



SHAPING RESPONSIVE TVET SYSTEMS IN THE MEDA REGION: THE IMPACT OF A REGIONAL APPROACH

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EDITORIAL

The EU's Education and Training for Employment (ETE) initiative is based on a participative bottom-up approach involving delegates from Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (MEDA) countries and representatives of EU member states. The intervention, content and structure of the project are the result of this participatory approach. Supporting regional dialogue on technical vocational education and training (TVET) and its relationship to the labour market is a key element in the MEDA-ETE approach to building human resource development (HRD) expertise in beneficiary countries.

The architecture of the MEDA-ETE project is such that it has developed into an exchange and debate platform for the issues and challenges facing education, training and employment in the Mediterranean region. The MEDA-ETE project team has supported this dialogue through the design and implementation of relevant activities leading to concrete knowledge-sharing processes. Group meetings at workshops and in study visits have enabled participants to exchange information about their own national situations and approaches within the framework of the project's components and themes. Each country has contributed from the perspective of its own specific experience, thereby creating a rich interaction among peers and a strong desire to continue the dialogue, including through virtual communities, created in the framework of the project plan for 2006 on the basis of the conclusions of the first annual forum.

Regional cooperation is a voluntary process and its effectiveness depends on recognition of its important contribution to supporting national policies and initiatives. Anchoring MEDA-ETE activities in national agendas has been demonstrated to be an appropriate and effective mechanism for blending and connecting development at the national and regional levels.

The project combines stakeholder needs and available resources, while opening up a wide range of means for further promoting regional cooperation. Regional cooperation must be able to rely on sustainable and effective commitment by partner countries in implementing concrete actions.

Equally important is the impact of regional perspectives on national policy-making processes, which is also a major project issue. However, the number of countries involved makes it difficult to monitor the progress of each and to support all countries equally. Furthermore, not all countries are ready to deal with all project issues, mostly because there are more urgent matters on the political agenda. The MEDA-ETE project team has therefore adopted a selective approach, which focuses on: (i) involving all countries in regional events; (ii) assessing the readiness of each country to embark on more substantial activities at the national level; and (iii) implementing more focused actions in the more committed countries (participation in national working group meetings, field visits by experts, meetings with policy-makers and social partners, etc.).

The main purpose of this publication is to describe the key policy lessons learned from MEDA-ETE activities and deliverables. The sets of themes and topics covered by the MEDA-ETE's Components 1 to 4¹ are in line with the regional and national challenges. In 2006, the project entered in its first full year of implementation. A range of topics have been studied

¹ As an expression of the shared interest of MEDA partners, the ETE regional project encompasses four components: Component n°1: Yearly Euromed Forum on TVET for employment; Component n°2: Euromed Network on TVET for employment; Component n°3: Support for young unemployed people in the areas of self-employment and the creation of micro-enterprises; Component n°4: Development of eLearning for training in Information and communication technologies (ICT) and TVET. For further information see: <http://www.meda-ete.net>

and discussed at the regional and national levels; these include the observatory function and its links to decision-making, career guidance, national qualifications frameworks and qualification recognition, entrepreneurship and e-learning for teachers and trainers. The first lesson to be learned from the initial year of implementation is that the impact of this set of themes in the partner countries has been uneven. In some cases, these have formally affirmed their various interests in the project actions and approaches. Nevertheless, the insights gained - following several regional and national events, reviews, stocktaking and comparative analyses - has helped strengthen the existing knowledge base of policies and practices in the MEDA region, making it possible to enrich the discussion of policy options and develop a sharper policy focus.

The MEDA-ETE project annual forum provides a perfect opportunity to examine past developments in depth, and more importantly, to discuss future actions. By bringing all the constituent networks together, the forum provides a framework for cooperation at the highest level and an opportunity for country representatives to discuss synergies and complementarities across project components at the national level.

This publication is thus a major input to the work of the different networks and also to the national working sessions. Although the MEDA-ETE project focuses on regional developments and advocates a systemic approach to TVET and labour market policies, this publication largely emphasises the 2006 project topics.

Clearly the intention is also to make further progress in understanding the implications of all these issues for improving project operation and achieving the project's objectives as a regional learning platform.

Chapter 1 presents new vision on observatory functions at the national and regional levels. More particularly it examines the link between the regional observatory function and national developments in this field. It looks at options for improving the regional observatory, taking into account national processes and the possible impact of the regional observatory at the national level.

Chapter 2 takes up policies for promoting career guidance. The major factors influencing career guidance in the MEDA region are examined, and a clear picture is provided of systems and practices. This section finishes with a set of recommendations for improving the relevance and quality of career guidance policies.

Chapter 3 examines policies and practices regarding national qualification frameworks, the recognition of acquired skills and the process for making these transparent and transportable across sectors and countries. Schemes for the validation of non-formal and informal learning are being introduced in a growing numbers of EU member states, although few MEDA countries as yet are undertaking pilot actions in this field. The development of coherent qualifications systems, however, provides a frame in this respect.

Chapter 4 describes projects and programmes for promoting entrepreneurship in MEDA countries. A wide range of institutions—including NGOs, public employment services, TVET providers and private providers—deliver services to would-be entrepreneurs. By looking at what works and what fails, for whom and in what circumstances, the stocktaking undertaken by the MEDA-ETE project contributes to more efficient and effective donor support.

Chapter 5 argues that the development of e-learning schemes and initiatives should focus on enhancing the quality and relevance of TVET. In this perspective teacher and trainer training institutions have a double role to play: their experience and professional expertise

must be utilised in courses development, and their competence and capacities must be secured to implement e-learning schemes. A number of strategic areas are developed and discussed.

Finally, **Chapter 6** presents conclusions in terms of the experience gained and the road ahead.

1. LINKS BETWEEN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL OBSERVATORIES

Jens Johansen and Oriol Homs

1.1 Introduction

The idea of a regional observatory focusing on labour market and education and training predates the MEDA-ETE project and its emphasis on education and training for employment. A regional observatory answers the call for a thorough examination of labour market, education and training trends that have formed part of the Barcelona process. Labour markets and education and training systems must be monitored closely in each of the MEDA countries, as these sectors are vital for the future development of their economies. This is partly a question of enhancing the skills of the population so as to meet the demands arising as a consequence of the globalisation process, with the need to be competitive forcing all countries to re-evaluate their systems on an ongoing basis; it is also a question of a need for labour markets to create sufficient new jobs to keep up with the increase in worker numbers brought about by the demographic pressures prevalent in all of the MEDA countries.

1.2 Typology of observatory functions

In the European experience there have historically been three generations of the observatory function²:

- The informal generation. No single institution is in charge of the observatory function. Existing administrative data on training and employment are not reliable. Some studies are carried out on an ad hoc basis.
- The institutional generation. One or several institutions or bodies, within or outside a given ministry, are in charge of monitoring labour market and/or training trends in a systematic way. Their field of observation is restricted. There is little or no coordination among the main actors in the employment-training system, or with other bodies producing information. The information produced by such bodies has a restricted circulation. The format used does not facilitate proper exploitation by the main stakeholders.
- The network generation. There is permanent and institutionalised network coordination among institutions and bodies producing information and the key actors in the training-employment system. Products are widely available and actors use them for decision-making.

Any kind of observatory is undoubtedly important, but it is the network generation of the observatory function which best fulfils the needs of countries. An observatory function that produces information which is not used cannot be justified in the long run. Information must be used for the information to be useful, so to speak. It is unfortunately not always the case that essential and accurate information is used by actors with the greatest possible impact. Leaving aside the importance researchers attach to reliable information, if the efforts required to collect the information are to be worth it, policy makers must use the information.

A regional observatory must be seen as part of the international and regional debate as well as of the national debate, and must be linked to national observatories. This linkage can take

² *Homs, O.*, Structures and mechanisms for information and needs forecast on training, qualification, and employment (observatory function), *European Training Foundation, Turin, 2001*

many forms and we will return to them later once we have discussed what constitutes a national observatory.

National observatories can take a variety of forms, which may not always go by the name of observatory and which are not all mutually exclusive:

- ETF-supported observatory functions
- Tripartite observatories (e.g. Portugal) where national agencies are joined by employer and employee representatives
- National observatories set up to monitor employment, education and training matters. Examples of this could be an observatory set up to monitor trends in poverty and employment, including in the informal economy.

