

Live&Learn

NEWS, VIEWS AND INITIATIVES FROM ACROSS THE ETF COMMUNITY

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Croatian deputy prime minister
Slobodan Uzelac
**A good qualifications
framework will reduce
unemployment**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 08** Ukraine special:
Why employers are the ones pushing for change in Ukrainian VET
- 16** Armenia demonstrates policy learning in action
- 18** How to involve social partners in your VET system

Letter from the editor AMBASSADORS FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Every year more than 2000 people from over 50 European countries come together at conferences, meetings and workshops organised by the ETF. We meet our stakeholders and different communities at events either in Italy, in the Balkans, in the MEDA region or in Central Asia. The topics for discussion are many and diverse: Adult learning, entrepreneurship, employment, gender equality.... yes, any issue related to human capital development.

But ETF meetings serve more than one purpose. Not only is a lot of

new information provided, knowledge exchanged and policy actions discussed, but by bringing people from different national, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds together, we also continuously promote dialogue between the European Union and its neighbours.

Intercultural dialogue is a fundamental value and long-term priority for the EU. Recognising this, the European Commission has decided to declare 2008 the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, underlining the important

contribution of intercultural dialogue to the European Union's strategic priorities.

Through its policies, activities and events, the ETF has always supported this important subject, which lies at the heart of EU policies.

Dialogue and face-to-face communication have proven to be very useful and even successful for many ETF projects in conflict and post-conflict zones. Bringing people together provides an opportunity for all to listen, speak, react and make progress, and dialogue and



CONTENTS

04
Croatia takes qualifications framework to the highest level

06
Ukraine special

10
Universal Declaration of Human Rights

12
ETF expertise, highly valued in Egypt

THE ETF HELPS TRANSITION AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO HARNESS THE POTENTIAL OF THEIR HUMAN RESOURCES THROUGH THE REFORM OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LABOUR MARKET SYSTEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EU'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS POLICY.

www.etf.europa.eu

Cover Photo:
Slobodan Uzelac,
deputy prime minister of Croatia

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cooperation can help to overcome shadows of the past and find a way towards unity.

However, in the process of establishing dialogue it is important that the values and concepts of one party will not be imposed on the others by forceful means. We must not seek advantage in the disadvantages of others, but seek our advantages alongside others.

Dialogue means that we talk and listen, not as doctrinaire missionaries but as partners in mutual respect trying to define

where we differ and where we find common ground in order to improve the lives of all us. Dialogue is defined as our only means of constructively dealing with differences of opinion.

Just a few weeks ago, I had the privilege to open a youth forum on "Migration – challenges and opportunities" in Italy bringing together students from 12 different countries – from Mexico to Georgia, from Uganda to Lithuania. Here I could express this sentiment in front of representatives of different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.

And during the two-week forum, the participants had the opportunity – face-to-face – to learn, to exchange information and views and to establish personal contacts across borders and continents.

The students left the forum as future ambassadors for intercultural dialogue, putting the values of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 into practice. We would do well to all follow their example.

Bent Sørensen,
Head of ETF Communication Unit



13
ETF contributes to development of apprenticeship in Morocco



16
Armenia demonstrates policy learning in action



18
How to involve social partners in your VET system



20
The ETF in the Balkans: helping boost human capital on the road to the EU



22
The EQF: a tool for greater transparency in education

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// TODAY, IN THIS REGION, IT IS YOUR PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE THAT MATTERS //

CROATIA TAKES QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL

Developing a future-proof qualifications system

Croatian education has a history of public disobedience. Its institutions are strong and individual and have in the past repeatedly and successfully defied legal decisions that were thrust upon them from above. It is no easy country for decision makers to regulate centrally. But is this a drawback or an advantage in the development of a national qualifications framework, something which requires broad consultation throughout the process of definition and implementation?

Live and Learn was in Zagreb to speak to the man on whose shoulders the development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework currently rests. Slobodan Uzelac was Secretary of State at the Ministry of Education and Sports until earlier this year when he became Deputy Prime Minister. Responsibility for his work on what is known as the CROQF moved with him and for good reason.

“Until now, responsibility for developing the Croatian Qualifications Framework rested with one ministry – the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport” Slobodan Uzelac said.

“We considered that problematic because the qualifications framework is not exclusively linked to education and we were keen to ensure that the fact that it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport did not become an excuse for others to become less involved. We found that even ministries whom we consider to be key stakeholders

delegated their involvement to lower levels thereby giving it less priority.”

Because of the approach chosen by the Croatians, it was in the end the government as a whole and not just the education authorities who adopted the guiding development document: the *Baseline of the Croatian Qualifications Framework*. A council was formed with representation from all relevant ministries and stakeholders. An operational team works in support of this council.

Crucial point

“We’re on the right track and that is not just our opinion but also something we saw confirmed during a recent conference in Brussels,” Uzelac said.

“We think we have come to a crucial point. We’re beyond the strict conditions for EU accession in this area, so there is no technical pressure from that direction any longer, but true European integration still requires better

tuning into current European developments of which there are many at the moment.”

This is not to suggest that the Croatian Qualifications Framework is being developed only with a view to European integration. Quite the contrary. The Croatians are well aware of the benefits of a system that recognises qualifications, competences and skills, not least in view of the country’s past.

“Ultimately I believe that a good qualifications framework will reduce unemployment which is still higher than the economic situation warrants. Until now we educated the masses who hadn’t a clue what their future jobs or positions would be. But that is not all there is to it. While true lifelong learning is being introduced, again on the foundation of existing structures, it will provide the necessary mobility, both internally within our own education and, as a result of the way in which the system links into the European Qualifications System, to the European Union.”

