Cooperation and Development) successfully established guidance employment offices at Lebanese private VET schools. This was received so positively that the Lebanese GEMM project sought to do the same in public schools.

The project was coordinated by the ETF in collaboration with the IECD and a local NGO working in the field of VET and employment. This ensured that proven methods were employed and that the project bore the official seal of approval. The Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon helped to establish contact with enterprises.

Six pilot schools were identified for the trial. In these schools, a guidance employment officer was appointed by the ministry. These officers underwent training in career guidance, in using job placement tools and techniques, in market research and local needs analysis, and in communication techniques. The project helped to develop a database to be populated with information about current students,

graduates and relevant companies. It also supported an analysis of current skills needed in the labour market and available vacancies.

The guidance officers selected and approached local companies, mapped their recruitment needs for specific occupations and identified the skills profiles for these specific occupations. Updating and expanding this information with feedback from companies will be one of their ongoing tasks. They will use this information to help students make career choices and to match vacancies with candidates.

The project benefited greatly from starting out with a proper plan for its own effective and efficient governance and with a framework for cooperation among local and national stakeholders. Having a common understanding of clear and achievable activities and objectives turned out to be a strongly motivating factor for all partners. The ministry laid the foundation for expansion of the network of guidance employment offices by wrapping them into a legal framework, officially appointing the officers with a clear job description and providing a coordination office at the ministry. The long-term plan is to set up guidance and employment offices in all schools.

This may, however, still be a challenging process. Maintaining fruitful partnerships between schools and labour market actors is not always easy but could be improved if the offices developed procedures for a systematic evaluation of their services, both by former students and employers. This could help them to build up evidence of their impact and of labour market appreciation of specific types of graduate.



# MOROCCO – LINKING LOCAL EVIDENCE WITH NATIONAL POLICY

The Moroccan VET system is centralised and controlled by national government agencies that traditionally take the leading role in policy development and implementation. A strong consensus has recently grown among engaged public and private sector actors that the governance of VET has to be improved, that closer and more meaningful partnership has to be developed and that the whole system should become more effective and responsive.

The Moroccan GEMM project tapped into this growing consensus by setting up a formal collaborative governance network of all the main local stakeholders in one specific geographic region and two specific trades. The network was empowered to review the local relevance of current training opportunities and to improve it. Subsequently, the experiences of the project were shaped into a collection of good practice that can be used elsewhere in the country.

The project settled on the Tangier-Tétouan region and narrowed down its scope to the automobile industry and logistics. A broad local partnership of public and private stakeholders was backed by an equally broad national project committee. Together, they made sure that the identified goals were achieved.

The project developed tools to identify labour market skills needs, to map and assess the current training provision and to strengthen the links between training provision and identified skills needs. The latter explicitly covered emerging skills needs too. The pilot study made extensive use of methods of skills needs analysis that had already been developed and tried in Morocco such as the sector approach to skills needs adopted by the Vocational Training Department. The pilot project in Morocco built on an earlier ETF-supported local development project.

This work provided evidence of gaps that were difficult to ignore, such as the need for better training for supervisory and middle management functions and the need for more training in soft skills and quality management.

The establishment of the regional working group improved communication and collaboration on training, skills needs and employment among all stakeholders. Its work clearly showed that partnership is a powerful tool for TVET governance,

be it locally or nationally. But the partnership cannot operate without political commitment, as partnerships can only reach their goals if there is a clear political will to recognise the evidence they produce and act on it.

The project also demonstrated the need for capacity building among partners that have a strong stake in each other's activities, such as trainers and employers, but no tradition of collaborating to grow stronger together.

In short, communication between local stakeholders has to be open, with shared data and information. The leadership of local partnerships has to be dynamic, engage all stakeholders purposefully, and be able to convince decision-makers that their work is indispensable.

National stakeholders will have to give tangible support to the local developments. Effective communication between the national and local levels will be needed and participation of both public and private sector partners must be on a formal and permanent basis, enshrined in legislation.