1.3 Links between the observatory function and decision-making processes

Regardless of the name used, an observatory function is generally understood to be a network that systematically produces and disseminates information that is relevant to decision-making by the principal actors in a field - in this case education, training and employment. The main characteristics of an observatory are that it is a network of all the involved stakeholders; there is some formalisation that gives it permanence and continuity; it links employment issues with education and training; it is oriented towards decision-making; it ensures transparency of information and accuracy and consistency of data treatment; and finally, there is analysis of and reflection on the information gathered.

Among the difficulties faced by an observatory function for the MEDA region are how to institutionalise the observatory function nationally, how to produce information in the absence of raw data, how to link the employment approach with the education and training approach, how to break the glass ceiling on the use of indicators and information in several countries, how to deal with the lack of data for the substantial informal sectors in many countries, and finally, how to overcome the problems of non-comparable data from different countries.

It is essential for the institution to link in to a national process in which indicators and data are being used as the basis for decision-making in a number of ways. A preliminary analysis is necessary to engage policy makers and the public at large, i.e., publishing a description of results is not sufficient. In-depth analyses with good results can be left to academic researchers, but a first attempt at explaining what the data shows must be entertained. Drawing recommendations from the analysis is another way for an observatory to link into the national process.

How it does this is the unique challenge facing each observatory, which must be solved based on the national context. Solutions from any given country may not transfer smoothly to another country. What is clear is that a national observatory must interact with the national processes to fulfil its role and, moreover, that the regional observatory must build on the national observatories and their national links.

1.4 Interactions between national and regional observatory functions

One of the main functions of a regional observatory is to be of use to national decision makers. It is therefore essential for the regional observatory to be guided by national

interests and to feed information back to the national processes. In this way, the regional and national observatories will interact and complement each other for their mutual benefit.

Research areas for a national observatory are ideally identified by assessing the areas of primary national interest and determining what data and which indicators will provide the information needed. The identification of areas of national interest necessitates a process whereby national interests can be formulated clearly in such a manner that indicators may be developed.

If national interests are clearly articulated, possible areas of interest for the regional observatory become clearer. Some compromises are to be expected, as it cannot be assumed that all national interests overlap. The fundamental challenge is to formulate regional needs in such a manner that these needs and the corresponding regional indicators and data may be translated back into a national context.

The links between national observatories and the regional observatory can take different forms. Representatives from the national observatories may participate in the regional observatory. There may be a formalised process for Euro-Med network members to provide feedback to the national processes. In the case of Syria, for example, a national observatory unit has been set up with the support of the ETF, consisting of representatives from the ministries of education and labour as well as from the national statistical office; these stakeholders are also the actors invited to send representatives to the observatory function network. In the case of Syria, therefore, the individuals overlap, providing a rare example of a national observatory being fully reflected in the regional observatory.

1.5 Conclusion

The relationship between national observatories and the regional observatory is, at heart, a symbiotic one. For the regional observatory to advance it must build on and tap into the national processes. And the lessons learned by the regional observatory must be fed back into the national observatories for these to develop national policy recommendations. National policy interests, in turn, will determine the focus of the national and, thus, the regional observatory. Each of these observatory levels can exist without the other, but the efficiency and relevance of each level will be heightened when the other level functions well.

2

CAREER GUIDANCE IN THE MEDA REGION

Helmut Zelloth, Tony Watts and Ronald Sultana

“The progressive adoption of lifelong learning strategies, and an emphasis upon active labour market policies, pose new challenges for career guidance. It needs to shift from being largely available to selected groups, at particular points in life, to being much more widely available throughout the lifespan. And services need to shift from an approach largely focused upon helping people to make immediate decisions through face-to-face interviews, to a broader approach that also encompasses the development of career self-management skills such as the ability to make and implement effective career decisions”.

Career Guidance and Public Policy – Bridging the Gap (OECD, 2004)

2.1 Background

In 2006, a specific component of the MEDA-ETE project was designed to support career guidance policies in the MEDA region. This project has generated a number of outputs, such as country- and cross-country analyses of career guidance policies, as well as the establishment of a regional network of policy makers in career guidance in the Mediterranean region, which is supported by a virtual community/discussion forum on guidance.

The analysis built upon previous experience with career guidance reviews carried out by the OECD, the World Bank, and the European Commission (DG Education and Culture, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), and the ETF). It further developed a research methodology by paying particular attention to the socioeconomic and cultural context of the MEDA region and the impact that this context had on the extent and nature of career guidance services. The reviews were based on the assumption that career guidance is not only important for individuals, but can also contribute to a number of public policy goals related to education and training, to the labour market and to social cohesion and equity. They took into account the paradigm shift in career guidance that is emerging in the EU and OECD countries - from ‘choosing a career’ to ‘constructing a career’, from ‘psychological testing’ to ‘tasting the world of work’, and from ‘external expert support’ to ‘career self-management skills’.

The underlying definition of career guidance used in the analyses was the same as that adopted by the EU Ministers of Education in 2004 (EU Council Resolution on Lifelong Guidance): “services to assist individuals and groups of any age, at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers”.

2.2 Contextual specificities of the MEDA region³

A heterogeneous region with a weak regional identity

The MEDA region is very heterogeneous, with great differences from one country to another in terms of economic structures, labour markets and educational indicators. Distinct colonial and post-colonial experiences have left different traditions and models that affect many

³ Sultana, R.G. & Watts, A.G., *Career Guidance in the MEDA Region*, European Training Foundation Turin, 2007. Most of the information in this article is drawn from this cross-country report.

aspects of state administration and institutions, including education and career guidance provision.

The MEDA region is also an area in which, in recent years, there has been considerable political turbulence and conflict, resulting in a slow-down in reform processes. Most countries have been more preoccupied with pressing security and economic issues than with building networks or a regional identity with other Arab states in the region.

As regards the systems for career information, guidance and counselling, it is clear that a number of sociocultural and socioeconomic factors, coupled with specific historical, political and educational features, have both constrained the development of career guidance services and have influenced the forms of existing services. Many of these contextual factors need to be analysed further and taken into account in any future development of services, to ensure that these are embedded in their context and not merely policies borrowed or imported from elsewhere.

In general, the resources available for career guidance (both public and private) are much more limited than in EU or OECD countries. On the other hand, there is a comparatively high inflow of funds from international and bilateral donors, which—if well targeted and distributed—could have a beneficial impact on system development. This is already evident, for example, in Jordan, where the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has been influential⁴.

Traditions and language

While Egypt and Jordan tend to have been influenced by Anglo-Saxon approaches to guidance, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and, to a lesser extent, Lebanon have been more influenced by French models (including French-Canadian ones). Israel has its own specificities and differs markedly from the other MEDA countries in terms of economic development, female labour-force activity rate, and the participation rate in education.

While Turkey shares some of the realities of the Arab states in the region, it is a secular state, and has, furthermore, been more subject to EU policy influence due to its status as an EU candidate country.

Significantly, perhaps, there is no single Arabic word that comprehensively reflects the word 'career' or the term 'career guidance'⁵. A number of possibilities have been suggested within the project. This indicates that the concept still has some fluidity within the region.

A large informal economy...

Most Mediterranean countries can be defined as economies in transition and the extent of the informal sector is much more pronounced than in OECD or EU countries. International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates suggest that informal employment accounts for 35%-50% of non-agricultural employment in most MEDA countries⁶. This sector is not highly regulated or formalised, and has few if any job descriptions, qualification requirements, or occupational structures. Many of the jobs are low-skilled or even unskilled, and such work tends not to feature in formal career information resources or career education programmes, even though for many students it represents their most realistic and likely future.

⁴ Mryyan, N., *Career Guidance in the MEDA Region: Country Report on Jordan*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2006

⁵ Badawi, A., *Career Guidance in the MEDA Region: Country Report on Egypt*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2006

⁶ Bardak, U., *An Overview of Educational Systems and Labour Markets in the Mediterranean Region*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2005

...and a labour market with other distinctive features

Employment in the public sector - both in administration and in state-owned enterprises - is very attractive for non-wage reasons such as job security and social protection. ILO statistics (2003) suggest that the share of public-sector employment ranges from more than 30% in Tunisia and Egypt, to close to 60% in Algeria. The preference for jobs in the public sector limits the relevance of career guidance for the citizen (although it potentially also makes aspects of career guidance services appealing for policy makers intent on encouraging entrepreneurship and employment in the private sector). Limited access of women to wage employment (only about 25% of the labour force are women) is another important feature of the region.