Slobodan Uzelac: A top down qualification framework would not work in Croatia

"I would like to stress one factor that must be borne in mind when dealing not just with Croatia but all transition countries in this region. Until not so long ago, in all of these countries it was more important to have a title than to have a competence. Your destiny depended more on your contacts than anything else. Today, it is your professional competence that matters and this raises the value of qualifications and the way in which they are awarded."

The baseline document mentioned above was adopted earlier this year and eight levels have been defined, each with four sublevels. The sublevels are still up for discussion at several events this autumn, but not the main eight. The descriptive work should be finished by the end of 2008. In the same period we also want to establish sector councils. The whole task has a timescale of five years."

Descriptors

"What we are looking at now is the descriptors of all three level components: knowledge, skills and competences. This work is carried out by the operational team. The descriptors are a tricky issue, especially because we are so keen on broad acceptance and endorsement. The descriptors should be equally clear to all involved; that's people with PhDs as well as lay people. This means that we cannot have this work done just by a ministry or just by a university; it must build on real life situations. That is a challenge, both from a linguistic and a logistical point of view. It may be harder for us than for other countries because we have no tradition in this. It will take time and this is the reason why we cannot work any faster than we do."

The operational team is now busy doing the writing work but that does not mean there are no more challenges ahead. One major task for the future is raising awareness among the general



Photo: ETF/A. Jongsmma

public and informing all personnel involved at schools, in companies and within the administration, of the benefits of the new framework.

Some countries in the Western Balkans (an expression that Uzelac dislikes "because there are no Eastern Balkans in this jargon") have made greater formal progress earlier than Croatia. Uzelac believes that this does not reflect hesitation on Croatia's part, rather it is the result of a decision making process characteristic of the country.

"Yes, some countries around us went further, but there is a crucial difference in that they more or less imposed a qualification framework in a top-down way. That would not work here," he said.

Strength of mind

He is probably right. Experience in higher education, but also in VET, has shown that there is enough strength of mind in the country to simply ignore new legislation if it has not been developed with sufficient support from stakeholders.

"We could have opted for a design that was developed by a small team and then imposed it on the entire country. In fact we can still do that if we really want to but I wouldn't dare. Croatia is

no country for top-down decisions. It has very independent institutions."

"While we are on that subject, the beauty of working with the European Training Foundation is that they take such local characteristics into account."

"When the ETF first brought up the subject three years ago, they didn't come rolling in with an army of experts to tell us what to do. No, they came in a very polite manner and, instead of imposing their own views, asked about ours. As a result of this method, what they eventually suggested was something that built on our culture and heritage. And this is one of the principles of the baseline document I mentioned earlier: we keep what was good in the past and develop it into a future-proof system." ■

FIND OUT MORE:
Ministry of Science,
Education and Sports -
[http://public.mzos.hr/
default.aspx?sec=2428](http://public.mzos.hr/default.aspx?sec=2428)

by Ard Jongsmma, ICE

UKRAINE SPECIAL

TIMO KUUSELA: THE PERSONAL TOUCH MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN UKRAINE

ETF country manager for Ukraine on his time in the country

The ETF's Timo Kuusela is a great believer in local contacts and local knowledge. When he took over as country manager for Ukraine in 2006, Kuusela's first priority was to spend some time on the spot. "I thought I wouldn't be taking my job seriously unless I got to know the country well," he says, "personal contacts are crucial for the success of my work."

Thus followed a ten-month stint on secondment to the EC Delegation in Kiev before Kuusela returned to Turin in July 2007 with a full address book and an even wider circle of Ukrainian friends.

Kuusela has found his personal approach comes in handy in Ukraine, a country in the grip of extreme political instability. "It is hard to work with the government here as the people in charge are constantly changing and cannot take many decisions," he says, "just relying on official contacts is not very effective."

Born in Finland, Kuusela speaks fluent Russian and understands Ukrainian. His varied professional experience includes working for a construction company in Moscow, teaching at high school in Finland's East Carelia and establishing a fashion chain in Saint Petersburg, as well as designing education programmes for the Finnish government. With the ETF since 1996, Kuusela spent several years managing

the VET reform in North West Russia initiative, a pioneering project to make the VET system more responsive to the labour market which managed to attract seven other donors. Foreshadowing today's emphasis on donor co-ordination, "it gave much higher visibility to the donors as we were all working together," he says, although dealing with so many actors sometimes caused its own tensions.

Kuusela defines himself as an all-rounder in VET reform rather than a specialist in a particular area. "I have a good overall understanding of how education systems work and what key elements need to be addressed to make reforms really sustainable," he says. His gift for networking allows him to go straight to the heart of the matter. "In this society of information overload, it is very easy to get lost," he says, "when you know the right people, you get good advice which saves a lot of time and gives you more confidence."



Photo: ETF/Mehmetli Amangeldi



Timo Kuusela getting to know the right people

by Rebecca Warden, ICE



WORLD BANK AND EUROPEAN COMMISSION SPEAK WITH SINGLE VOICE ON UKRAINIAN VET

A World Bank-European Commission joint initiative is working with the Ukrainian government and employers on how to make the education system more responsive to the needs of the labour market.

“We believe it is a structural problem; it is not that the education system is not producing skills, it is simply that it often produces skills that need improving when the graduate starts work,” says Olena Bekh (above), education specialist at the World Bank country office in Ukraine, “there is no system of feedback from the labour market to the education system.”

The two partners, with the ETF providing technical advice, have developed a policy note suggesting how Ukraine could modernise its education

and training system, focusing on three main topics; quality, financing and governance. A study visit to Finland and a series of workshops and conferences since 2007 are helping raise the awareness of stakeholders from the government and social partners on these issues. The policy note will be discussed with the Ukrainian government, aiming to arrive at a final version before the end of the year, with publication planned for a later date.

