

# AGENDA

## HOW PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE AND TURKEY?

### ZOOM PLATFORM

14 OCTOBER 2021, 09:30 – 12:15 (CET TIME)

Online event, jointly organised by the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF)

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### BACKGROUND

To ensure that young people and adults acquire the skills they need to render them employable, vocational education and training (VET) systems around the world construct various forms of collaboration between the public and private sectors. Public–private partnerships (PPPs) that focus on skills development are one these forms of collaboration.

The ETF publication *Public–private partnerships for skills development: A governance perspective* builds on 23 case studies located in 14 countries. [\*Volume I. Thematic overview\*](#) provides an overview of these PPPs; it clarifies what they are and how they function, and examines the conditions necessary for their formation and sustainability, as well as the risks they entail and their potential for success. [\*Volume II. Case studies\*](#) describes and reviews the PPP cases according to the analytical categories of the ETF's study methodology.

The ETF's study PPPs for Skills Development will offer the evidence to kick-off the discussion. The event will go beyond the study and discuss suitability of the PPP instrument and its applicability in context of the South-East Europe and Turkey. The recent national, EU and international policy frameworks and programmes, in fact, all emphasise the crucial importance of building alliances between the state and non-state stakeholders.

Among these recent policy frameworks we find: the European Pillar of Social Rights, 2017, the European Skills Agenda, 2020, the European cooperation towards a European Education Area and beyond, 2020, the Sectoral Blueprint for Cooperation on Skills, 2020, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, 2018, the Youth Guarantee in SEET, 2021, and other policies. Given the ambitious goals and the magnitude of the agreed targets, there is an established common understanding that these policies can only be implemented if all actors join forces and resources together.

The **objective of the event** is to discuss:

- Types of PPPs in the field of skills development and supportive conditions.
- The application of PPPs in context of national and EU policies and programmes.

### **Participants:**

The event gathers a wide range of actors in the field of VET, skills and lifelong learning that work in, or cooperate with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

The actors that play a role in skills development in the lifelong perspective span across a wide range. Their involvement and level of responsibility may vary, but they are all relevant to increase the access to and quality of formal, non-formal and informal learning at any age, and quality employment.

Policy and decision makers, employer and employee representatives, business organisations, non-governmental and civil society organisations, experts and practitioners are stronger if they form a community that act and reflect upon skills development for all.

*\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*

# THURSDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2021

<b>09:15 - 09:30</b>	<b>Zoom connection open to participants</b>
<b>09:30 - 09:40</b>	<b>Welcome</b> Chair: <i>Ulrike Damyanovic, Focal Point for South Eastern Europe and Turkey, European Training Foundation (ETF)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Cesare Onestini, Director, ETF</i></li><li>• <i>Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska, Secretary General, Western Balkan 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF)</i></li></ul> Presentations: quick round of self-introductions
<b>09:40 - 09:55</b>	<b>Session 1: PPPs to attain quality skills development</b> Chair: <i>Ulrike Damyanovic, ETF</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Government and social partner cooperation: reinforcing implementation, by Siria Taurelli, Coordinator for Governance and Quality Assurance, ETF</i></li><li>• <i>Purpose and scope of the Regional Challenge Fund (RCF), by Frieder Woehrmann, Team Leader, Fund Management Unit, RCF</i></li></ul>
<b>09:55 - 10:25</b>	<b>Session 2: Types of PPPs for skills development and supportive conditions</b> Chair: <i>Mounir Baati, Senior Human Capital Development Expert - VET Quality Assurance, ETF</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Presentation by Siria Taurelli, ETF</i></li><li>• <i>Q &amp; A</i></li></ul>
<b>10:25 - 10:30</b>	<b>Away from screen</b>
<b>10:30 - 10:55</b>	<b>Session 3: Selected case studies of PPPs for skills development</b> Chair: <i>Mounir Baati, ETF</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Presentation by Aram Avagyan, ETF expert</i></li><li>• <i>Q &amp; A</i></li></ul>
<b>10:55 - 11:30</b>	<b>Session 4: Innovation brought by PPPs</b> Discussion moderator: <i>Balsa Culafic, Coordinator of the RCF in the WB6 CIF</i> Panellists: <i>Klotilda Binjaku, Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania; Besim Mustafa, Kosovo Chamber of Commerce; Mladen Perazic, Chamber of Economy of Montenegro; Natasa Janevska, Economic Chamber of North Macedonia; Desanka Mihailović-Kovač, National Employment Service of Serbia.</i>
<b>11:30 - 11:35</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>11:35 - 12:10</b>	<b>Session 5: Applicability of PPPs for skills development</b> Discussion moderator: <i>Siria Taurelli, ETF</i> Panellists: <i>Nicola Alimenti, APRO formazione, Italy; Gürhan Höke, TürkTraktör, Turkey; Mirjana Kovacevic, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia; Alqi Mustafai, National Agency for VET and Qualifications of Albania</i>
<b>12:10 - 12:15</b>	<b>Concluding remarks</b> Chair: <i>Ulrike Damyanovic, ETF</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Frieder Woehrmann, RCF</i></li><li>• <i>Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska, WB6 CIF</i></li><li>• <i>Ulrike Damyanovic, ETF</i></li></ul>