Widespread rural poverty

Another important economic factor is rural poverty. The economies of several countries in the MEDA region - such as Morocco, Syria and Turkey - are marked by a heavy reliance on agriculture, with sizeable percentages of the population living in rural regions. This raises important questions regarding the value of career guidance to poor, rural communities, where access to education is still limited, where the range of occupations available to choose from may be effectively restricted to agriculture and related jobs transmitted largely through families, and where work is focused on economic survival rather than on self-development and identity construction.

The predominant directive guidance role played by the family...

In Mediterranean countries, the family plays a very important part in the orientation of young people towards specific occupations, and also represents the main form of economic and social support. Whom you know is much more important than what you are able to do. Accordingly, many young people do not show much interest in enhancing their ability to choose, because they believe that their career chances depend largely or entirely upon their family connections. It is not uncommon, for instance, for Palestinian parents to do their utmost to ensure that at least one of their children - normally the oldest one - becomes a doctor or an engineer. Such a dream is shared by many other parents in the MEDA region, who consider these two professions as representing the royal road to well-being⁷.

The strength of the impact of parental influence on young people is probably related to the socioeconomic status of the family, to gender dynamics within the family, and to cultural differences between more or less conservative families. There therefore remains scope for career guidance, but there may be strong pressures - and a strong rationale - for involving the family actively in any career guidance interventions.

...and sometimes by the state

It is not only the family that is likely to have a directive approach to career orientation. The state too, in many parts of the MEDA region, has tended to exert a strong policy influence by directing young people into tracks predefined by centralist economic planning and labour market requirements. In Tunisia⁸, guidance has tended to be used as a planning tool, with

⁷ Djenkal, A., *Career Guidance in the MEDA Region: Country Report on Algeria*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2006

⁸ Sedrine, S. B., *Career Guidance in the MEDA Region: Country Report on Tunisia*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2006

official circulars setting quotas for each pathway that schools are obliged to respect. The Tunisian report on career guidance draws a distinction between previous models of guidance in the country - which are referred to as guidance by diktat (orientation contrainte) - and more recent models marked by dialogue.

In contexts marked by directiveness, it is likely that the concept of choice - as well as the scope for formal career guidance services - will be restricted. So too will be the expectations of, and the styles and methods adopted by, such formal career guidance services as may already exist. In countries with a strong respect for authority, it is likely that individuals will expect any such guidance to be directive in nature.

Guidance ... by fatalism?

Linked to family socialisation and its impact on career orientation is a deeply embedded life orientation based on fatalism, which has been identified in many Mediterranean societies. This important implications for career guidance, inasmuch as this is predicated on the notion that individuals are largely in control of their own destinies, and that the future is subject to rational planning rather than to forces over which they have little, if any, control.

Gender imbalance

In Arab states, occupations are highly gender typified, and it is often considered unseemly and even shameful for a person to transgress gender roles when exploring future careers, or for women to work in a predominantly male environment. The dilemma for career guidance is that, given the importance of the family, practitioners have to involve parents in the process of choice, but in doing so they may simultaneously have to combat parental prejudices, which limit aspirations - most particularly for girls, whose futures tend to be narrowly tied to the roles of wife, mother, and carer of elderly relatives, including in-laws.

Educational factors

Finally, the education system in many Mediterranean countries is characterised by a number of difficulties that have a direct or indirect impact on career guidance. It is often the case, for instance, that education systems track students at an early age into curricular pathways which determine a narrow range of occupational futures. Guidance has little relevance when the possibility of moving between tracks is severely restricted. In addition, the status hierarchy in terms of post-school opportunities tends to be very rigid, with those obtaining top marks taking up medicine, science and engineering degree courses, the next group entering the humanities, and the rump going into technical and vocational education. It is this hierarchy that largely determines futures, rather than individual choice or aspirations.

2.3 Provision of career guidance services

Career guidance services in the MEDA region have a long history, with some initiatives having survived or evolved, and others having been discontinued or replaced. The history of services in several Mediterranean countries has been an uneven one, with some initiatives growing organically, and others proceeding on a stop-start basis as situations and policy priorities have fluctuated.

Guidance services in schools

In most of the MEDA countries, such formal career guidance as is provided in schools is carried out by guidance counsellors (under various titles). Their role is usually a broad-

ranging one, often encompassing personal and social as well as educational guidance; the attention given to longer-term career issues tends to be limited or (in some cases) non-existent. A few countries have introduced career education into the curriculum. In general, career guidance programmes tend to be stronger in private schools than in government schools, partly because they tend to have smaller class sizes and more resources at their disposal (particularly the case in Lebanon). Within vocational schools, career guidance provision tends to be limited to the informal help which may or may not be offered by individual teachers/trainers.

Guidance services in the labour market

Public employment services are poorly developed in many MEDA countries, partly because only a few have unemployment insurance schemes, and partly because the services have limited funding and limited credibility with employers. Not surprisingly, therefore, their career guidance functions tend also to be restricted. The main exceptions are as follows: Israel, where the National Employment Service includes a National Career Counselling Centre (though its future is currently in question), with 12 occupational information centres across the country; Turkey, where 18 of the 81 employment offices offer employment and career counselling services (including testing) and a further 43 have career information centres; and Tunisia, where each public employment office has a team offering career guidance.

In a number of Mediterranean countries, some NGOs have been active in the provision of career guidance services. In countries like Egypt and Lebanon, for example, a range of faith-based and other organisations have offered services - including career guidance components - chiefly to young people and disadvantaged groups.

Career information is still rather restricted

In some MEDA countries, the career information available is very restricted. In Egypt, for example, information is available on post-compulsory education and training, but information on occupations is currently limited to a few information sheets. In Lebanon, the only regular career publication has been the annual universities guide produced by the Ministry of Education. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGs), the information available is limited to a few leaflets and brochures.

More strongly developed career information systems exist in Israel, and also in Turkey, where an Occupational Standards Commission (MEDAK) has been established to ensure the reliability, validity and standardisation of career information (over 600 career information files have been approved and are openly available on the internet). Progress is also being made in other countries, including Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia; in some countries (including Egypt, Jordan and Syria), work on developing improved labour market information is under way, often with donor support. Computerised and web-based services are relatively well developed in Israel, Jordan and Turkey.

Human resources

In many MEDA countries, little formal training exists in the field of career guidance. Accordingly, services are offered by individuals trained in cognate fields (e.g., psychology or personal counselling), trained in career guidance abroad, trained on short courses lasting a few days to a couple of weeks (often unaccredited), or often without any formal relevant

training at all. Diplomas and degrees in counselling are offered by universities in a number of MEDA countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Turkey⁹.

Policy and legal framework

Most Mediterranean countries currently have weak policy frameworks for career guidance. Some have relevant legislation, though sometimes it is purely definitional (e.g., Egypt) or general in nature (e.g., Jordan and Syria). Even when more specific, it is sometimes ignored in practice (e.g., Israel, Lebanon and Tunisia).

In Lebanon, the Ministry of Education has recently developed a national education strategy in which career guidance is a priority¹⁰. Similarly, in Tunisia, the education reform of 2002 highlighted the role of guidance, and the 11th National Development Plan promoted the value of guidance in the attainment of the overall objective of restructuring the economy and developing a knowledge-based society. A number of other countries (Jordan, Lebanon and WBGs) have established career guidance divisions within a relevant ministry, which provide a focal point for policy support.

2.4 Conclusion

The perspective of lifelong guidance is very new for the MEDA countries and far from being feasible in the short term. Countries are preoccupied and challenged by other problems and priorities, and awareness among policy makers that career guidance can play an important role for future human resource development is at a modest level and growing but slowly.

Reforms to education and training systems are under way in many MEDA countries and are seen as playing a fundamental role in economic and social development¹¹. Such reforms - including labour market reforms - need to take into account current and future demands for career guidance provision that is adapted to the socio-cultural and socioeconomic features of the particular country and, to a lesser extent, its wider region. An integrated approach is needed, which designs career guidance systems as part of a wider reform agenda in education, training and the labour market¹².