For Olena Bekh, the added value of this initiative is not just its relevance to the

Ukrainian context, but the strong partnership that has been built between donors. “This is quite a tricky partnership as the European Commission and the World Bank are complicated organisations,” she says, “after a lot of hard work we are now acting in a very trusting environment where the amount of formality is low and the degree of real co-ordination is high.”

Governments in partner countries often waste a lot of time and resources trying to comply with the reform priorities, procedures and even language requirements of different donors all working in the same sector. “Here we have come to the country with a single, co-ordinated voice,” says Bekh, adding “this makes for a much more efficient approach which should achieve a bigger impact.” ■

by Rebecca Warden, ICE



UKRAINE SPECIAL

// THIS PROJECT IS OUR VISION OF HOW A NATIONAL QUALIFICATION SYSTEM SHOULD WORK //

WHY EMPLOYERS ARE THE ONES PUSHING FOR CHANGE IN UKRAINIAN VET

Getting involved in improving the quality of training reform

Employers are the driving force pushing for change in the Ukrainian VET system. In some countries, the ETF finds it hard to get employers involved in the process of VET reform, but in Ukraine it is the employers rather than the authorities who are taking the lead in moves to improve the quality of training. Shortages of qualified labour and a lack of political will to take action have brought them to the forefront.

The ETF has been helping develop a national qualification framework for Ukraine since 2006 and the Confederation of Ukrainian Employers (CUE) has adopted the project as its own. The confederation, which represents most of Ukrainian big business, has drafted a concept note on how employers see the new

framework. Working closely with the ETF and other partners, the CUE is producing a new set of occupational standards for the catering industry and is about to do the same for the sectors of metallurgy and machine-building. It has designed a bill to act as enabling legislation and pave the way for change. As we go to press, the confederation is busy lobbying the Ukrainian Parliament to get this bill made law.

“This project is our vision of how a national qualifications system should work and our way of meeting the challenges of modernity,” says Kyrlyo Tkachenko, director of institutional development at the CUE, “it aims to forge a real link between the labour market and the education system.”

Ukrainian VET is currently plagued by the twin problems of low quality and structural imbalances which together provide a poor fit to the demands of the labour market, according to Irina Akimova, a Ukrainian opposition MP and well-known economist. “A considerable

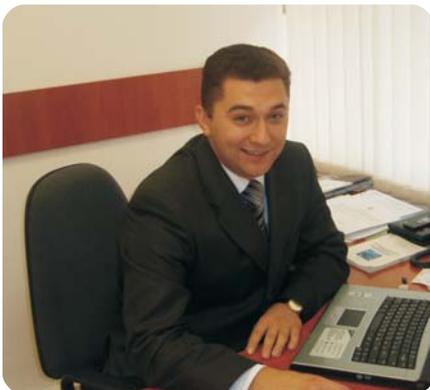
Irina Akimova, a Ukrainian opposition MP and well-known economist



Photo: Vladimir Korablev

number of VET graduates cannot find a job but employers are desperately seeking qualified workers and cannot find them,” she says. The hardest job vacancies to fill tend to be those of middle and lower ranking technicians, but the Ukrainian education system continues to show a strong bias towards higher education.

Photo: Oksana Medvedska



Kyrlyo Tkachenko, director of institutional development at the CUE

Ukrainian employers have tried to establish different forms of on-the-job training and there have been attempts to resuscitate the apprenticeship schemes that used to exist in Soviet times, but with little success. All this has had the effect of making employers even more keen to see a comprehensive overhaul of their country's VET system take place.

The strong involvement of employers and trade unionists is also a reflection on the high degree of political instability in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Government has seen a total of 13 different cabinets since 1991 and minor cabinet reshuffles have become almost a matter of routine. "It is hard to work with the government as the people in charge are always changing and so relying solely on official contacts is not very effective," says Timo Kuusela, ETF

country manager for Ukraine. "Employers, NGOs and think tanks have become very active to fill the vacuum," he adds.

