

# COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2020 UPDATE: MOROCCO

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

The outlook for Morocco is positive in terms of its economy and the reforms it is implementing. The government is committed to continuing and stepping up the pace of reforms, which are already well on track. Particular attention is being paid to key areas related to governance, education and the labour market, with a view to increasing competitiveness and promoting inclusive growth.

Due to the fast-changing and unstable situation with decision-making in the education and training sector, 2017 and 2018 were difficult years for reform implementation and for the implementation of international cooperation assistance programmes. The Education Vision 2030 and the related Strategy for Vocational Education and Training (VET) Reform 2021 remain the key strategic policy documents, backed by the recently approved law on education.

However, in particular for the VET sector, limited progress has been recorded on the reform implementation, impacting severely on the quality and relevance of skills. In parallel, unemployment and inactivity rates, especially among young people and women, are both increasing. As a result, in August and again in October 2018, the King gave clear indications in his speeches for the urgently needed reforms to be implemented in the education and training sector. He tasked the Prime Minister with designing a roadmap for VET reform, together with a small commission made of ministers from the relevant sectors. The main axes of the new roadmap have been presented and validated, mainly operationalising the key axes of the VET strategy and defining a new generation of VET centres – called *cites des métiers et des compétences* – that should become operational in all regions starting with a pilot in the region of Rabat-Salé-Kénitra.

In February 2019, a new Secretary General for VET took control of the functions and, although the VET State Secretariat still suffers from human resources shortages, the stabilisation of a concrete roadmap and the political will to boost the sector are promising signs of potential revamped activities in the reform process and relaunched international cooperation.

In this context, work on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was relaunched in June 2019, with a ministerial decree setting up the NQF Permanent Commission. This crucial step, which comes after many years of work, supported by the European Training Foundation (ETF) since 2006, paves the way for genuine progress towards the full deployment of an NQF in Morocco. The European Union (EU) will continue to support this field through Twinning on NQF.

After a difficult period in international cooperation, there are encouraging signs of relaunch. In July 2019, the EU announced that Morocco has moved closer to its goal of obtaining a privileged relationship with the EU following successful talks between the Foreign Minister, Nasser Bourita, and the EU's Foreign Affairs Chief, Federica Mogherini. Following the 14th meeting of the Morocco–EU Association Council of June 2019, the partnership will include the relaunch of talks on a free trade agreement, and the prospect of Morocco being integrated into a number of new EU programmes and agencies.

In this context, the EU is already present in Morocco with large support interventions in the education and training sector. The ongoing Sector Reform Performance Contract in the VET sector is complemented by a Technical Assistance envelope that covers both specific support to the VET State Secretariat and a project on VET local development (managed by the British Council and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)). NQF Twinning is also envisaged but not yet in place.

The country receives support from several donors, including from EU Member States and international banks and agencies. The main actors include the following:

The AFD (*Agence Française de Développement*, French Development Agency) is active in the integration of vocational training in general programmes, focusing on specific economic sectors such as automobile, energy and fashion. It also supports the “*Observatoire des Branches et des Metiers*” in the Tamkeen project, which aims to create governance structures at local level for better matching of skills offer and demand and increased employability. The project has finalised the pre-feasibility study, but activities have not yet started.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, a German development agency) started a new project in late 2018 on developing work-based learning and a better partnership between the public and private VET sector.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation supports the VET sector at various levels and in particular the creation of public/private partnerships in VET and autonomy of the VET centres. The labour market component works on the development of an integrated labour market information system in cooperation with the “*Observatoire du Marche de l’Emploi*” and the VET department (supported by the EU Technical Assistance facility).

The regional EU Youth Employment in the Mediterranean (YEM) project, implemented by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), includes Morocco among its partner countries.

Donor coordination in the education and VET sector is led by both the EU and the AFD. At the end of May, a ministerial decree determined the establishment of a Programme Management Unit for all donor programmes signed with or benefitting the Ministry of Education, VET, Higher Education and Scientific Research. Their role is to provide advice and input to ongoing and new programmes and to monitor implementation in order to signal any delays or risks. The unit should be at the forefront of coordinating the donors in the future.

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

There was no major progress in 2018 and the first half of 2019 in the implementation of the agreed strategic objectives, mainly due to the specific country context as mentioned above. Final validation of the VET roadmap, the appointment of the new Secretary General, and setting up the Programme Management Unit are promising signs for relaunch of the cooperation.

## Specific objective 1: help national, regional and sector governance bodies to better implement and monitor VET strategy

Activities under this objective did not record progress. However, the ETF gave advice to the current EU actions in VET based on the results of the work carried out with the VET department in the field of governance. The ETF suggested relaunching the reflection process on VET governance, building both on the work done in Morocco as well as in other countries on local governance and governance mechanisms. The EU-funded project Kafaat Liljamia has adapted the Torino Process methodology to carry out the assessment of the VET system at local level in one of the project pilot regions. The process methodology and tools will be primarily used to foster dialogue and reflection around skills development, skills quality and relevance.