Ongoing reforms have included stronger but also more flexible articulation, both within the education and training system and in relation to the labour market. This in turn opens up more scope for individuals to make choices within the system. Arguably, however, it is not enough to simply increase the scope for choices; if reforms are to be effective, it is also important to take steps to ensure that support is available to help individuals make choices in a well-informed and well-thought-through way. This is where career guidance can play an important role.

In addition to its links to education and training reforms, career guidance can also be linked to the restructuring of the labour market. This includes encouraging stronger market mechanisms by reducing the size of the public sector. Markets work most effectively when the actors within them have access to good information. Career guidance can accordingly be

⁹ Akkök, F., *Career Guidance in the MEDA Region: Country Report on Turkey*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2006

¹⁰ Abdul Ghani, A.M., *Career Guidance in the MEDA Region: Country Report on Lebanon*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2006

¹¹ Chakroun, B., *Innovative practices in teacher and trainer training in the Mediterranean region*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2003

¹² Zelloth, H., *Conclusions of the Joint Workshop of Regional Network and Local Experts on Career Guidance in the MEDA Region*, Minutes of an event held on 10-11 July, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2006.

seen as a means of making labour markets work. In some countries there is also a realisation that elements of career guidance can be helpful in encouraging entrepreneurship.

2.5 Recommendations

Seven broad themes emerge from the country and cross-country analysis of the MEDA region:

1. Improving the comprehensiveness and quality of career information.
2. Establishing career education more strongly within the school curriculum.
3. Extending career guidance services more broadly.
4. Ensuring that such provision is strongly grounded in the socio-cultural context.
5. Developing the competences of career guidance staff.
6. Identifying a focal point for strategic leadership across the career guidance field.
7. Enhancing cross-sectoral and regional cooperation.

In all countries there is a need for enhanced cross-sectoral collaboration (e.g., closer cooperation between the ministries and departments responsible for education and for the labour market), as well as for intra-sectoral collaboration (e.g., between departments within the same ministry, or between different ministries who share responsibilities for the same sector, such as ministries of education, of vocational education, and of higher education). Such cooperation could enhance the development of a more coherent vision of career guidance services and thus improve their effectiveness.

We also recommend that steps be taken to sustain networking across the MEDA region. The MEDA career guidance network launched by the ETF and composed of national experts and policy makers from each of the ten participating Mediterranean countries, could function as a knowledge network. In this way, the regional network could follow up the progress achieved in implementing policy recommendations made in both the country and cross-country analyses.

3. NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND RECOGNITION FRAMEWORKS

Jean-Marc Castejon

3.1 Background

In 2006, the ETF implemented MEDA-ETE Component 2.3 on the recognition of qualifications. This component has been, from the outset, addressed in synergy with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) project, which commenced in 2005. The rationale underlying this approach is that national frameworks in general have very much built on the existing approach of defining learning outcomes. This has brought many advantages, in particular, a growing recognition that learning outcomes can be attained in different ways, and not only through formal schooling. Recognition of prior learning and assessment of non- and informal learning have since moved up on MEDA region agendas. This component thus fits well into the wider ETE project through its contribution to policy debate in partner countries.

The project does not aim, however, to develop NQFs, but to research and facilitate the vocational education and training (VET) reform policy debate. An NQF is a framework that links existing qualifications—at different levels and of different types—in a coherent and consistent manner, on the basis of a common and agreed set of descriptors and criteria. Despite differences between countries, there appear to be three main elements common to all NQFs, as follows: reference levels describing types of skills and knowledge for various qualifications, quality assurance principles and guidelines, and methods for recognising learning gained in different programmes and contexts. Qualifications are often specified in terms of learning outcomes or competences; these specifications, which emphasise the capacity to integrate skills, knowledge and attitudes in the application of learning, describe what an individual is expected to be able to do and know as a result of the learning undertaken in a course of study.

The experience of countries that have developed NQFs shows that the process takes time, requires considerable human and financial resources, and requires thorough consultation with, and participation of, the various stakeholders, including the education and training community, employers, unions, government ministries (typically the ministries of labour and education), and the university sector. It is assumed that an NQF will provide strong incentives and adequate opportunities for VET providers to develop and organise appropriate learning processes and qualification recognition functions. NQFs also typically provide for overall quality assurance mechanisms. It is assumed—given the obvious relationship between the quality of learning processes and the quality of learning outcomes—that a debate about NQF will, of necessity, touch all major VET reform policy issues.

ETF partner countries, in developing policies and strategies for the reform of their VET systems, are facing the challenge of transforming VET systems that have traditionally been based on various forms of input control (number of students, number of qualified teaching staff, centralised and uniform subject-based curricula etc.) into systems that are governed and funded largely on the basis of agreed learning outcomes and learning quality. Most countries have piloted standards for individual occupation areas but have not been able to develop overall coherent NQFs. Similarly, most countries have piloted curriculum changes related to single occupations or programmes without being able to develop an overall and consistent curriculum approach. Moreover, most of the early work on standards and curricula—seeking a departure from the previous knowledge-based approaches—has been

based on narrow skill concepts for simple and standardised occupations and tasks. These are by now considered to be obsolete, as they do not properly prepare learners for employment systems that are characterised by high levels of uncertainty. Learners require broader competences that develop flexibility and further learning capacities. Early standards and curriculum work, moreover, has almost invariably neglected middle and higher qualifications levels.

Building on experiences with curriculum modernisation, many countries are currently reviewing their classifiers (i.e., lists of occupations for which recognised VET programmes exist). Classifiers, however, normally only include qualifications at certain levels of education; they typically also include occupations and programmes that existed in the period of large state-owned industrial, administrative and agricultural enterprises. They are therefore outdated and no longer reflect the kind of qualifications required in the labour market. They also tend to focus only on formal education and training as provided by the public education system. Nonetheless, there is a growing need to create open educational pathways within the formal education system and to recognise learning achieved through non- and informal learning.

3.2 The MEDA-ETE project approach

A specific approach has been followed in the MEDA region, based on the facilitation of policy learning. As previously commented, NQFs are viewed by the ETF as a catalyst for reform. The process aims to illustrate the potential leverage of the project on sector policy. The method proposed has been to progressively phase in the project, so as to make of it a genuinely collective and structured learning experience. Five phases are foreseen (some already implemented), conceived of as a sequence of steps that incorporate an accumulation of learning experiences that build on each other. These phases (discussed in turn below) are conceptualisation, exposure, interaction, adaptation, and evaluation. The conceptualisation and exposure phases took place concomitantly in 2005 and 2006.

(i) Conceptualisation

This phase consisted of a stocktaking exercise of existing VET systems to allow a read-across collective analysis of VET systems in the MEDA countries. It aimed to (a) provide a map of existing qualifications, (b) report on the successful aspects of each system that can be built on (c) highlight gaps in the system, and (d) identify obstacles to people obtaining qualifications. A second step was to build a common understanding of what qualifications frameworks entail. The third step was for countries representatives to begin to develop an idea of whether a qualifications framework was wholly or partly relevant for their countries. The relevant issues included:

- Awareness among policy makers in partner countries of the international debate on the contribution of NQFs to quality VET.
- Understanding of context specifics in NQFs and the connection between framework design and the overall characteristics of national education and training systems.
- Commitment among main stakeholders at the national level to engage seriously in NQF policy debate.
- Basic technical and professional capacities for NQF design.
- Experience-based evidence underpinning policy and design decisions.

- Basic consensus among key stakeholders within individual countries about NQF policies to be adopted.

(ii) Exposure

This awareness-raising phase consisted of study visits in two European countries with the purpose of observing positive and negative aspects and examples of good practices in the field. The countries were chosen to illustrate specific experiences in developing an NQF. Apart from the specific context that prevails in MEDA countries, providing a potentially strategic role for NQF discussions in VET reform, the experiences of recent NQF debates and developments in other (especially EU and OECD) countries also need to be taken into account. There are two—in many respects interrelated—issues that are of particular importance:

(a) From single qualification standards to NQFs. Initial attempts to develop NQFs have very much built on defining learning outcomes. That has had many advantages—mainly a growing recognition that learning outcomes can be reached in different ways, and not only through formal schooling. Recognition of prior learning and assessment of non- and informal learning have since moved up on agendas. Learning outcomes also make it possible to align different levels of qualifications. There is considerable discussion about which kinds of learning outcomes are to be considered relevant, although there is a growing consensus that traditional concepts of knowledge and skills are no longer appropriate, and hence the current discussion on competences.