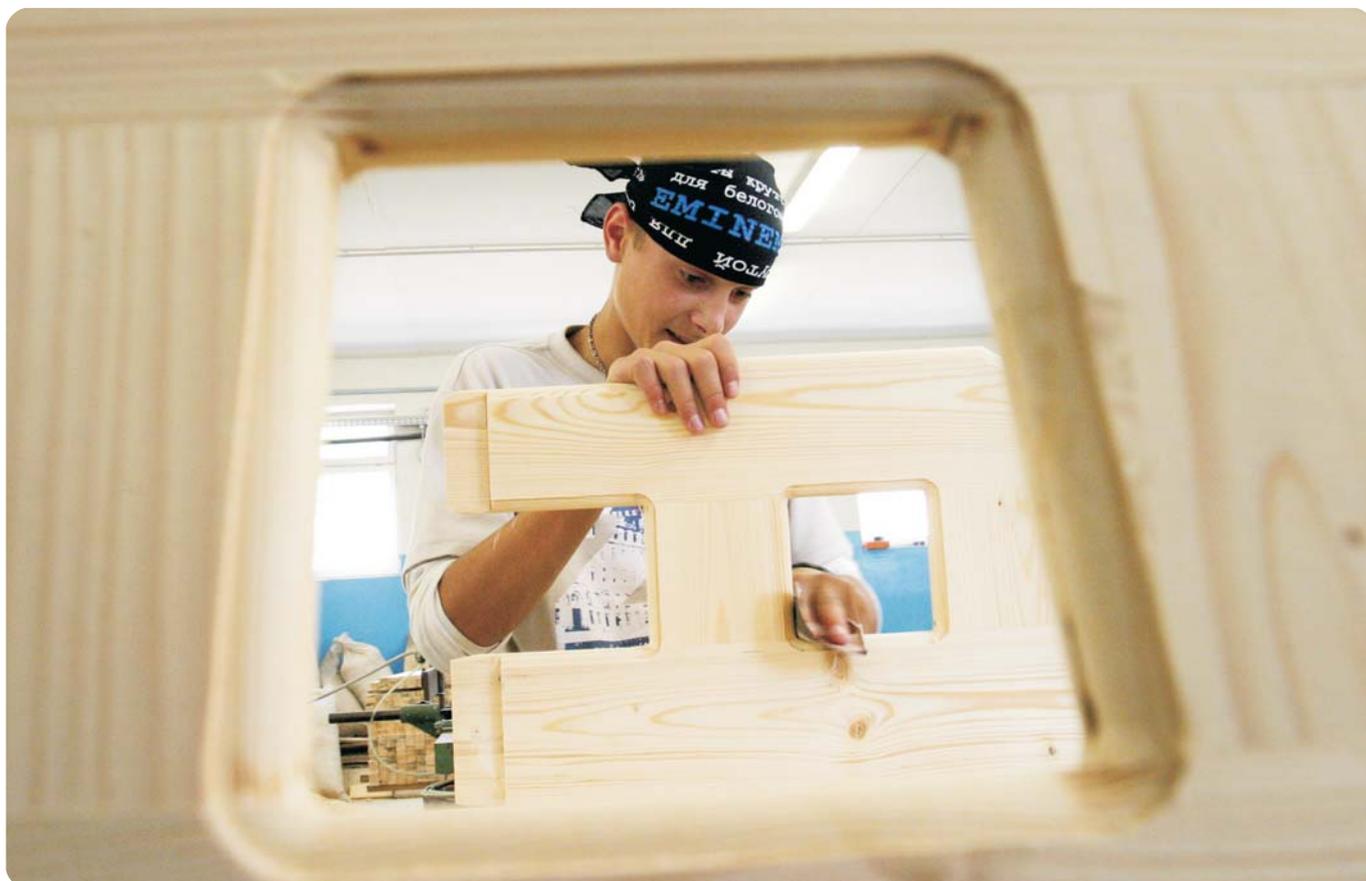
Irina Akimova has seen some signs of progress recently. Over the past three years, the Ukrainian government has experimented with new ways of managing VET by devolving strategic and financial decision making from the centre to the regions. "It is a good idea to fund VET from regional budgets as they are more in touch with local labour needs and can respond faster," she says. Nevertheless, Akimova is convinced that full-scale reforms are unlikely until there is more political stability.

In the meantime, international organisations such as the ETF have an important role to play by keeping the

need for VET reform in the public and political arena. "Even if reforms have little chance of being pushed through right now, this doesn't mean we should all be silent about what needs doing," says Akimova, "there needs to be an ongoing campaign to increase awareness; international organisations have a vital role to play in this." ■

FIND OUT MORE:
Confederation of
Employers of Ukraine -
<http://www.conf.eu.org/en>

by **Rebecca Warden, ICE**



// WE CAN BE PROUD OF ACHIEVEMENTS RELATED TO FREEDOM AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN EUROPE //

60 YEARS FIGHTING ABUSE IN THE WORLD, BUT STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Sixty years ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) against oppression and discrimination. Following the Second World War, which witnessed some of the most barbaric crimes in human history, the Universal Declaration marked the first time that the rights and freedoms of individuals were laid out in such detail.

Every single person has rights: that is the essence of our humanity, and the text of the Declaration represented the first international recognition that human rights are applicable to every person. But it is not only the UN that is

concerned about human rights. Since June last year, the new European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in Vienna has focused on the situation of fundamental rights for human beings in the 27 member states, while a myriad

of NGO's, from Amnesty International to the Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders, work every day to involve the civil society in the defence of fundamental rights.

The universal declaration of human rights was adopted by UN member states on 10 December 1948. It began as an initiative of the governments, but today it is the common goal of people everywhere.

Global expression

The UDHR holds a particular record: it is the most translated document in the world – even more than the Bible according to the Guinness Book of Records. It represents the first global expression of rights to which all human beings are inherently entitled and consists of 30 articles which have been elaborated in subsequent international treaties, regional human rights instruments, national constitutions and laws.



Morten Kjaerum, director of the FRA, says in an interview with Live and Learn that the panorama of human rights in the world is far from rosy; although the EU is a unique model.

“Over the last 60 years I think that we can be proud of the achievements related to freedoms and civil rights in Europe. As we see in Europe and the EU we have not rested on our laurels and have set up mechanisms to improve, monitor and assess how far our actions are matching the words of the UDHR. In the EU for example we have created a Charter of Fundamental Rights and are in the process of establishing and empowering mechanisms to make that Charter a reality. Of course, there will be those who think more can be done and they may well be correct...but Europe still remains unique worldwide for its human rights protection system. Anyway, the best legislation is useless if people are not aware of it”.

Public support

“The human rights picture is complex, and it comes in and out of focus, it is essentially fluid and constantly evolving. What’s important, in my opinion, is that whenever human rights abuses take place, those responsible can be brought to account. If I have one complaint, it is that I believe that all EU governments should be doing more to publicly support human rights and bring human rights home to people in their day to day lives.”

According to Amnesty International, every day thousands of people are victims of extrajudicial executions, unlawful killings, disappearances,



Photo: ETF/A. Ramella

torture and ill-treatment or are prisoners of conscience, victims of detention without charge, trials or, in some cases the death penalty.

Connections

But, what can be done to increase commitment to the defence of human rights on a global scale? Is there a model to follow? Are the examples of Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi a source of inspiration?

“There is a profound philosophical connection between the fundamental principles of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration and those practised by Mahatma Gandhi.”, said the general secretary of the UN, Ban Ki-moon recently.