# CONCEPT NOTE

## Implementing partnerships in context of government and social partner cooperation in VET and skills

Government and social partner cooperation in initial and continuing vocational education and training is successful when it leads to good quality knowledge, skills, and competences that people may apply in different occupational areas in the labour market. It is such a link to the labour market that motivates the involvement of employer and employee representatives in vocational skills systems.

The interaction between the public and private sector is a specific feature of lifelong VET systems as compared to general education. It is important to steer this interaction in a direction that enables feedback from the demand side to the provision side regarding the relevance of the provided skills, as well as the forecast of labour market trends and skills needs for the future. The mechanisms for cooperation play the function to steer the dialogue, thus the way they are shaped is important and has an impact on the final outcomes.

We also see a dynamic dimension in the social partnership in lifelong VET, which implies that existing bipartite and tripartite agreements are reviewed on a regular basis. In fact, due to the evolving circumstances, including changes in the skills needs, new sectors that emerge while others decline, skills shortages that result from demographic trends and so on, the stakeholders should constantly improve their cooperation arrangements, and possibly review respective roles and responsibilities in the field of people's skills development.

Last but not least, the capacities of the actors influence the effectiveness of cooperation but at the same time capacities grow through practice. The more the public, private and civil society stakeholders engage in cooperation agreements, the more they learn and reinforce their experience in addressing complex situations and adapting to changes. Leadership is an important capacity among other ones, both on the state and non-state sides, as it was underlined during the ETF-UNESCO conference "Building Lifelong Learning Systems" in June 2021.

Cooperation between the government and social partners can be effective at all stages of the VET, skills, and lifelong learning policy cycles: early on at the stage of setting the strategy and policy agenda, following with resourcing and planning, through to policy implementation including the monitoring that could lead to adjustments in the plans, and finally at the stage of reviewing the policy outcomes and drawing policy lessons.

Also, social dialogue in the field of VET and lifelong skills development unfolds at different levels: the dialogue on skills at national level cuts across various social and economic policies; at the regional or intermediary level of governance, the dialogue typically involves the economic sectors that operate in the same territory and aims at relevant skills development plans; whereas locally, education and training providers agree upon curriculum specificity, various forms of work-based learning and student assessment.

Where social dialogue in VET is an established tradition, mechanisms such as consultative and decision-making bodies, public-private partnerships, negotiation practices have been institutionalised over time. The relevance of the provided skills and the employability of young and less young people tend to be high or satisfactory in systems that are characterised by social dialogue. It has to be recognised, however, that the landscape of increased market liberalisation that started in the last leg of the 20th century, of financial and economic crises followed by the pandemic, has everywhere affected social dialogue, including in the field of skills development.

