

## **TAJIKISTAN**

### **ETF country plan 2007–2010**

#### **1. Socioeconomic background**

Tajikistan is a low-income country with an estimated gross national income (GNI) per capita in 2005 of US\$330 (Atlas method), which ranks it 190 out of 208 countries. According to the Human Development Index, Tajikistan is placed 122nd out of 177 countries. After the initial economic collapse following independence and the civil war, signs of recovery began to appear in 1998 and since then the country has experienced continuously high growth rates. In 2004, the economy is estimated to have grown over 10%. However, the total size of the economy remains well below its 1990 level and industry in particular has found it difficult to recover.

Given its economically very unfavourable circumstances, Tajikistan faces a difficult demographic situation with a labour market that is not capable of absorbing the present population of working age. High birth rates over the last few decades have resulted in a population of working age which increased from about 2.5 million in 1991 to 3.9 million in 2004. During the same period official employment remained virtually unchanged at just under 2 million, with a low of 1.7 million in 1999. This difficult situation led to a sharp increase in the share of the population working in the informal sector, caused mass seasonal labour migration to Russia and Kazakhstan in particular, and generated widespread poverty. In 2002 an estimated 65% of the population lived below the national poverty line. Remittances from migrants constitute the main income in many households and make up a significant share of GNI.

With about 47% of the population under the age of 15, the influx into the labour market will continue to be high in years to come. There are about 120 000 new entrants to the labour market every year. Because about half of young people leave after compulsory education (grade 9) and another approximately 25 000 leave after upper secondary general education, a large proportion of young enter the labour market without any specific qualifications.

#### **2. Key policy issues and strategies in human resource development**

The fundamental changes which have occurred in the economy and labour market during the last 15 years – the disappearance of traditional wage employment in large parts of industry and agriculture – set the new framework for human resource development needs in Tajikistan. The education and training system has not been able to meet this challenge and continues to a large extent to deliver the same obsolete knowledge, skills and competences as in the past. The education and training system has also experienced a decrease in enrolment and attendance rates in compulsory education and all forms of upper secondary education.

The first responses to this situation came in compulsory, upper general secondary and higher education. The direction of strategic reforms in compulsory and upper general secondary education currently concentrate on ensuring equal access, the quality of knowledge and relevance to the needs of modern society. The aim is to do this by improving the efficiency of the system, including finance, management, planning mechanisms and spending, and by rationalising and modernising the curricula and teaching methods. Higher education reform includes rationalising the university network, modernising the curricula and strengthening the autonomy of institutions. Widespread corruption at all levels of higher education remains a major concern for quality of and access to higher education. Though the national concept of education dates back to 2000, large-scale system reform is still at an early stage.

Vocational education and training (VET) was slower at initiating policy reform. This was partly because the Ministry of Education initially concentrated on the areas of the education system, mentioned above and partly because the responsibility for VET was shared between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The latter, with the support of ETF, started more fundamental reform discussions in 2003 with the development of a new concept for initial VET. This work was followed in 2006 by the government approving a National Action Plan for Reform of the Initial Vocational Education and Training System in Tajikistan. Key policy issues addressed in the plan include: the content and organisation of educational processes; the qualification structure; adult training; social partnership; VET system management and quality control; and international and regional cooperation.

Discussions within the Ministry of Education on post-secondary vocational education in technical colleges were at the initial stages and there was very little joint discussion on the overall VET system covering all levels from initial vocational education to higher technical education. In terms of actual changes in schools and for students and trainees hardly any progress has been achieved to date.

In December 2006 the responsibility for initial VET was transferred from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection remains responsible for employment, migration and adult training, which includes training for unemployed people and re-qualification, with particular focus on migrants. The Ministry of Education therefore does not have a comprehensive policy for technical and vocational education and training.

A key overall policy issue and strategy in Tajikistan is how to reduce poverty. The country has therefore engaged in a process for the development and implementation of a national poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), the first version of which was approved by government in 2002. As a result of the awareness which was raised during the ETF stocktaking project in 2005, the second revised version makes more explicit reference to skills development as an input into poverty reduction measures and also links it to VET system reform. The PRSP provides the overall framework for international donor support.