“Today, the legacy and the principles of Mahatma are carried forward in our celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are carried

forward through the activities of the United Nations and our invaluable partners in civil society: religious leaders, teachers, artists and so many others. Our task is to ensure that the rights in the Declaration are a living reality, that they are known, understood and enjoyed by everyone, everywhere. It is often those who most need their human rights protected, who also need to be informed that the Declaration exists - and that it exists for them”
Ban Ki-moon stated. ■

FIND OUT MORE:
UDHR - <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>
FRA - www.fra.europa.eu

by Fernando Heller, ETF

ETF EXPERTISE, HIGHLY VALUED IN EGYPT

Policy statement provides basis for TVET reform



Photo: ETF/ Belakhdar

The ETF's work in Egypt has been given high marks by a recent evaluation, which concluded that its work there "has been highly relevant" with respect to the Egyptian Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) reform process, national priorities and EU policies.

The ETF acted as a link between EU policies and national developments in areas of human resources development (HRD), with specific projects such as the National Qualifications Framework and the streamlining of other developments and policies.

"The ETF covered areas that were not addressed by the government or by other donors. ETF assistance coincided with Egypt's own attempts to overhaul its TVET system as well as a number of projects including the establishment of the Industrial Training Council and the Egyptian Technical Colleges Programme. The support of ETF was thus timely", Dr Muriel Dunbar, ETF Director says.

According to Dr Dunbar, the ETF successfully placed its activities in an overall policy perspective that connects education and training to the contribution that employment policy makes to growth and social development.

The main stakeholders from industry, government and technical centres were involved in the design, conceptualisation, and implementation of the activities. This resulted in

ownership and commitment, better results and acceptance of recommendations at policy level.

"Directly as a result of the ETF's efforts, the Ministry of Education will include career guidance from the first grade in its three-year technical schools, which is one of the most notable ETF achievements in the country", Dr Dunbar states.

"The ETF has also demonstrated its capacity to support and facilitate policy development and policy action in Egypt. A good example was when the ETF worked jointly with the World Bank on the production of a draft policy statement for the reform of TVET in Egypt", says Elena Carrero-Pérez, ETF country manager for Egypt.

This policy statement provided the basis for launching a comprehensive strategy for reform of the TVET and employment systems in Egypt that meets the new economic challenges, and hence provides a basis for cooperation between the government and the donor community. The statement was approved by the government in March 2002 and endorsed by the Supreme

Council for Human Resources Development in June 2002.

To support the reform process effectively, the ETF concentrated on cross cutting themes that contribute to the overall reform and links with the EU. "The ETF's activities in Egypt reflect the fact that many of the problems are interrelated and need to be addressed in an integrated way", Carrero-Pérez says.

"Vocational education and training is one element in a mix of policies that contribute to the country's human resources, therefore ETF activities have focused on other features such as career guidance policies and practices", she adds.

The ETF's activities in Egypt have included the establishment of a forum in the form of an HRD Observatory to act as a coordinator for the various agencies working in the education, training and employment fields. ■

by Outi Karkkainen, ETF

// SMES NEED TO RENEW THEIR WORKFORCE AND METHODS //

ETF CONTRIBUTES TO DEVELOPMENT OF APPRENTICESHIP IN MOROCCO

Increasing opportunities offered by apprenticeship



Photo: ETF/A. Selih



The crafts industry is a key industry in Morocco

Apprenticeship is a key issue in Morocco. In one of its major economic areas, agriculture, 23,000 apprentices completed training between 2000 and 2008 and the goal is to increase this figure to 60,000 between 2008 and 2012 and to 180,000 between 2008 and 2020.



"We have 1.5 million small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises that need to renew their workforce and their methods" says Bouchra Chorfi, head of the agricultural schools section and the person responsible for apprenticeship at the Department of Education, Research and Development of the Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture.

The crafts industry is another key industry in Morocco. It needs 60,000 new apprentices by 2010, a considerable challenge given that the current rate of new apprentices is 7,000 a year.

In view of this situation, the Moroccan Secretary of State for Vocational Training asked the European Training Foundation for assistance in the strategic development of apprenticeship schemes in agriculture and crafts.

Bouchra Chorfi, who heads 42 vocational training centres (including nine agricultural schools) participated in the project, which she claims to have brought her feelings of "relief" and "optimism".

"The involvement of numerous experts from abroad helped us to see that our problems were not unique and allowed us to find inspiration in models used in

other countries without losing sight of the particular business set-up in Morocco."

Solutions

The initiative is not entirely new to Morocco as the country received help from German and French apprenticeship experts several years ago in devising solutions for the agricultural and crafts industries.

"We were a little concerned at the beginning, when we were told that an international training agency was to become involved", acknowledges Hakam Kettani, Head of the Social Promotion and Human Development Division of Entraide Nationale, a government institution that has played a pioneering role in introducing apprenticeship schemes to the Moroccan crafts industry.

National assemblies had already been held on how to develop apprenticeship schemes in Morocco, so in Kettani's opinion, there was a risk of redundancy. In hindsight, however, he considers that the ETF's contribution so far has been very positive.

"They bring in a new style and methodology that allows us to share ideas and mould them to our particular circumstances, and that makes things easier," he says.

Among the key strategies identified were awareness-raising among companies of the role of apprenticeship programmes, improving the allocation of finances, and simplifying administrative procedures.

Although he prefers to remain cautious, Hakam Kettani believes that this shift from "individual to collective communication" has increased the chances of approval for the project from higher up, namely from the Secretary of State for Vocational Training and the corresponding minister.

The Moroccan Education Charter of 1999 and the apprenticeship law 12-00 of June 2000 have, in fact, created a favourable climate. The charter mentions "the development and gradual expansion of training in professional settings, in particular through apprenticeship schemes, to increase the employability of graduates and better satisfy the needs and competences of enterprises; the development of on-the-job training to improve workforce skills; and the development of training for socially vulnerable groups to facilitate their incorporation into society and the job market."