# PALESTINE – TRACING FORWARD

The Palestinian education and training system is undergoing an unprecedented level of structural reform at all levels. One key objective of this reform process is to better match what is taught in education and training with what is needed in the labour market and society. Finding out whether that objective is met requires close monitoring of how graduating students fare in the labour market they enter. Tracking students after graduation has proven to be an effective tool for this, but tracer studies were never used nationwide in Palestine. The GEMM project sought to introduce them, teach people to use them and, most importantly, help people to act on their results.

To give the project the necessary support, not only in schools, but also from decision-making authorities, it was governed through a dual structure, with a Core Group of representatives from ministries and social stakeholders acting as a steering board and a Project Committee with representatives of the 15 institutions that piloted the project's tracking scheme and was responsible for the actual project implementation.

The Core Group selected the 15 institutions from across the West Bank. These included not only regular public schools, but also schools managed by the UNRWA and different NGOs.

Schools prepared databases with contact details of students graduating in 2016 while the project developed its Graduates Tracking System on the basis of existing models developed jointly by the ETF, Cedefop and the ILO. The models were customised and translated into Arabic. Both groups benefited from intensive capacity training. Workshops helped people in the field to understand survey design, to understand the themes of monitoring and evaluation

and the use of targets and indicators, and to increase their capacity to develop policy, set targets, and conduct analytical studies.

Supported by the ETF, IT experts developed the online system that would be used for the tracking system.

The first results will come in after graduation in 2016. They will be conveyed to policy-makers in the relevant ministries so they can use the results when making decisions on adapting existing curricula and initiating new programmes. But the results will also help school principals and managers of TVET institutions to identify problem areas that require closer cooperation with local companies and labour market institutions.

This GEMM pilot project is closely connected to a broader project, also with ETF involvement, through which a TVET monitoring and evaluation system is introduced in Palestine. The results of the GEMM project will be embedded in this system. The model will be gradually implemented in all Palestinian TVET institutions, providing constant feedback on the transition from education to work. Eventually the tracking system should be linked to or embedded in a broader labour market information system.

While the achievements of the GEMM project in Palestine are considerable and encouraging, it is also recognised that for any such system requiring broad partnership and local flexibility, some deep changes are required in overall TVET governance. In particular, decentralisation efforts must be strengthened and these decentralisation efforts must support local engagement of employers and social partners in skills needs assessment and improving the relevance of technical and vocational training.



# TUNISIA – MAKING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP A REALITY

Since the 1990s the reforms of the Tunisian VET system have concentrated on developing a competence-based approach to education and training, the beginnings of an approach to lifelong learning and growing emphasis on quality assurance. Now a key challenge is how to devolve more responsibility to training providers and to better engage local employers and social partners.

In a country and system that are built around a central planning and command structure, this is not so easy. Away from the central government, in schools and among local authorities, people simply lack the capacity to react more proactively to local needs. Because they lack this, the central authorities will be less likely to devolve power. Breaking this circle requires capacity development.

The GEMM project in Tunisia was designed to deliver this, setting up parallel national and local partnership structures to improve training in two specific sectors in one specific region. The region chosen was the Gabès Region, on the Mediterranean coast in central Tunisia. The sectors addressed were construction and maintenance.

Working closely with the ETF, the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment established two broad partnership groups with employers, social partners, training providers and other stakeholders. One, the Regional Committee, operated locally in the Gabès Region. It reported to the National Committee, in which the ministry and a range of social partners were represented. The two committees worked closely together.

Working through these partnerships, a careful labour market needs analysis was conducted in the construction and maintenance sector. Since one specific aim of the Tunisian GEMM project was to actually get a group of jobseekers into employment, this was followed by the development and delivery of appropriate training by the involved professional training partners.