Main policy issues and strategy challenges in human resource development for Tajikistan in the period 2007–2010 can be summarised as follows:

- the mismatch between the supply and demand for skills and the absence of a comprehensive education and training system which can respond to emerging qualification needs at all levels
- the revival of the role of initial VET in providing qualifications along with its social role
- the development of post-secondary technical education or non-university higher education
- the role of skills development in poverty reduction and related VET system reform
- developing mechanisms to enable and promote adult training and initiate a move towards lifelong learning systems
- institutional capacity building for the definition, implementation, monitoring and financing of the VET system
- the improvement of the school network and infrastructure.

### **3. EU and other donor policies and interventions**

The European Commission (EC) has provided some limited support to Tajikistan in initial vocational education through a project under Tacis AP2002. This project was to provide support for the development of the national action plan and some initial curriculum development work at school level, and to identify priority areas for future international support. A follow-up project was planned under Tacis AP2005. The EC delegation in Dushanbe has requested ETF staff to develop terms of reference during the first months of 2007. In addition, within the framework of support for improving living standards and reducing poverty, a number of skills development initiatives have been supported at grassroots level in Khatlon region and the Fergana Valley. In the new development cooperation instrument, direct support to VET is not immediately expected.

In higher education the EU has provided support through Tempus and is expected to continue to do so within the new development cooperation instrument.

Support by other donors in VET has primarily been provided via the UNDP with Japanese and Swedish funding and also by the German Development Service for the development of adult training. Further support has also been provided in teacher training by GTZ and InWent. Discussions are ongoing between the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and GTZ for a larger project in support of adult training. Negotiations are also ongoing with Helvetas, Switzerland, for future support.

By far the largest donor input to education and training has been the support from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for general education. Initially, this support was to rebuild the school infrastructure. Support for general education is expected to continue, which may include support to all parts of secondary education as part of a move towards a more comprehensive view of the education system, including vocational education.

### **4. Mid-term perspective ETF intervention strategies contributing to added value in national, EU and donor reform-support policies**

ETF's mid-term perspective focuses overall on the provision of information, analysis and policy advice on human resource development and stakeholder capacity building as well as support to improve the effectiveness and relevance of EU assistance programmes. Furthermore, it emphasises an exchange of information and experience among donors and networking activities to transfer relevant policy lessons between the EU and partner countries and between partner countries. In Central Asia this focus will be translated into policy advice on comprehensive VET systems, the link between skills development and poverty reduction, and support to the EU programmes. Stakeholder capacity building for both definition and implementation of reform will be key aspects of all ETF interventions.

In Central Asia in general, a number of international donors appear to show increased interest in supporting VET policy development rather than focusing on infrastructure development. ETF will seek to underpin this move in approach by maintaining a close exchange of information with donors active in Tajikistan to help donors direct their support towards key priority areas in education and training policy development and implementation in Tajikistan.

Within this framework, the key objective of ETF support to Tajikistan in the period 2007–2010 will be to support the continued development of comprehensive education and training policies and implementation capacities.

This objective will be pursued within the following main policy challenges:

#### **Development of an overall VET policy**

The review and re-definition of an overall VET system as an integral part of a comprehensive education and training policy remains a key challenge for Tajikistan. At present initial VET is

hardly considered to be an integral part of the overall education system and the links between initial and post-secondary VET are limited. Often there is little clarity about the difference between the two levels of vocational and technical education and Tajikistan still needs to develop the capacity to implement a unified VET system which will improve transparency of qualifications, pathways and the use of resources.

ETF will address this challenge in three main ways. The first is through a continuation of the discussion of the concepts of national qualification frameworks, which started in 2005 in the framework of a regional project on a national qualification framework, and using these concepts as a reference tool to review the VET system in Tajikistan. This will be done through conceptual discussions of national qualification frameworks, active learning and the development of technical capacities for framework design through the elaboration of a pilot framework of qualification profiles, level descriptors and assessment principles for the tourism sector. The work will involve both ministries responsible for VET and the tourism industry. The practical experience will be translated into a national policy paper for national qualification frameworks; policy stakeholders will be closely involved in the project. Sharing experience with EU Member States and with the other Central Asian countries will be essential parts of the project.