German model

Bouchra Chorfi recalls the experience of working with the German organisation GTZ, in the 1990s. The project consisted of implementing the German model of alternating work and training in the field of agriculture, and indeed, since 1999, apprentices undergoing all

levels of training have divided their time equally between training centres and the work place.

Nonetheless, as Chorfi recalls “there were some major difficulties with implementing a foreign model at the beginning”. There was little similarity, for example, between the German agricultural enterprises and the small and medium-sized Moroccan set-ups, which were mostly run by elderly owners with limited education.

According to Chorfi, there is resistance in the Moroccan agricultural industry to the idea of a work contract.

In addition to its role as a facilitator, one of the ETF’s main contributions has, in Chorfi’s opinion, been to bring in international experts with inspiring and partly transferable experience.

She is interested in a Latin American initiative that involves a pre-apprenticeship period of two weeks. She believes that it would provide young apprentices, who in Morocco are sometimes taken in straight from the street, with the opportunity to inspire confidence in others. It might also reduce the drop-out rate (currently 20%) as levels of motivation and commitment would be more evident.

Joint reflection

Bouchra Chorfi is also pleased with the “fruitful” relations with other Moroccan entities so far, such as the Office of Professional Training and Labour Promotion (OFPPT) and other government ministries. Joint reflection has led to promising good practice. The textile-clothing sector, for example, has initiated a pilot on-the-job training project. Chorfi says that they are thinking about



Photo: blue foot

implementing a similar scheme in an agricultural enterprise in Agadir.

The participants in this new apprenticeship project have paved the way for important changes that have been in the air for a long time but that until now had never been defined in such a clear manner: the importance of tackling the problem of apprenticeship from the perspective of supply rather than demand, specifically taking into account all the particular characteristics of the business set-up in Morocco.

Both Hakam Kettani and Bouchra Chorfi are hopeful that the new project will be approved in the not-so-distant future, first by the sector and then by the relevant authorities. The political will is there and time is of the essence.

The crucial question now is whether the means will effectively match the will. The main challenge will be to convince the agricultural and crafts industries to play their part by increasing their awareness of the opportunities and advantages offered by apprenticeship. ■

FIND OUT MORE:
Ministry of Agriculture -
<http://www.madrpm.gov.ma/>
Entraide Nationale -
<http://www.entraide.ma/>
OFPPT -
<http://www.ofppt.org.ma/>

by Armand Chauvel, ICE

//THE ETF SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTED TO VET REFORMS IN THE COUNTRY//

ARMENIA DEMONSTRATES POLICY LEARNING IN ACTION

Armenian VET has come a long way since independence

Levon Mkrtychyan, until recently Armenia's veteran minister of education, supplies the inside story of the country's drive to reform its VET system in an interview with the ETF: Armenia's VET system has come a long way since the dramatic days following the break-up of the Soviet Union.



Photo: ETF/O. Medvedska



Levon Mkrtychyan, former Armenian Minister of Education

Back in the early 1990s, the country's VET system virtually collapsed when the shutdown of many major industries and the halt of economic growth drastically reduced the need for skilled labour. In a short time, VET schools operating in areas seen as no longer necessary were closed down, with initial VET hit particularly hard; by 2005, there were 56 schools providing initial VET, just 40% of the capacity available in 1991*. "The prestige of vocational education institutions declined dramatically in the eyes of the general public, followed by a drastic decrease in the number of applicants," says Dr Mkrtychyan.

Today, the Armenian government sees improving the quality of its vocational education and training as a special priority. It has drafted a strategy for revamping preliminary and middle VET which became law in 2005. Since 2006, investment in the education sector has begun picking up and in 2007 Armenia started implementing a sector-wide

approach to reforming VET, with support from the European Union.

Things are really moving in Armenian VET. "We see the availability of vocational education and training as one of the most important factors for economic growth in this country as well as reducing poverty and inequality," says Dr Mkrtychyan.

National council

Under the new Sector Policy Support Programme 2007-2010, 12 VET schools located around the country are currently being refurbished in order to become regional showcases for both initial and continuing VET. The ministry has set up the National Centre for VET Development as well as a national council to oversee the reforms. Work is also underway on developing new VET standards, revamping curricula, producing new training modules and retraining teachers.

Armenia decided to adopt an all encompassing sector-wide approach to

* USAID Armenia: Strategy for 2004 – 2008, <http://armenia.usaid.gov/upload/File/Armenia%20Strategy.doc>

In the early 1990 Armenia's VET system virtually collapsed

VET reform in 2006. Its previous experience of working with EU institutions such as the ETF was instrumental in taking this decision. Armenian involvement in previous VET reform projects, such as Tacis assistance from 2003 onwards, helped build the Ministry of Education and Science's capacity for designing and managing VET reform. "This has allowed the government to assume more responsibility and ownership for promoting appropriate reforms in the country," says Dr Mkrtychyan. In spite of increasing home-grown expertise, he sees a continuing role for external support in Armenia. "Donor investments are still required as budgetary resources are scarce and EU general budget support is the most efficient mechanism for tangibly promoting more targeted VET reforms," says Dr Mkrtychyan.

He first came across the ETF in 1998 when the Armenian national observatory was established. "This significantly contributed to VET reforms in the country," says Dr Mkrtychyan, "so far, all of the reforms in the VET sector have somehow been linked to ETF projects or projects supported by the ETF. The expertise it provides is invaluable for our efforts to become more efficient and targeted."

Actively involved

The ETF continues to be actively involved in Armenia. Its policy learning project is stimulating the debate on how social partners can contribute to VET reform and this year participants are focusing on issues of governance. They hope to establish a tripartite council which will act as the policy making body for the whole VET sector. A second project is helping the Armenians develop a national qualification framework as well as fuelling the debate on key issues for VET reform.