(b) Processes that represent a radical shift from learning inputs to outcomes. Given developments in the nature of work and in our understanding of how people learn the traditional model for transferring standardised expert knowledge or skills is no longer valid. Teachers and trainers are now seen as facilitators of learning processes for learners who may differ widely in terms of learning needs and styles. The key issue is that attention to learners and to quality learning processes takes up the centre-stage position. This has tremendous implications for teacher training, curricular development, and the organisation of schools and other educational institutions. A wide range of fundamental aspects of education and training systems thus inevitably become part of the discussion on NQFs.

(iii) Interaction

This phase commenced in 2006 and is still ongoing. In parallel to the collective activities which took place in the previous conceptualisation and exposure phases, countries have formed working groups (called dialogue groups), composed of the main national stakeholders in the field. The purpose of these groups is to explore the information and knowledge drawn from study visits and reference documents and to exchange points of views on their relevance to individual countries. A key element in the discussions is the exchange between managers and policy makers from different jurisdictions. This interaction phase also takes the regional dimension into account. As mentioned previously, the regional and international dimensions are an integral part of the ETF project, because qualifications frameworks cannot be developed in isolation from one another. The purpose of this phase is to (a) share the outcomes of exchanges within dialogue groups, (b) share the outcomes of study visits, (c) develop a common understanding of issues, challenges and opportunities among a larger group of people, and (d) develop a platform for regional cooperation and for the exchange of experiences. The output of the dialogue groups will be a set of action plans which will pave the way forward to NQFs by leading to the development of formal policy papers.

(iv) Adaptation

Stakeholder discussions will continue to take place in the adaptation phase. All countries will move from existing qualification systems to the development of qualification frameworks. Qualifications frameworks will not be the same for all countries, however, so the adaptation phase will consider features or elements from a range of possible models.

(v) Evaluation

This final phase concerns the evaluation of the chosen model using international benchmarks for NQF design. Alongside project activities implemented in the different countries, an electronic project forum has been created in order to (a) gather reference documents for the dialogue groups, (b) prepare events, and (c) capitalise on the knowledge produced by the project. This forum, conceived as a tool for knowledge management, has significantly enhanced the regional dimension of the project. However, a number of provisional limitations have become evident, primarily, the fact that technical and cultural factors mean that forums are by no means easy to organise. That said, the forum functions as a collective learning experience and is very likely to gather momentum in the future, as such initiatives open up the way for further developments. An electronic forum is undoubtedly an integral part of any project with a regional dimension.

As the project has unfolded, the MEDA countries have split into three categories, as follows: highly motivated and highly prepared countries (Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco); motivated countries with a poor institutional capacity (Syria, Algeria); and countries for which the project is not of immediate relevance (West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel, Lebanon).

The next phase of the NQF project, due to commence in 2007 and last for three years, will address—with a strong country focus—the first category of countries.

3.3 Conclusions

The output of the ETE project to date has a bearing on two challenges:

(i) Combining national, regional and international approaches. Qualifications frameworks are a good example of the need to place projects in a regional perspective. NQFs not only play a role in national education and employment systems but also across borders—in terms of mobility but also, and more generally, in attempts to promote economic development and social cohesion within a wider region. The challenge to balance learning inputs, outcomes and processes has an increasingly international dimension. National policy makers are concerned about the transparency and comparability of their qualifications. While a regional qualifications framework—such as the European Qualifications Framework—may act as a pragmatic reference instrument for NQFs, communications between countries about how their qualifications relate to each other will undoubtedly lead to discussions about how these qualifications are achieved. VET qualification systems—both within and outside Europe—will be different and will produce different outcomes in different ways. Meanwhile, it has become increasingly obvious that countries are learning as much from each other as they learn from Europe, even if the type of learning is not the same. The ETE project has highlighted the complementarity of learning stances, with the national dimension as the key dimension that is complemented by a regional dimension. The national and regional activities pertain to the interaction phase, which aims at national consensus while taking into account peer review—this is the dimension that the project will enhance in the next three years. The international dimension, meanwhile, pertains to the exposure, adaptation and evaluation phases.

(ii) Creating synergies between institutional capacity building and the ETE project. Although the project may have an institutional dimension, this cannot be reduced to an institutional logic. Instead, the capacity of institutions to learn from projects needs to be built on. Building capacities through a variety of learning experiences (mainly projects) is a growing feature of public service in general. On the other hand, there is an endeavour to avoid duplicating existing programmes and institutions. The ETE project aims to introduce new ideas and trends to the MEDA region countries. The issue of ownership is not commensurable to the project cycle because it is too short. But because ETE activities are backed by other projects and networks supported by the ETF, the ball continues to roll even after the end of individual projects.

4. ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING IN THE MEDA REGION

Ali Bellouti

4.1 Introduction

The regional MEDA-ETE project, a product of the Barcelona process, identifies education and training as key tools in economic and social development and for improving the competitiveness of economies in the future Mediterranean European free trade area. The project was designed as a platform for reflection and communication and as a framework for cooperation between the EU and Mediterranean countries in the areas of education and training areas. Its aim is to help MEDA partner countries draw up and implement TVET policies that contribute to the promotion of employment through a regional approach.

Component 3 focuses on the fight against unemployment, particularly among young people, in areas where it is becoming increasingly difficult to create jobs in sufficient quantities. It is designed to meet the needs of both the active population joining the labour market (those looking for a job for the first time) and those who have lost their jobs for economic reasons. This is a situation which, to varying degrees, is shared by many developed and developing countries. In the MEDA countries, where the proportion of unemployed young people (particularly university and vocational training graduates) is becoming untenable—both as far as public opinion is concerned and for the political authorities—it has a significant effect on economic and social development. Moreover, not only are paid jobs hard to come by, but when they do arise, potential candidates face demands from companies for which they are frustratingly unprepared.

Component 3 of the MEDA-ETE project aims to increase the capacity of MEDA partner service providers specialising in information, training and advice in the field of micro-enterprises and self-employment. These are presented as alternatives to long-term unemployment among young people.

4.2 Project implementation

The MEDA-ETE project, which follows the spirit of the Barcelona process, is based on the exchange of experience between the EU and the MEDA region. Organised activities focus on three complementary objectives:

- To identify service providers in the EU and Mediterranean countries specialising in the field, to enable an exchange of experiences between interested parties in the two regions.
- To identify, select and analyse good practice, methods and tools used in the EU and Mediterranean countries, as well as the lessons to be learned from bi-/multilateral cooperation programmes between EU Member States and MEDA partners.
- To reconcile supply/demand between EU/MEDA service providers, to enable national MEDA agencies to choose examples of good practice to transfer and implement through pilot projects, and to train trainers and creators of micro-enterprises and self-employment.

Furthermore, at the end of the pilot projects, an assessment will be carried out to identify the lessons learned and recommendations so that national specialist agencies can develop a shared methodological approach that is flexible and adaptable to the realities of

MEDA countries. These assessments will also target political leaders with information on how they can improve training policy in order to reduce unemployment among young people.

In the first year of implementation (2006) an initial list of EU and MEDA service providers was drawn up, which will shortly be published in the form of a directory on the MEDA-ETE website. A summary of national policies and entrepreneurial projects and programmes involving cooperation between the EU and the Mediterranean region has also been drawn up. Finally, an in-depth study is currently being prepared on good practices in the EU and Mediterranean countries. It will be presented to the national agencies signing up for the project at a technical seminar to be held in April 2007. This will enable them to choose - in accordance with their own needs – examples of good practice that will improve the training they provide for the creation of micro-enterprises and for self-employment.

4.3 Entrepreneurship in EU and MEDA region countries

Developing entrepreneurship skills and teaching young people to take risks and to set up their own businesses or to take over a family business is not about improvisation. Policies have been developed in various countries or regions of the world—particularly in the EU and MEDA countries—that adopt different approaches but typically with the same aim: to create wealth (through enterprise) and employment. This option for reducing unemployment is also encouraged in developing countries.