The second way is through fostering a policy dialogue between the Ministries of Education and Labour and Social Protection on the overall VET system. Although initial VET has been integrated within the Ministry of Education and only adult training remains with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, such a dialogue is still essential to ensure more transparency in qualifications, easy pathways and better use of resources. This dialogue will be promoted through a series of awareness-raising events at policy maker and technical level in Tajikistan. ETF will also promote sharing of experience with other countries which have progressed further in the development of a unified and transparent system. The dialogue will not only involve ministerial stakeholders, but also others to encourage a broader involvement in the discussion of the overall education and training system. The support will lead to the development of the outline of a unified VET system in Tajikistan and initial thoughts on how to improve the use of available resources. ETF will engage closely with other education and training system reform initiatives including those supported by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank in order to ensure that the education and training system is considered as a whole.

The third way is through improving the capacity for translating reform declarations into change at school level. In initial VET not only the concept but also the national action plan appear to be a series of declarations of intentions and fail to define a limited number of realistic and achievable priorities with pre-defined funding and clearly assigned responsibilities. ETF, together with the Ministry of Education, will help to identify one or two key priority areas and support a process which will define all the necessary steps and provide initial support to kick start implementation at school level. The support will build the capacity of the relevant authorities to go through the process from the definition of aims and means to the implementation at school level. The support will also allow the Ministry of Education to continue a further elaboration of a second generation national action plan.

Another key aspect of the VET system is the adult training managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. However, with the expected support from GTZ, the main role of ETF will be to ensure that a comprehensive approach to VET is taken in cooperation with the Ministry of Education to include adult training in all discussions on the future system, and, of course, to seek close cooperation and exchange of information with the GTZ supported interventions in adult training.

### **Skills development, poverty reduction and VET system reform**

As in many countries the role of skills development within poverty reduction measures has primarily been seen as providing technical skills related directly to the measures being undertaken. There has been little discussion about how to ensure a more sustainable provision of skills and competences and the potential role of the existing VET system in doing so, and therefore there has also been no link to VET system reform. Throughout 2005 ETF

did a stocktake in Tajikistan of skills development for poverty reduction. This identified some of the key challenges which prevents the VET system from contributing better to skills development for poverty reduction.

ETF will address this issue in two main ways. The first will be through promoting policy thinking on how to enable vocational schools to provide skills development opportunities which are relevant to the local economy. This would make them a more reliable partner in poverty reduction initiatives and guarantee a more sustainable skills provision. ETF will do this through a continuation of the Skills development for poverty reduction project. The project is an action policy learning project which, through a pilot partnership project in a selected vocational school, will demonstrate how to increase the capacity of the school to respond better to local circumstances. The project will fully involve the policy makers in analysing the results of the project, defining which changes are needed in the VET system to create an enabling environment and in linking up with the national authorities in charge of the PRSP process so as to further increase awareness of why VET reform is important in this context. The project will also encourage international exchange and close engagement with Kyrgyz and Kazakh partners at both policy and school level. The project will foster an environment for peer learning between the Central Asian partners.

The second way will be to arrive at a better understanding of the importance of the skills and qualifications held by Tajik migrant workers. Tajikistan's economy and the wellbeing of individual families currently depend to a large extent on remittances from migrant workers. Further understanding is needed of the link between recognised skills and qualifications and the type of jobs and working conditions migrants have abroad. Furthermore, it is important to come to an understanding of the kind of skills and qualifications which would be required for migrants to better improve their working conditions, if such a link can be established. ETF will collect information on this issue and promote awareness of the importance of ensuring that young migrants are better equipped with skills and qualifications.

### **Underpinning VET system reform through donor support**

ETF will discuss strategy with other donors active or interested in Tajikistan in order to help focus donor interventions on key priority areas in support of education and training policy development and capacity building to implement reform. Part of this dialogue will be with the EC services in order to identify how better to address skills development needs within poverty reduction measures or within projects that are supporting economic diversification and in order to identify key VET policy areas for direct EU support.

A first step towards opening this dialogue will be a joint ETF-World Bank regional conference on the need for human resource development to sustain economic competitiveness and diversification and the role that education and training, and in particular the VET system, could play. In addition there could be joint World Bank-ETF initial project identification missions to the country in the second part of 2007 to support a closer integration of general and vocational secondary education in Tajikistan. The final focus of the project will only be decided on during the project identification mission.