Photo: deannaford

In 2008, the ETF is conducting a review of employment in Armenia which will feed into the activities of the European Commission's DG Employment and DG External Relations. As for the future, Dr Mkrtychyan hopes that the ETF will continue to provide its support, particularly in providing consulting and other expertise, access to other countries' experience of VET reform and the opportunity to get involved in the Copenhagen Process.

Levon Mkrtychyan is pleased with the progress made so far but has no

illusions about how much still remains to be done. His ambitious list of priorities for Armenia's recovering VET system include improving overall quality, boosting the provision of continuing education, encouraging the social partners to get more involved, building better organisational structures for the system and rationalising the use of material and financial resources. ■

by Ard Jonsgma, ICE

Levon Mkrtychyan - a long-serving minister of education

Levon Mkrtychyan can certainly demonstrate plenty of relevant job experience; his recent term of office was his third stint as Armenian Minister of Education since he first took on the job in 1998. On returning to the post in 2006, Dr Mkrtychyan oversaw a period of increasing interest and investment in Armenian VET. He believes that the lack of suitably qualified junior and middle-ranking technicians, due to factors such as immigration, outdated curricula or the changing structure of the Armenian labour market, has helped push the topic of VET reform to the top of the political agenda.

In his previous incarnations, Dr Mkrtychyan has acted as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and advisor to the Armenian Prime Minister. He began his career in higher education, spending twelve years lecturing in history at Yerevan State University.

//THE CZECH REPUBLIC HAS ADAPTED BEST PRACTICE FROM OTHER EU COUNTRIES//

HOW TO INVOLVE SOCIAL PARTNERS IN YOUR TVET SYSTEM

EU and Moroccan study visit to the Czech Republic

Bringing social partners onboard is one of the best ways of making sure VET students will find work when they graduate.



Photo: ETF/A. Ramella

Educationalists from seven EU countries plus Morocco were able to see how the Czech Republic goes about engaging its social partners on a study visit to Prague, organised by Cedefop on 10 – 13 June. “We were impressed by the way the Czech Republic has adapted best practice from other European countries to create a framework for the involvement of social partners,” said Abdelaziz Jaouani, human capital development specialist, currently on secondment at the ETF.

The Czechs have several initiatives and organisations involving social partners. The Integrated System of Typical Positions, developed over the last ten years, is a modern replacement for a catalogue of occupations, giving structured information on different jobs, the work environment and qualifications and personal requirements. This is supplemented by the National Qualifications Framework, currently under development. A total of 25 field groups involving almost 300 external experts act as a way of communicating



Abdelaziz Jaouani, ex-director of the MEDA II support unit in Morocco, currently on secondment to the ETF

Involving employers in the design of education helps ensure an efficient match between supply and demand on the labour market. It is particularly useful for the early identification of the need for new skills and competences.

between designers of VET programmes and relevant partners.

Sector councils, an idea inspired by the British model, provide a voice for a particular branch to speak to schools and the authorities on issues of human resources development. Bringing together representatives of employers, professional associations and trade unions as well as educators and other experts, this idea has gained acceptance fast and is starting to have a real influence on the development of qualifications and occupations. Finally, the curricula reform currently underway has launched a new concept, Framework Education Programmes,

which form the basis for wider School Education Programmes. These changes allow social partners and universities, labour offices and local government to have a say in the content of education both nationally and regionally.

A busy four days produced plenty of ideas on how to motivate and involve social partners, a subject which many countries both within and outside the EU often find problematic. But Abdelaziz Jaouani warned that giving employers too strong a voice in the content of VET can be counterproductive. "What employers want may not be what the students want," he said, as employers may push

for a curriculum which is too trade-orientated at the expense of more transferable skills such as those relating to personal development. ■

by **Abdelaziz Jaouani, ETF**

Abdelaziz Jaouani (front centre) with EU and Moroccan study visit participants



THE ETF IN THE BALKANS: HELPING BOOST HUMAN CAPITAL ON THE ROAD TO THE EU

ETF and Italian government conference in Rome discusses importance of education reform in the Balkans

The importance of strengthening human capital in the Balkans to enable their societies to take on future challenges with a view to joining the EU was underlined in October, in Rome by representatives of the Italian government and the Balkan countries in the conference *Human capital to develop the Balkans*, sponsored by the European Training Foundation.



The concept of learning refers not only to what but also to how we learn

The undersecretary of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alfredo Mantica, opened the conference on the topics of training and education at the Farnesina, the seat of the Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry in the Italian capital.

“The contents of the conference remind me of some of Italy’s key issues; that at community level we insist on the need to realise a series of initiatives, from cooperation in the training and education sector to investment building to people to people contacts”, revealed Mantica, inaugurating the meeting together with the Director of the ETF, Dr Muriel Dunbar, the Minister of Public Education of Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj and the deputy Minister of Education of Albania, Ms Adriana Gjonaj.

Key competences

“The modern economy and global competition require us to be increasingly able to learn key competences, for example to be flexible, entrepreneurial and prepared for change. The concept of learning refers not only to what we need but also how we learn, what learning can be used for and how we can develop our learning also in new directions of which we may not be aware”, Dr Dunbar stated.