It is also worth taking a look at the national policies developed in the countries of the MEDA region and the EU to find out what is behind moves to encourage entrepreneurship in society, particularly among young people, and to encourage the creation of micro-enterprises and self-employment. What are the target groups and the areas of activity? What types of good practice are used by specialist service providers?

Early work carried out as part of Component 3 of the MEDA-ETE project has provided a few answers, which are summarised in this article. These are supplemented by the results of work carried out by DG Enterprise and Industry on implementing the European Charter for Small Enterprises, the European Charter for Small Enterprises in Moldova and the Western Balkans and the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise launched in Caserta. A virtual platform has been set up by DG Enterprise and Industry to monitor the implementation of the Charter in Moldova, the Western Balkans and the MEDA region on the basis of a methodology developed by the ETF with the assistance of the OECD. This platform will enable information to be exchanged in real time and experiences to be shared between MEDA and EU countries.

So what is education in entrepreneurship?

According to the working group for the MEDA region set up by DG Enterprise and Industry, entrepreneurship is: “the main driving force behind economic growth, the creation of revenue and well-being, progress for all, social inclusion and stability in a region aiming to become a free trade area”. It involves risk-taking, creativity and innovation and is found in every sector of activity or type of enterprise. Considered a genuine need and a future investment in building an entrepreneurial society, entrepreneurship has to be instilled in young people and adults and encouraged in all suitable forms at every level of the education system, including in a lifelong learning perspective (primary and secondary school, higher education and vocational training). Such an approach obviously means reforms will have to be made, to include active teaching methods and a new way of thinking.

In which areas is action to be taken?

Although there are plenty of public and/or private bodies run on a not-for-profit basis that specialise in training in entrepreneurship in all its various forms, it is mainly the state and national education systems that are called upon when it comes to the EU's thinking on the subject. It is up to each individual country whether or not it implements EU recommendations. However, these recommendations are regularly assessed on the basis of an indicative action plan. A recent example was the conference held in Oslo in 2006, which gave rise to the Oslo Agenda for Entrepreneurship, in which a number of good practices were suggested¹³ for possible adaptation, although countries are still showing different levels of commitment in this area.

To summarise, in EU countries, it is mainly the job of the state, which can work in collaboration with or with the support of private or not-for-profit bodies. These may operate within or outside schools and/or universities. Target groups may be either those in a specific academic cycle, or people selected on a voluntary basis, usually grouped together according to their academic level. The programmes developed in each case, apart from a few exceptions, rarely cover all the academic cycles (primary, secondary and higher education).

In countries in the MEDA region, the list drawn up in Component 3 of the MEDA-ETE regional project shows that entrepreneurship education of an operational kind - in other words, directly resulting in the creation of micro-enterprises or self-employment - is well developed. Ministers in charge of employment are developing programmes in this area as weapons against unemployment both among young people and higher education graduates. This approach is widely used in North Africa and in areas where the public sector only becomes involved in a limited number of targeted recruitments and where the private sector is still insufficiently developed to offer a serious alternative to the public sector.

The method of training of entrepreneurs in countries in the MEDA region - targeted training over limited periods on motivation and the development of entrepreneurial skills in those old enough to set up a real enterprise - differs from entrepreneurship education provided in EU countries. While entrepreneurship education targets academic cycles and is usually provided in schools, training in the creation of micro-enterprises and self-employment is mainly provided by in-service training and/or in initial training programmes (e.g. in Tunisia) outside the education system. It is supported by public bodies promoting employment or by private bodies (NGOs) working in collaboration with public bodies. In each country, there are a number of national agencies specialising in the training of entrepreneurs and measures that facilitate access to credit or to micro-credit. National agencies have gained a certain amount of experience in this area, which has enabled them to diversify their products and their areas of intervention according to the needs of target groups.

As an example, in three North African countries - Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia - training in the creation of micro-enterprises has become a key element in employment policy. Through the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills (ANAPEC), which was restructured for this purpose, Morocco has launched a massive programme supporting the creation of micro-enterprises (IDMAJ) which will help to find jobs for 200,000 higher education graduates by 2008. In Algeria, since the National Agency for the Employment of Young People and the National Agency for the Management of Micro-Credit (ANGEM) were created, nearly 80,000 micro-enterprises have been created¹⁴ which have generated some

¹³ These good practices are, in particular, used in Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, Spain, etc. The document referring to them will be available in the coming weeks.

¹⁴ On 30 September 2006, according to the National Youth Employment Support Agency (ANSEJ).

225,000 jobs. Finally, in Tunisia, the National Agency for Employment and Independent Work (ANETI) - a pioneer in the region in this field - offers a number of programmes for developing and for financing self-employment. Results have been so positive that a decree establishing a system for initiating and adapting the creation of enterprises has just been adopted (March 2007). This mainly affects young people, particularly students in higher education wanting to work for themselves and gain some experience in terms of management and projects.

Good practices put to use?

Good practices put to use are typically adapted to the target groups concerned. In EU countries, good practices apply to the three academic cycles, while tending towards higher education and technical secondary education; they cover all or part of the course (for example, one or two years before graduation). Three countries have recognised practices implemented during primary education (Luxembourg, Flanders in Belgium and Norway (outside the EU)). Training is provided in the form of lectures, case studies, round-table discussions and workshops. Lessons can be integrated into the academic cycle or provided outside the academic cycle (during the holidays, at evening classes, etc.). In some countries, the approach is national (as in Ireland or Luxembourg) or local/regional, where it is left up to individual establishments. All the practices include professionals providing expert testimony by giving talks and/or training sessions. Various events (forums, enterprise days, etc.) are organised in certain countries from time to time, as providing an opportunity for dialogue and for political decision-makers, trainers and project holders to meet up and exchange experiences.

Following initial research carried out under the MEDA-ETE project in eight countries involved in the project (Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Britain, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden), it has been possible to select about fifteen examples of good practice developed by different bodies, four of which are listed at the end of this chapter by way of example.

In the MEDA region, the project has listed about a hundred public or private national agencies that are developing programmes for training entrepreneurs and/or self-employment programmes. A number of different practices are used. Most are based on the CEFE¹⁵ method for the creation of enterprises and the training of entrepreneurs adapted to national circumstances. This method was developed by the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) and has been applied in around sixty countries. Training is generally intensive and limited in terms of time (three to four consecutive weeks); it essentially relates to motivation and entrepreneurial ability and leads to viable individual projects being drawn up that are likely to receive funding. In the Mashreq countries, practices come from various sources and favour target groups determined in advance (e.g. students, young jobseekers or women). Training can be carried out according to conventional methods or in seminars, conferences, meetings, etc., with professionals and teachers trained for this purpose.

On the basis of the list drawn up under the project, ten partner national agencies (one for each country) have been designated as direct beneficiaries of Component 3 of the MEDA-ETE project. The technical seminar to be organised in Rome in April 2007 will allow these agencies to choose an example of good practice that they will be able to internalise and develop in pilot projects.

¹⁵ CEFE: Création d'Entreprise et Formation d'Entrepreneurs, i.e. Enterprise creation and training of entrepreneurs

ANNEX

Four examples of good practice in the EU

1. Belgium's FREE foundation is developing a 30-hour, extra-curricular programme divided into 50-minute lessons. The course on entrepreneurship is aimed at students in the last two years of their master's degree and offers support to teachers in charge of the course.
2. The Flemish Young Enterprises (Belgium) project aims to develop entrepreneurial skills and attitudes among 6 to 25 year-olds through practical learning, to establish links between schools and companies, and to organise activities in which students are able to develop their talents and organise activities on a European scale. This practice applies to all segments of the educational system, with programmes adapted to each target group depending on the age bracket.
3. Association Jeune-Enterprises de Picardie (France) gives young people an introduction to economic life and the creation of enterprises, shows teachers how to deal appropriately with pupils in this context, and calls upon members of volunteering enterprises wishing to invest in inter-generational teaching projects. The programme (Entreprendre pour apprendre, i.e. Venture to learn), is based on the creation of an enterprise during a school year. Participation in a project, which is voluntary, is aimed at all young people between the ages of 14 and 26, whether school pupils, students, apprentices or jobseekers.
4. Junior Achievement—Young Enterprise (JA-YE) Luxembourg has a programme called Mini-Enterprises, which is intended to give students an introduction to entrepreneurship, to promote the entrepreneurial spirit, and to introduce students to professional life. It is aimed at pupils in general or technical secondary education (15 to 18 year-olds) during a year in which they are taught how to manage a mini-enterprise and make decisions.

