

COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2020 UPDATE: PALESTINE*



* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual position of the Member States on this issue – hereinafter 'Palestine'.

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

The National Policy Agenda (2017–2022) recognises the importance of education to economic growth and sustainable development and identifies quality education for all as a priority.

The 2010 National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Strategy includes an action plan covering legislation, financing, labour market relevance, qualification frameworks, teacher training and quality assurance. The 2010 TVET strategy and TVET law are currently under revision. Strategy and reform implementation is progressing slowly because of fragmentation of the TVET system and the socio-economic context. The situation is made more challenging by United Nations Relief and Works Agency budget cuts announced in 2018, which may affect the TVET sector for Palestinian refugees. The new government, in place since April 2019, is giving high priority to the TVET sector and solutions are being sought to make the system more efficient by reducing its fragmentation.

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Labour are closely cooperating to promote the TVET sector by creating a more positive image and by making it more relevant for the labour market. For example, the 11th grade curriculum was adapted to a competence-based approach and new assessment methods are under discussion. Teachers are being retrained and efforts made to modernise vocational schools' equipment. The Ministry of Education has introduced vocational units into the general education which resulted in a higher enrolment in 2018. A work-based learning strategy was approved and Enabel (Belgian Development Agency) introduced 83 work-based learning initiatives in the West Bank and Gaza.

In 2018, as a result of the cabinet's decisions, the TVET Higher Council and the Development Centre were reactivated and are supported by the Executive Council. However, the current VET governance structure is again under discussion with the new government.

Palestine is largely dependent on donor support. The European Commission contributes most external assistance, mainly through the European Neighbourhood Instrument. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, a German development agency) and Enabel are the main partners supporting the TVET sector. The EU project Support to TVET Development (EUR 8 million), designed with European Training Foundation (ETF) cooperation and implemented by GIZ, ended in October 2019. The ETF will provide policy advice for the implementation of the self-employment component of GIZ's new project, PALM: Programme for Access to the Labour Market, and will cooperate with Enabel with the implementation of their new programme, Skilled Young Palestine.

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

Specific objective 1: support establishment of TVET monitoring and evaluation to map the system's efficiency and effectiveness in addressing labour market needs

Work progressed slowly towards 2020 objectives and planned activities were revised in 2017. Delays were caused by stakeholder instability, uncertainty about the Development Centre's role, financial and human resources, and insufficient leadership in the monitoring and evaluation technical working group. In the future, the Development Centre or any other new body will be responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the TVET sector.

In 2017, a national monitoring and evaluation framework and indicators were developed and validated. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and Ministry of Labour evaluation processes were revised and TVET student data was disaggregated by qualifications. In 2018, the MoEHE reviewed its data collection system to identify new indicators for the monitoring and evaluation framework.

In 2018, six indicators from the new monitoring and evaluation framework were tested by the non-governmental organisation VET League, a network of private VET providers. Different capacity-building workshops on monitoring and evaluation took place in 2017, 2018 and 2019. A joint monitoring and evaluation publication will focus on tracer studies, an important tool to measure VET effectiveness. The 2018 tracer study carried out jointly by the ETF, GIZ and Enabel will help Palestine and the donor community find a common approach to tracer studies in the future.

The ETF has halted work on a governance model for monitoring and evaluation until the Development Centre is fully operational and has sufficient human resources. With the new government in place since April 2019, the current governance system of the VET sector (with the Higher Council and the Development Centre) is back on the table. The ETF, together with other donors, should closely follow the situation and consider the governance issue an important transversal task while implementing their programmes.

The specific objective to support the establishment of TVET monitoring and evaluation to map the system's efficiency and effectiveness in addressing labour market needs has been replaced by the work carried out under the Torino Process 2019–2020 and the feasibility study on the TVET sector in East Jerusalem that will take place in 2020. In addition, other objectives have been added for 2020.

ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2020

Specific objective 1: support establishment of TVET monitoring and evaluation to map the system's efficiency and effectiveness in addressing labour market needs

This objective will be carried out under the Torino Process. During the 2019–20 Torino Process, the quantitative data collection will be based on the new national monitoring and evaluation framework developed and agreed in 2018. The Torino Process will underline the challenges and difficulties of collecting data across the different ministries and private VET providers.

Since the VET system is fragmented and a national governance model for monitoring and evaluation is lacking, stakeholders will collect and compile information to gain an overview at national level, including East Jerusalem (with a separate feasibility study) and, as much as possible, with information from Gaza. In the future, the Development Centre (or any other new independent body) will monitor and evaluate the VET sector and centralise data collection.

Specific objective 2: support EU external assistance and the bilateral policy dialogue

As requested by the EU delegation, the ETF will carry out a feasibility study on the TVET system in East Jerusalem. This study will focus on the particular situation of the VET schools and the labour market situation in East Jerusalem. This feasibility study will be carried out in line with the Torino Process.

Upon request of the European Commission or the EU delegation, the ETF will support EU–Palestine bilateral policy dialogue with input for European Neighbourhood Policy action plan monitoring and bilateral subcommittee meetings and delivery of annual country fiches to the Directorate-General for Employment.

Specific objective 3: support the MoEHE and the Development Centre to create a more inclusive VET system

This specific objective will not be taken forward in 2020. It is not a priority at this moment in the country. In addition, whereas the VET governance structure is under discussion, the existence of the Development Centre is not assured.

Specific objective 4: enlarge the ETF network in Palestine to share information and identify areas for future cooperation

The ETF as a centre of expertise is aiming to cooperate with all education and training stakeholders, share information and identify where to add value. The ETF will continue to enlarge its network of relevant country stakeholders.

In 2020, the ETF will closely work together with GIZ and Enabel on the following programmes:

- 1) GIZ project PALM: Programme for Access to the Labour Market. One of the components of the programme relates to capacity building for self-employment services that includes the promotion of start-ups.

The ETF will provide expertise in the area of entrepreneurship for the establishment of the new multifunctional training centre in Birzeit that will be managed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour.

The ETF is part of a working group together with GIZ, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), International Labour Organization, Enabel and the Ministry of Labour. In 2019, ETF's support consists of helping to shape the concept of the new centre and co-organising a study visit for two key stakeholders from the Ministry of Labour to Turin and Germany.

Based on the results of the feasibility study and lessons learned in 2019, the ETF will share good practice, give advice and comment on proposals on how to make the new centre in Birzeit operational and functional.

- 2) Enabel's new project, Skilled Young Palestine, aims to enhance young people's transition to employment and self-employment through improved skills and competences (21st-century skills).

Cooperation will focus on awareness raising of EntreComp (Entrepreneurship Competence Framework) and DigiComp (Digital Competence Framework), and also on sharing methodologies for labour market intelligence analysis.

Other activities

Palestine is an active member of the ETF Forum for Quality Assurance, and activities will continue in 2020.

Palestine 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.