At the end of 2010, ETF activities in Tajikistan will have produced the following outcomes:

- the capacity to develop a policy on national qualification frameworks as a part of the overall education and training policy
- a policy dialogue between the authorities in charge of all aspects and levels of VET and the outline of a comprehensive VET policy
- the capacity to set priorities for reform and prepare sound implementation plans and mechanisms
- thinking on policy for linking skills development for poverty reduction with VET system reform
- awareness among policy makers of the role of skills and qualifications for migrants;
- a contribution to the better use of EU and other donor interventions in support of human resource development.

During 2007 and well into 2008, ETF will continue and complete the national qualification framework and skills development for poverty reduction projects in Central Asia. During 2007, ETF will seek further engagement with policy makers to define a policy learning process which can support an emerging policy dialogue within the Ministry of Education and between the Ministries of Education and Labour and Social Protection on a comprehensive VET system. This process will then start, with ETF support, from 2008 onwards. Likewise, ETF will enter into close discussions with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection to define one or two key priority areas from the national action plan and define a process in which ETF can support and build the capacity of the authorities. Finally, ETF will also undertake exploratory work in the first period of the mid-term perspective in order to be able to define an approach that will ensure the provision of sound information on the skills and qualifications of migrants. During 2007 intelligence will be collected on what has already been done in this area in Tajikistan to prepare the ground for an intervention in 2008–2009. Dialogue with the EU and other donors will take place throughout.

## **5. Objectives and indicators for the work programme 2007**

**ETF 2007 Activities and services in Tajikistan**

**ETF country objective 2007:** To inform VET policy development and build capacity on VET reform implementation through ETF policy advice activities.

<b>PROJECT NUMBER</b>	<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>SPECIFIC COUNTRY OBJECTIVE</b> Longer-term effects the project is expected to have at the country level	<b>EXPECTED OUTCOMES</b> Outcome = short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's output	<b>ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS</b> Quantitative or qualitative variables measuring achievement against the expected outcomes	<b>SOURCES OF VERIFICATION</b>	<b>(YEARLY) OUTPUTS</b> Products and services resulting from activities	<b>PROJECT DURATION</b>
DCI 07-01	Support to Tacis and development cooperation instrument project cycles	To improve relevance of HRD components in EU-funded interventions in the country through ETF support to their definition, preparation and impact assessment	EU interventions identified and designed upon request  EU interventions reviewed and policy impact assessed upon request	ETF contribution to the design of development cooperation instrument support of poverty reduction measures  ETF contribution to the design of Tacis VET project  Reviews drafted for relevant projects	Request data base  Project designs  Project reviews	Tacis VET project re-designed	2007–2010
DCECI 07-02	National qualification framework (NQF) in Central Asia	To build consensus among key stakeholders about policy to be adopted concerning a NQF and to further promote regional cooperation in the area	Basis for further development of sector qualification framework for tourism	Pilot framework of qualification profiles, level descriptors and assessment principles for tourism	Pilot qualifications framework for tourism	Learning outcomes /qualification profiles  Level descriptors  Assessment approaches (formal,	2007–2008

		of qualifications	Implications of the pilot sector qualifications development for a national policy on qualifications assessed	A NQF policy paper drafted by country team	Draft NQF policy paper for Tajikistan	informal, non-formal learning) Implications for developing related VET programmes Identified policy issues Review of pilot experience Draft NQF policy Consultations of draft	
--	--	-------------------	--	--	---------------------------------------	--	--

DCECI 07-03	Skills development for poverty reduction	Develop a better understanding of the possible role that skills development can play for poverty reduction to prioritise current VET reform initiatives	<p>Experience-based policy guidelines for VET systemic reform for increasing the responsiveness of vocational schools to local learner and enterprise skill development needs</p> <p>Principles agreed for inclusion of skills development in PRSP and EC assistance programming and project definition</p>	<p>Lessons from pilot school experience</p> <p>Consultation process with national authorities</p> <p>Policy guidelines for increasing responsiveness of VET schools</p> <p>Draft principles</p> <p>Validation process</p>	<p>Peer review reports</p> <p>Pilot school reports</p> <p>Reports by local coaches</p> <p>National and regional events</p> <p>Draft policy guidelines and draft principles</p> <p>Conclusions of regional seminar</p>	<p>ETF publication</p> <p>Pilot school coaching and peer reviews</p> <p>Capacity building of national authorities</p> <p>National seminar on policy guidelines</p> <p>Validated principles for inclusion of skills development in PRSP and EC assistance programming and project definition</p>	2007–2008
-------------	--	---	---	---	---	---	-----------