5. E-LEARNING FOR TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN THE MEDA REGION: TOWARDS A REGIONAL APPROACH

Ulrike Damyanovic and Sabina Nari

5.1 Introduction

E-learning for teachers and trainers in the MEDA region is the topic of Component 4 of the regional MEDA-ETE project. The overall objective of this initiative is to support education and training reforms in the countries concerned. The specific objective of Component 4 is to design, develop and deliver online training courses on the information and communications technologies (ICTs) and/or tourism. The major outputs are the development of a common methodology and an online course on e-learning for teacher training. The courses will tackle a vocational education and training (VET) area where the use of e-learning is not much diffused due to the centrality of practice required to learn a profession. The input of this project, and its added value, is not to try and reach a more advanced level of technological presentation, nor to train high level IT specialists to become content developers, authors or instructional designers. The objective, rather, is to work together with existing teacher training institutions to develop institutional capacities and skills to teach and learn using technological tools.

5.2 Why e-learning for teachers and trainers

It was during the design phase of the MEDA-ETE project that e-learning for teachers and trainers was selected as one of the priority areas for development in the MEDA region education and training systems. At first sight, the choice of e-learning might be questionable, since it may appear to be secondary to the overall VET reform process in the region, especially if compared to, for example, access to quality of education. Moreover, new technology is costly and only one third of the MEDA countries have access to broadband, leaving a digital gap that needs to be addressed. However, there are clear indications that e-learning is among the policy priorities of MEDA governments, particularly in the field of VET teaching and training¹⁶. There is a clear demand for skills upgrading and competence development in the new technologies in order to be able to respond to the emerging needs of the labour market, with a particular view to the Euro-Med free trade zone to be created in 2010.

5.3 A short overview of e-learning in the region

The penetration of the new technologies in everyday life has led to a modification of life styles, communications, and information exchange in modern societies. As a consequence, people of different ages, social statuses and education levels need to upgrade their skills to adapt to a changing environment. In the MEDA region technological change has occurred rapidly, although many challenges still remain in some countries. These include the high cost of internet connection (mainly due to a lack of legislation on free trade in telecommunications), access to computers, and low digital literacy.

The situation is changing (although at different rates), largely thanks to national programmes and EU and other international initiatives, although one third of countries (in

¹⁶ Coulon A. and Chakroun B., *e-Learning for Teacher and Trainer Training in the Mediterranean region*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2007

particular Syria, Palestine and Lebanon) are experiencing particular difficulties and so are lagging behind.

The requirement analysis carried out under Component 4 to prepare for the design of the e-learning course confirms this situation. In particular, a clear need has been expressed to address the specific conditions of changing educational settings in public institutional contexts with pedagogical innovations like e-learning. The heterogeneity of participants will require a modular and flexible approach to course design and strong tutor support during the implementation. Country representatives have also stressed the importance of experience exchanges and networking.

The integration of new technologies is supported by strategy frameworks (integrated into laws, policies, special plans, e-strategies, etc.), with action plans that also cover the education sector by targeting training and, specifically, teacher and trainer training. These policies and strategies are usually based on an initiative of the ministries of education, vocational training and/or higher education. To provide some examples, in Morocco, the e-Maroc strategy includes a significant vocational training component, through the e-éducation and GENIE projects, focusing on three priority areas and including teacher and trainer training. In Algeria, the government's e-Commission is in charge of developing a national policy for the new technologies. The e-Commission is supported by different ministries, each of which will implement an action plan in its own field of competence. The Ministry of Vocational Education and Training operates through the EU's sixth framework programme, the National Centre for Distance Vocational Education (CNEPD), and private operators.

Interventions in the region also originate with private investors, offering support focused mainly on specific technologies. These investors - which in some cases have special agreements with national/governmental institutions - include: Cisco in Algeria and in Morocco; Sun in Tunisia; Microsoft in Lebanon, Algeria, Jordan and Morocco; and Intel 1 in Turkey, Jordan, Israel and Palestine. Other donors active in this field include UNESCO, UNWRA, and NGOs such as World Links.

The strategies put in place for teacher training in the new technologies are fundamental. Governments have at their disposal important means for facilitating the implementation of actions, among them: (i) the creation of structural conditions allowing the development of online training; (ii) the promotion of co-financing initiatives with the private sector, particularly with international enterprises operating in a country; and (iii) bettering coordination and political coherence.

Data available to date do not enable analysis or definitive conclusions to be drawn on the impact and quality of initiatives. However, there is some indication that most trainers and teachers are not able to complete training when the focus is on technology (in many cases, to a very high standard) rather than on pedagogical approaches linked to the integration of these technologies in the learning process. The methodology proposed for the MEDA-ETE Component 4 project aims to address this issue.

5.4 Project methodology and initial achievements

The specific inputs of the ETF in the project design phase feed on the latest developments in the e-learning field, where the focus has shifted from a technology-centred to a learner-centred approach. With this in mind, the rationale and objectives of the project are directed towards the methodological and pedagogical aspects of e-learning (how teaching and training methods change when training is delivered by means of a technology as well as face-to-face). The aim is to further enhance and develop institutional capacities, skills and

competences. In this context e-learning is a means to an end, i.e., it aims to improve the quality of education and training. Across the region, policy and reforms are endeavouring to shift from an input-oriented system that emphasises rote learning to a more interactive, critical engagement with knowledge. E-learning is a valuable tool for changing our way of dealing with teaching and learning. The concept of communities of practice and action research have been proposed for implementing activities that lead to the sharing of knowledge and experience among participants. Focusing on the learner and on his/her needs and on pedagogical requirements means greater success in terms of long-term impact and sustainability.

Since the beginning of the project, the main idea being stressed is the centrality of cooperation and the need for teacher training institutes to both commit to this principle and to actively provide input throughout the different phases of project implementation. This participatory approach is aimed at fostering ownership and contributing to the sustainability of results by the end of the project. Authorities from each MEDA country have nominated teacher training institutions and target groups as beneficiaries of the project. Teacher training teams have been established composed of the following: a training manager to act as team leader and contact point for the project in the country; a pedagogue/facilitator to provide content and course facilitation input; and an information technology specialist for course design development and delivery. The teams, which are at the core to the project, represent a community of practice which shares its knowledge and experiences. These communities of practice are key elements in coordinating and supporting trainees (teachers and trainers) in their respective countries during course deployment.

Cooperation will bring about better and more regular exchanges and will foster mutual trust and understanding between countries in the region. This cooperation will be developed on site at regional seminars organised at least twice a year, and at a distance through the project platform and the virtual community. The communities of practice will be asked to participate in collaborative working sessions and in experience, practice and information exchanges, thereby providing comments and feedback on key project documents.

The action research approach was introduced—for the first time during the requirement analysis phase—as a tool to assess training needs. As the first main deliverable of the project and the basis for course design, it represents an important methodological step forward in the project. MEDA countries administered the training needs questionnaire to a total of 100 selected teachers and trainers. The analysed questionnaires provided a snapshot of the course beneficiaries and their needs, and the results have been used to feed into the design of the online course syllabus.

A first course outline has been shared with the communities of practices to foster ownership of results. This will be followed by further inputs to the syllabus, including the provision of examples of good e-learning practices and policies that take on board the concept of e-learning and the use of the new technologies in education and training. The idea is to provide the network with a repository of practices and policies to be consulted and shared among countries in the region—always responding to the key concepts of project implementation, which are cooperation and sharing. The common methodological paper—which will be a major project output—will document the learning process and the stages—from project design to dissemination—implemented as action research.