The ETF also provided advice to the “*Observatoire des Branches et des Metiers*” about the new project in Tamkeen, which focuses on the development of local governance mechanisms for better matching of skills supply and demand. Actions mainly included content input for the project’s preparatory phase and deliverables.

## Specific objective 2: support local stakeholders’ capacity to anticipate and match skills needs and apply the methodologies to priority sectors

This objective was merged with objective 1 in 2018.

## Specific objective 3: support consolidation of the NQF as a reference for user groups

The ETF was asked to resume support to consolidate the NQF. In particular in 2019, the ETF supported the drafting of the ministerial decision for the setting up of the NQF Permanent Commission as well as the preparation of the Twinning fiche on NQF. The ministerial decision was signed in early July. The ETF continues its support in bridging activities in view of the NQF Twinning, which in 2019 consisted primarily in organising and facilitating a refresher workshop on the work accomplished in NQF in Morocco, addressed primarily to members of the NQF Permanent Commission.

## ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2020

### Specific objective 1: help national, regional and sector governance bodies to implement and monitor VET strategy

In 2020, the EU Technical Assistance project will focus on VET governance and will provide capacity building to work towards an improved and more efficient governance model and organisational arrangements.

The ETF may be associated with the reflections linked to the VET governance support provided through EU assistance. Considering that one of the axes of the roadmap for VET is the development of new generations of VET centres, and considering the ETF experience in this field in other countries (e.g. in Tunisia with the Pole of Competence and regional VET Centres of Excellence), the ETF has been requested to provide support to develop, with the Moroccan partners in the VET sector, a governance model for these centres. In line with this, the possibility to involve Morocco in the VET Centres of Excellence project may be explored so as to benefit from the international experience.

Under this objective, the ETF will continue to provide content input and advice to the Tamkeen project. This takes the form of expertise contribution to the different project phases and related deliverables.

A collaboration with GIZ on removing the obstacles to work-based learning expansion will also contribute to rolling out the Moroccan VET strategy.

### Specific objective 2: support local stakeholders' capacity to anticipate and match skills needs and apply the methodologies to priority sectors

This objective is merged with objective 1 and is linked to the support for the Tamkeen project that aims at a better match between skills supply and demand.

### Specific objective 3: support consolidation of the NQF as a reference for user groups

The ETF was requested to provide support through specific bridging activities until the NQF Twinning is in place. Potential input during the Twinning implementation (as part of EU support actions) will be explored once the dates of signature and start of the Twinning are confirmed.

### Specific objective 4: Torino Process 2018–2020

The relaunched cooperation with the VET State Secretariat and exchange of letters with the new Secretary General confirmed the interest of Moroccan partners to take part in the fifth round of the Torino Process. A new coordinator was appointed and the work initiated after summer 2019. The ETF will also work closely and provide input to the Kafaat Liljamia EU project to adapt the Torino Process methodology and tools to the regional (subnational) level.

### Other activities

**Under the EU support function** – There are currently no requests for ETF support to the EU Delegation in the framework of this function. This is likely to evolve following a number of promising high-level formal discussions. However, the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy

and Enlargement Negotiations may request the ETF carries out the governance and financial credibility of the strategy in view of a proposal for new budget support in the area of education and VET. The request has not been confirmed at the time of writing this document (Nov 2019).

**Potential cooperation in Africa through partnership with Morocco** – The Secretary General of VET and the Advisor to the Minister of Education, VET and Higher Education and Scientific Research have requested ETF support in the coordination and follow-up of the African Forum on VET and the role of Morocco in the VET Alliance for Africa. In the framework of the African Forum, the idea is to engage African countries who have participated in the Forum in 2018 and who signed the Forum Declaration, to put in place a process of monitoring (based on the example of the Torino Process) for the African countries. The role of Morocco in Africa is gaining more and more importance, in addition to being one of the priority axes of the VET Reform Strategy 2021. A recent policy brief by the Robert Schuman Foundation suggests that African countries could capitalise on the experience of Morocco, particularly in relation to economic emergence and insertion in the regional and world value chains<sup>1</sup>.

This action and follow-up involvement has not yet been confirmed at the time of writing this document (Nov 2019).

**ETF Forum for Quality Assurance in VET** – Morocco, through the VET State Secretariat, is an active member of the ETF Forum for Quality Assurance.

**Regional studies** – Morocco will be included in two regional studies, one on the future of skills and another on the situation of people not in education, employment or training.

Morocco 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.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/questions-d-europe/qe-522-en.pdf>