Against this background, the EU has relaunched social dialogue as a powerful instrument for being prepared and react positively to critical circumstances and change processes. This overall approach also applies to the VET and skills for employment, a sector of significance for the EU. We see the approach reflected in the European Pillar of Social Rights, 2017, the European Skills Agenda, 2020, the European cooperation towards an European Education Area and beyond, 2020, the Sectoral

Blueprint for Cooperation on Skills, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the Youth Guarantee, and other policies.

These skills-related resolutions and operational frameworks form part of the EU over-arching strategy of a just transition towards greener and digitalised economies and societies, which deliver on sustainable competitiveness, fairness, and resilience. The EU Member States and partner countries are therefore bound to innovate the instruments and cooperation mechanisms, to make them perform according to the new policy framework and strategic priorities. The ETF as an agency is engaging with the partner countries in this process of reviewing the cooperation mechanisms in the field of VET and lifelong skills development.

## Achievements in social partnership in VET in partner countries

Consultation with social partners and their actual involvement in VET do not follow a universal model. But despite the variations among countries, cooperation between the government and social partners features in VET systems that perform effective school-to-work transitions and a good matching between skills supply and demand.

By performing its function of monitoring human capital development policies in partner countries, the ETF found that:

First, public–private cooperation in VET advanced over the 2010s in the ETF partner countries. Examples that prove structured collaboration include dialogue on the design and assessment of learning; work-based learning schemes; joint skills needs’ analysis; and collaboration on setting new national qualifications frameworks. These examples were in fact cases of partnership, based on a common purpose coherent with the country’s VET policy and oriented towards the implementation of this policy.

Secondly, it was found that in only a few countries were these partnerships framed by institutionalised social dialogue in VET at the national or sub-national level. Some of these partnerships, however, mirrored the nascent social dialogue in VET (ETF, 2016; 2019).

## Assessing PPPs as instrument for skills development with high quality outcomes

Moving from these findings, the ETF studied the characteristics of selected cases of public-private partnerships aimed at high-quality skills in the context of VET and employment. The study produced an overview of PPPs for skills development from the governance perspective (Volume I), based on the comparison of 23 case studies (Volume II). Of these, 10 cases are rooted in countries with a solid practice of social dialogue in relation to socio-economic policies, while 13 cases are in four countries with varying practices of social dialogue in VET. Serbia was part of the study.

The driving questions of the study were:

- What are the characteristics of PPPs in the field of skills development? Notably: what are the PPP types based on these characteristics?
- What are the conditions for sustaining the partnerships? Notably, what legislative, institutional, and financing arrangements, and capacities should be in place?

The ETF study adopted the following definition of PPPs for skills development: mechanisms for coordinating action and sharing responsibility between public and private stakeholders in VET for formulating, designing, financing, managing, or sustaining engagements of common interest with a view to producing results at the level of outcomes (impact) in addition to outputs.

The adoption of this operational definition was needed given that: 1) the internationally acknowledged definitions of PPPs are not suited to the skills development field; 2) the understanding of PPPs in education does not capture the specificity of the government and social partner cooperation rooted in VET; and 3) while the SDGs encourage the systematic utilisation of PPPs, they do not provide a definition of the concept. In the end, a universal definition of PPPs may be not desirable given the variety of partnership experiences across policy areas, countries, and forms of governance. It is better to utilise a 3-dimension typology to cater for the multiple differences.

One conclusion of the study was that, more than the definition, what matters most is that PPPs in the field of skills development are meaningful if they are outcome- or impact-oriented. Understanding what are the outcomes for the beneficiaries and what the actual results of the policies, compared to the expectations and plans, is crucial to make decisions about the PPPs for skills development.

The PPPs are often motivated by skills shortages and build on the long-term commitment of both public and private partners. The best examples place the young or adult learner and/or jobseeker at the centre of the process, and may be a source of innovation in VET management and delivery. Depending on contexts, the PPPs bring about experimentation in VET governance and some show the potential to establish new practice to be later acknowledged at system level.