5.5 Key challenges and risks

As often pointed out by network members, the main challenge in project implementation is to maintain the motivation of trainees in order to avoid drop-outs during course delivery. This is

a particular challenge for online courses throughout the world, and ways and means for keeping participants on board are continuously discussed - although it is acknowledged that there is no unique solution. The challenge is even greater in the MEDA countries because, as a UNDP¹⁷ report has noted, e-learning requires learners to be active, autonomous and self-directed, rather than passive absorbers of knowledge. A sound tutoring concept will need to be established to support trainees, and the obstacle of language will need to be addressed (courses will be delivered in English and French). Allowing for a certain unavoidable proportion of drop-outs, the role of the facilitator in each teacher training institution will be key. Participants will need to become used to different teaching and learning modalities. The teacher training institute team will need to guide trainees throughout the learning process, ensuring that they do not feel isolated in individual work sessions conducted at a distance. Progress will need to be monitored and remedial solutions will need to be applied to cases of potential drop-outs (e.g. telephone follow-up, face-to-face meetings, etc.). The involvement in terms of time, workload and motivation will be high both for the institutes and the trainees.

The pedagogical elements related to the e-learning model to be used refer to socio-constructivist approaches, situated learning, instrumental cognition, concept mapping, collaborative (distributed cognition) and project-based learning. A large proportion of trainees will not be familiar with these pedagogical notions and the theories underpinning them. In particular, web-based learning puts a great deal of emphasis on building on prior knowledge, the co-construction of knowledge, tutoring, and, especially, on meta-cognitive skills, i.e. awareness of one's learning and developing the ability to direct and adjust it. There is, therefore, a need for a clear strategy that ensures that all involved in the project have a shared understanding of what learning entails for successful implementation.

An additional potential risk is that the institutions will not have a clear commitment, through their parent organisation or through their own management, particularly in terms of setting aside adequate resources to complete the project. These resources include staff time, appropriate equipment and infrastructure. This commitment has been clearly expressed in project design by authorities of the ten MEDA countries and we hope that this commitment will be reconfirmed. The ETF and the teacher training institutes will need to actively promote the project, raise awareness of results and keep authorities informed on achievements. A memorandum of understanding has been proposed, which stipulates roles and responsibilities of the ETF and the teacher training institutes, and aimed at supporting project implementation and ensuring successful project implementation.

We believe that the provision of pedagogical and methodological tools adapted to the realities of target participants and what is realistically available and possible in their countries will have a great impact and will ensure the sustainability of the project until closure in 2008.

¹⁷ United Nations Development Programme (2003). *Arab Human Development Report: Building a Knowledge Society*. New York: UNDP.

6. CONCLUSIONS: EXPERIENCE GAINED AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Borhène Chakroun

Building on the progress of the MEDA-ETE project and on the chapters of this publication, we can already argue that developments have contributed some important insights on the project that can guide us in the future. These relate to its different components but they also cover other TVET reform challenges and issues facing the region.

6.1 Experience gained

Certain insights indicate that context matters. Zelloth et al. (Chapter 2) strongly underlines how the influence and specific features of sociocultural and socioeconomic factors, coupled with specific historical and political factors, seem to have constrained the development of TVET in the MEDA region and to have influenced the forms adopted by existing institutions. Any initiative - be it regional or national - will be short-lived if it does not fit into a particular context and if there is no local ownership.

Other insights warn us against being over-optimistic on the impact of a regional project on national policies and systems. The strength of the MEDA-ETE project is that it provides a context that facilitates not just participation but active engagement by national representatives in developing their own understanding of policy issues. However, any regional initiative, no matter how relevant it is, is limited in terms of ownership and national commitments. Nevertheless, a major conclusion to be made at this stage is in regard to the possible links between the regional and national levels; as Johansen and Homs (Chapter 1) state, the relationship between the national and the regional dimensions is, at heart, a symbiotic one. For the regional dimension to advance it must build on and tap into national processes. And the lessons learned through regional activities must be fed back into the national dimension so as to develop national policy recommendations. National policy priorities—in terms of topics and timing—will determine what the national and the regional dimensions should focus on and what their respective contributions will be.

Another insight, provided by Castejon (Chapter 3) in regard to the dynamics of networks, is that well conceived working processes may induce policy learning. The method proposed has been to progressively phase in the project, which would make of it a truly collective and structured learning experience. He also suggests that although these processes can contribute significantly to policy learning, it is well to note several caveats. Learning occurrence is difficult to pinpoint at the individual level and even more so at the organisational level. Even more difficult is trying to identify the particular decision or policy redirection that can be attributed to the regional project. Nevertheless, there is some good news from Egypt and Jordan regarding the development of national strategies for career guidance based on the MEDA-ETE initiative. Other good news is related to the continuation of NQF actions in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan.

6.2 The road ahead

As Damyanovic and Nari (Chapter 5) have pointed out, since the very beginning of the project the main assumption behind regional cooperation is the need for partner country commitment and their active provision of inputs in the different phases of project implementation. This participatory approach will foster ownership and contribute to the sustainability of results by the end of the project. Authorities from the MEDA countries have nominated experts and institutions who will be beneficiaries of, as well as contributors to,

project components. The country teams composed of all these experts are the core of the project and represent a community of practice which is sharing knowledge and experiences.

An important question that the upcoming annual forum needs to address is how MEDA-ETE activities can be supported in each partner country and what resources will be needed. It is hoped that the planned country sessions and the consequent work in national groups will make for closer coordination and better sharing of information about MEDA-ETE activities. Once the forum is over, it will be important to continue to foster this national dialogue. In 2007, a MEDA-ETE event will be organised in each country as a meeting point for all network members.

As mentioned by Castejon (Chapter 3), the virtual communities created for several components have helped to (i) gather reference documents for the members of the dialogue groups, (ii) prepare events, and (iii) capitalise on the knowledge produced by the project. These virtual communities have significantly enhanced the regional dimension of the project. Conceived as a tool for knowledge management, they have also revealed provisional limitations, for reasons ranging from technical issues to different cultural settings. But as a collective learning experience, they are likely to gather momentum. This initiative will be enhanced in 2007 as part of the project's four components.

The year 2007 represents the mid-term of the project operational phase. The project team and all partner countries need to already start thinking about the sustainability of MEDA-ETE activities and outputs. All project stakeholders (the EC, partner countries, the ETF and others) need also to reflect on follow-up to this important initiative. Within the MEDA-ETE team, we see the project developing in terms of two threads: regional and thematic.

As far as the regional thread is concerned, the MEDA-ETE project has raised awareness of the importance and relevance of regional cooperation. A strategic option should/could cover new initiatives that go further in terms of fact-based benchmarking exercises and more formal peer reviews and learning. In any case, regional cooperation should be linked with the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy and with regional initiatives.

As for the thematic thread, MEDA-ETE Components 3 (Entrepreneurship) and 4 (E-learning) include pilot actions at the national level that are aimed at introducing new initiatives and practices in the MEDA region. Pilot projects need to be monitored very closely so as to assess how they can be implemented on a larger scale (at the system level). The thematic line also covers the continuation of themes and topics introduced by the MEDA-ETE project and of concern to individual countries (e.g., career guidance in Egypt) and/or to a cluster of countries (e.g., the NQF for Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan). These projects could be covered by bilateral EC programmes and/or ETF interventions, and in some cases, could be funded by member states (e.g., the Italian trust fund for an NQF) and/or donors.

Finally, regarding the Euro-Med observatory function, the first data collection exercise reveals the large gaps existing in terms of the availability and quality of data in different countries. The experience of national observatories would indicate that developing a full set of indicators on TVET for each country is a highly ambitious aspiration, and, even more so, developing indicators that are comparable (particularly in the short term). This all points to the fact that this aim is overly ambitious for the time frame of the MEDA-ETE project (end of 2008). Moreover, and taking into account the delays in the implementation of the MEDSTAT 2 project, no major improvements can be expected at the national levels in terms of statistical capacities in the HRD area. Thus, the major conclusion that can be drawn for the future is twofold: first, that for a project aiming at comparing countries, it seems necessary to develop individual national projects on the building of TVET indicators; and secondly, it seems

necessary to consider MEDA-ETE actions as the first phase of a much longer cycle that will eventually build on sound mechanisms for producing comparable and useful data for policy making in the region. The methodological note on the link between national and regional observatory functions offers a number of options and scenarios in this regard.

With the knowledge gathered so far in regard to the keys for success but also on the obstacles for progress, the MEDA-ETE project will continue, with its available resources, to support initiatives that promote regional networking, knowledge sharing and high policy impact.

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