“The main reason education is a priority in Kosovo is that today we are living in a service based economy and in our society

It is important to have educated and trained people in today's service economy

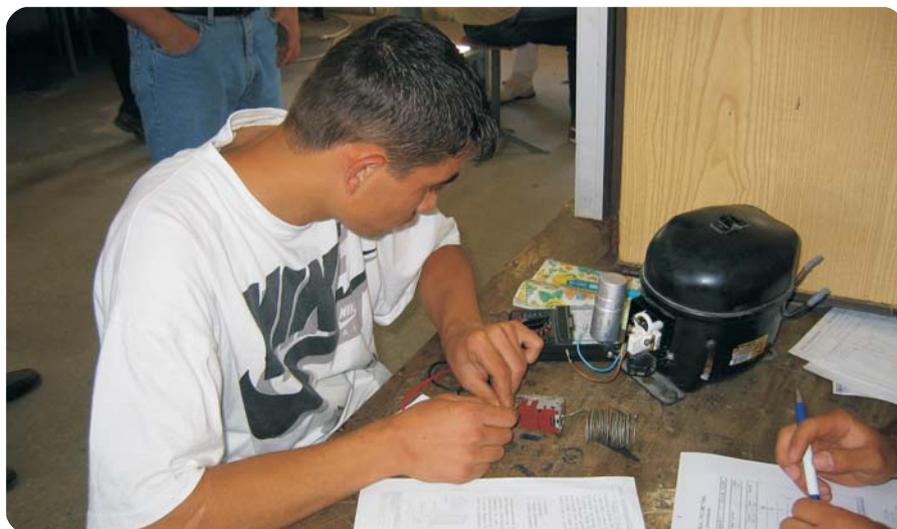


Photo: ETF/A. Martin

it is very crucial to have educated and trained people who can use knowledge and skills for their daily work and can be ready to change profession and job”, said Mr Hoxhaj, who praised the work the ETF is doing in his country.

“The ETF has been supporting us a lot in recent years. Thanks to its support we have been able to introduce many policies and reforms in the education sector. We are looking forward to receiving more support from the agency in the field of entrepreneurship in order to link education with the labour market” he stated.

Integration policy

Ms Gjonaj also thanked the ETF for its “particular support to the development of the vocational education and training sector in the Balkans, as part of the policy for integration with the EU in the very near future”.

“Albania is deeply involved in reform processes that are in full coherence with the European and regional processes. Education in general and VET in particular are considered by the

Albanian Government as high priority areas and are the focus of important reform initiatives”, she added.

Acknowledging that the ETF has been functional since 1995, Mr Mantica highlighted the Foreign Ministry’s collaboration with the ETF, which has allowed for the realisation of projects, and which has seen a special trust fund provide some €2.5 million over the last five years.

On the other hand, Dr Dunbar stressed that the strengthening of human capital – by means of high quality education and training – in the Balkans countries “is a must, given the difficulties many of their economies are still going through”.

Data from the ETF shows that, in terms of buying power, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in the Balkan countries is still among the lowest in Europe, fluctuating between €3,652 in Albania and €8,327 in Croatia. ■

by Fernando Heller, ETF

ETF expert Vincent McBride

Photo: ETF/A. Ramella



THE EQF: A TOOL FOR GREATER TRANSPARENCY IN EDUCATION

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe. It is a common instrument which links national qualifications systems together, promoting workers' and learners' mobility between countries and thus facilitating lifelong learning. ETF expert Vincent McBride tells Live & Learn more in this interview, in view of the upcoming EQF conference to be held next January in France.

What is the scope of the EQF?

The EQF is part of the "Lisbon strategy", one of the key elements of which is to strengthen the internal market, which means greater integration of different institutions, similar to the way in which member states work. By this means you create more transparency, more mobility and a better allocation of resources. One of these resources is, of course, human capital – individuals - and the way we recognize individuals is through the qualifications systems.

Why is transparency so important for the EQF?

Transparency is particularly important for cross-border recognition and for facilitating the ongoing learning of individuals throughout their working lives. In a longer term, the idea is to promote mobility and to get recognition of their skills. The EQF does that by finding a common reference point for everybody's qualifications.

Is this about harmonizing the education systems in the EU?

No, this is not about harmonizing the European market. The EQF creates greater transparency to make it easier to understand what people have and what they can do. I think people feel that transparency is the way to go at the European level.

Is Europass, the European CV, an example of this?

Europass is a way to make people's skills and knowledge visible and that is in effect what the EQF does. The EQF is a common reference and is supported by common principles for identifying knowledge and skills.

What is the direct benefit of the NQF for the citizens of the EU?

The NQF is intended to assist member states and individuals in the area of mobility to make it easier for people to move between different systems and

countries and have their skills recognised. This is achieved mainly through having an improved understanding of what people's skills and qualifications are.

How can the ETF contribute to the EQF?

We are involved in two main ways: we provide, and have provided, technical support for the Commission on this issue. We are a centre of expertise which knows a great deal about education, training and qualification frameworks. I think is a natural role for the ETF to provide support to the EC – and Cedefop on the further elaboration and implementation of the EQF because the EQF also has an external dimension that affects not only member states but also countries close to the EU and perhaps more globally as well. ■

by Fernando Heller, ETF

PUBLICATIONS



Quality and quality assurance in technical and vocational education and training

This report provides a general overview of the political objectives of VET reform. It describes the main achievements in the EU and analyses the current state of reform in the MEDA countries. Its main focus is on quality and quality assurance in TVET examining common challenges and potential synergies for common actions in TVET between MEDA countries themselves and with the EU. It will be available in English from November with a French version planned for 2009.

EVENTS

November 10-14 2008, Sofia, Bulgaria

Study visit to Bulgaria from the Albanian Ministry of Education, National Employment Service and NAVETA on accreditation and assessment.

November 27-28 2008, Torino, Italy

Technical meeting of NQF national coordinators and policy makers from participating CIS countries.

MEDA-ETE Dissemination Days

October 29 – Amman, Jordan

November 24 – Cairo, Egypt

November 30 – Algiers, Algeria

December 1 – Damascus, Syria

December 4 – Rabat, Morocco

December 9 – Israel (location to be confirmed)

December 16 – Istanbul, Turkey



NEW FACES



Alberto Cutillo, ETF Governing Board member for Italy



Frans Borg, ETF Governing Board member for Malta



Per Byström, ETF Governing Board member for Sweden

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