

# COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2020 UPDATE: ISRAEL

# A BRIEF SUMMARY OF KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN VET AND SKILLS AND EU AND DONOR COOPERATION DURING 2018–19

Labour market conditions continue to be very positive in Israel in line with economic growth. Employment and labour force participation rates continue to rise, while unemployment rates are hitting historical lows of around 3.5%. The greatest improvement is among women (especially Arab Israeli women) and this is clearly linked to the rise in their education and enrolment rates in higher education. However, Israel remains a country with marked socio-economic differences among the different population sectors. The high tech sector (accounting for about 10% of the economy) stands out internationally for its performance levels, but low productivity characterises the rest of the economy and poverty is especially high among ultra-Orthodox and Arab populations. Concerning the medium-term sustainability of the country, current positive economic trends have been expressed by several parties and include among other factors the need to improve workers' skills at medium and low levels.

Investment in initial education and training and improvements in graduation rates and international scores are evident. After great effort from the state, 40% of students in upper secondary education are enrolled in technological studies. This should improve their employability while contributing to economic growth. Israel has the most educated population among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and leads international innovation rankings. This is due partly to university/industry collaboration supported by government.

In consideration of Israel's high socio-economic status, European Union (EU) and European Training Foundation (ETF) cooperation has a specific nature. Israel has limited access to the European Neighbourhood Policy, mainly through multi-country or regional programmes. EU Member States and international donors are not active in Israel.

## AN ASSESSMENT OF MID-TERM PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ETF'S 2020 OBJECTIVES

In line with the EU–Israel political agenda, the ETF will continue to support Israeli stakeholders with dissemination and sharing of EU policy orientations and facilitating Israeli access to EU cooperation instruments and programmes, in particular the TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) instrument, and European good practices.

The ETF's support of the establishment of the Israeli National Qualifications Framework (NQF) will be continued in cooperation with the EU-funded Twinning project. ETF inputs will include a review of national documents, facilitating access to international and European communities of experts, and policy recommendations.



The ETF will also support policy dialogue between the EU and Israel through policy and system analyses and input to discussions. The findings and recommendations of the Torino Process analysis carried out in 2019 will be shared in 2020 to inform reforms in the education and training system.

As part of a new 'differentiated approach' developed by the ETF to better respond to the different needs of its partner countries, Israel will be part of a pilot initiative involving EU Member States and ETF partner countries to reflect on innovative concepts and new partnership modalities in education and training. Through this initiative, Israel will be in the position to better cooperate with EU institutions and the Member States.

The Israeli Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Committee, comprised of all major stakeholders, will remain the ETF's main counterpart in the country for sharing knowledge on EU policy orientations and organising Israeli participation in ETF initiatives.

## ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2020

ETF cooperation with Israel in 2020 will focus on EU external policy orientations and country requests. The aim is to reinforce Israel's links with the EU via participation in EU programmes and tools and in expert communities.

### Specific objective 1: Support Israel to be involved in EU-funded instruments

#### a) Advise on the NQF within the framework of EU Twinning

Policy advice on setting up the Israeli NQF within the framework of the EU-funded Twinning project will include policy advice work, review and inputs to documents, sharing of EU good practices, follow-up on issues that will emerge during the study mission to ETF offices in 2019 and inclusion of Israel in the ETF Global Inventory on NQFs.

#### b) Support access to TAIEX

The ETF will support the TVET Committee in the formulation and design of two new requests to TAIEX.

On request of the European Commission or the EU Delegation, the ETF will support the European Neighbourhood Instrument programming and project cycle, EU–Israel policy dialogue, European Neighbourhood Policy action plan monitoring and bilateral subcommittee meetings.

### Other activities

As part of the first pilot exercise under the ETF differentiated approach, Israel will take part in a workshop at the beginning of 2020 to reflect on priorities for TVET reforms and on international



cooperation in education and training, such as how to set up Centres of Vocational Excellence, how to reinforce Level 5 qualifications and how to strengthen the involvement of the private sector.

Israel will be involved as a member of the Communities of Practice, as a follow-up of the Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration signed after the Ministerial Conference on Skills and Labour, held in Cascais, in April 2019.

Israel's good practice in public/private partnerships in VET and in developing innovative skills for the future in the agri-tech sector will be analysed and disseminated through ETF publications for reference and inspiration for other partner countries.

Israel will continue to participate in ETF corporate and cross-regional initiatives such as the annual conference, the Torino Process and the Forum for Quality Assurance in VET. Given the experience of Israel in VET Centres of Excellence, their participation in the ETF project activities may be envisaged.