As indicated earlier, capacity development was one of the cornerstones of the project. One important target of training and coaching activities was the Regional Directorate of Vocational Training and Employment, which had to manage the project locally. Others included training employment counsellors, apprenticeship counsellors and human resources managers who needed to be trained in methodologies for identifying skills needs and translating these into training needs.

The project set up a pilot training and apprenticeship initiative for jobseekers. This involved identifying a target group of jobseekers and analysing their qualifications, then setting up relevant training in both technical and soft skills based on the actual needs of the local labour market. Jobseekers received tailored training, guidance and support that could secure them employment in specific occupations where employers had identified vacancies. This linking of employers, labour market analysis, training and jobseekers through the regional pilot project produced innovative results.

The developed partnership model was sufficiently generic to be replicated in other regions. In fact, if contact between different sectors can be made, other industries could also benefit from it. In order to make it easier for others to draw on the positive results of the project, a factsheet has been drawn up. It describes the project approach for adaptation and application in regions or sectors.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

The lessons drawn from the GEMM pilot projects can be distilled into a clear set of recommendations for consolidation of results or for follow-up action.

**1.** Most of the pilot projects can, and should, be upscaled or replicated to include other sectors or regions. The requirements for consolidating the newly created or extended platforms for dialogue and coordination on skills development should be examined. Such consolidation should be consistent with current planning for improved governance models. For a continuation of pilot project activities and sustained impact it is important to further institutionalise these partnerships and to create specific mechanisms to support their operations. This requires willingness from central governments to give more space to local partnerships to be active and effective.

**2.** In future activities related to improving stakeholder dialogue and TVET governance, stakeholders from the central level (public institutions and social partners) should be informed and engaged so as to improve the link between local and national efforts. The partnership approach to formulating project proposals has led to projects that fit more naturally into national reform efforts. Involvement and support from central authorities clearly improves the viability of local partnerships, promotes complementarity of actions and as such is likely to give a higher survival rate of new initiatives beyond their pilot stage.

**3.** Some of the most positive outcomes of the pilot projects are related to the collection and use of local labour market information and data. A better understanding of the skills demands and the skills gaps is a pre-condition for successful local and regional economic development. Understanding these skills demands requires closer cooperation with the stakeholders that actually need the skills. Labour market information provides a solid basis for interaction and collaboration with these stakeholders. Skills needs mapping and analysis should be built into local and regional VET policies, if not into all VET policies.

**4.** Each of the eight participating countries should prepare a clear sustainability plan for the partnerships platforms established in the pilot projects, be it in their current setup or in a modified form. While the GEMM project set the course towards better interaction between national and local levels of governance, in all countries dedicated follow-up actions will be needed to mainstream their results to other sectors and regions.

**5.** Gender equality was an explicitly mentioned priority in the project objectives. It was mentioned as one of only two cross-cutting issues, the other being local development, and the GEMM documents clearly stated that “the pilot projects are encouraged to address the quality and relevance of VET especially in terms of the employability of women”. Yet, gender equality was the clear focus of one of the pilot projects only: the GEMM pilot project in Jordan. Finding out why and what can be done to improve this in future initiatives should be a priority.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Cedefop | Centre européen pour le développement de la formation professionnelle (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)                           |
| ETF     | European Training Foundation   |
| EU      | European Union   |
| FNAC    | Fonds national de développement de l'apprentissage et de la formation continue (National Fund for the Development of Apprenticeship and Continuous Training) |
| GEMM    | Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean  |
| GIZ     | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Institute for International Cooperation)   |
| IECD    | Institut européen de coopération et de développement (European Institute for Cooperation and Development)  |
| ILO     | International Labour Organisation  |
| NGO     | Non-governmental organisation  |
| TVET    | Technical and vocational education and training  |
| UNRWA   | United Nations Relief and Works Agency (for Palestine Refugees in the Near East)   |
| VET     | Vocational education and training  |





The ETF is an EU agency that helps transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy.

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