



EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION



REPORT TO THE EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

JANUARY 2008

The ETF in 2007

Throughout 2007, the ETF took significant steps in the areas of education, training and human resource development in the EU's neighbouring countries in support of the new EU external assistance instruments.

We have seen strong commitment and progress in many countries in the Western Balkans, the MEDA region and Central Asia where reform efforts result in stronger links between the education sector and the labour market.

In Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries, the ETF helped to strengthen the contribution of education and training to poverty reduction.

In South Eastern Europe, our actions in entrepreneurship skills development resulted in the establishment of curriculum and teaching frameworks oriented towards lifelong learning. Also in the Mediterranean region, the ETF's entrepreneurship learning projects facilitated the development of enterprise capacities.

All in all, the ETF's actions in 2007 contributed to strengthening competitiveness by identifying how human resources development can contribute to overcoming barriers to growth, and ensuring that investment in education produces workers with skills relevant to the needs of the labour market.

Information, advice and policy analysis

The ETF provides information, policy analysis and advice on human resources development issues in the partner countries. As an example, in 2007, we concluded our research in Moldova, Egypt, Albania and Tunisia on the link between migration and human resources development. The ETF's research shows that migration to the EU from the countries in the survey is not focussed on areas where there are identified skill shortages and for migrants returning home, the benefits of working and living in an EU country do not systematically support their further employment or participation in education and training. These results suggest that greater use of emerging European wide transparency instruments such as Europass and the European Qualifications Framework would contribute to better human resources development outcomes from migration.

In 2007, the ETF also conducted joint analyses with stakeholders in Albania, Kosovo, and Turkey on the challenges of implementing vocational school reforms. Among the conclusions of the analysis was that educational leaders at all levels can play a more effective role in the reform process if they are aware of how the change process unfolds and are alert about the opportunities and obstacles that may arise. It also helps if they involve and consult with schools and teachers. Furthermore, school inspectors, principals and deputy principals are crucial when it comes to shaping the institutional culture of schools by creating conditions that support improvements that can be incorporated into existing routines and practices.

In Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, the ETF completed three in-depth studies on progress in human resources development and vocational training reform with marked differences in conclusions from country to country. In Azerbaijan reform stems from the labour sector rather than the education sector, while in Armenia, the move from project assistance to a sector wide approach is generating important lessons for reform efforts. In Georgia, reform is guided by a strategy focussing on measures to link education and the labour market more closely, including the use of qualification frameworks.

The ETF also deepened its policy dialogue processes with Ukraine and Russia over the development and implementation of national qualification frameworks. In Russia the growing use of learning outcomes and strategies, and challenges in moving from pilot activities in the area to a national framework at sector level are critical issues. Similarly, in Ukraine, the ETF supported the drawing up of initial plans for the modernisation of vocational qualifications and the mapping of future directions.

Supporting stakeholders

Throughout 2007 the ETF worked closely with stakeholders to strengthen their capacities to implement human resources development reforms and to take advantage of opportunities under the EU's external assistance instruments. In Kyrgyzstan, to strengthen the contribution of education and training to poverty reduction, the ETF helped vocational schools to open up to their local communities and become powerhouses in the local economy. Under the guidance of coaches trained by the network, schools are strengthening their partnerships with local actors, improving their training services and having a more entrepreneurial outlook. Actions so far have included taking stock of their own strong and weak points, assessing the training needs of the local community, retraining teachers and designing innovative new programmes for specific groups of students.

The ETF's Entrepreneurship Learning projects in South Eastern Europe and the Meda region support the European and Euro-MED charters for small and medium sized enterprises and facilitate the development of entrepreneurial capacities through the improvement of skills development policies. Training experts from Jordan and Israel participated in an ETF-organised study visit to Sweden where they received training related to entrepreneurship learning.

The ETF's actions in development was finalisation of the key South Eastern Europe which for institutions in Albania, Croatia, the former

Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia to examine how entrepreneurship and 'learning to learn' skills could be incorporated into the

entrepreneurship skills supplemented by the competencies project in provided opportunities

secondary school curriculum. The results are provided as a series of lessons that support partner countries in establishing curriculum and teaching frameworks that are more strongly oriented towards lifelong learning.

Throughout the year, the ETF conducted workshops involving all of the partner countries to support them in identifying and addressing their human resources development reform needs. Topics covered included national qualification frameworks, accreditation practices for vocational schools and programmes, the use of human resources development in supporting poverty reduction, the modernisation of apprenticeship, and the introduction of career guidance systems as a support to education reform.

Exchanging information and experience among donors

In 2007, the ETF increased its activities related to the exchange of information with other donors engaged in human resources development and continued its dialogue with the World Bank on the relevance of vocational education in secondary education and the impact

of qualification frameworks as a facilitator of lifelong learning, particularly in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region.

Formal institutional collaboration with the World Bank in the human resources development sector was complemented with the placement of an ETF staff member in Washington to exchange expertise on sector based approaches and emerging European developments in international assistance in human resources development.

Another ETF staff placement reinforced the ETF's involvement with UNESCO, with a short-term secondment of an ETF staff member to Paris to cooperate and share information on approaches to monitoring and evaluation. During the year, the ETF also worked closely with the British Council on their initiatives in South Eastern Europe, and with the Danish assistance agency, Danida, in the area of teacher training.

Supporting Community assistance

During the year, as part of its support to the delivery of Community assistance in the field of human resources development, the ETF broke new ground in the Mediterranean region. We were asked by the EC Delegation in Cairo to undertake an assessment of the current situation of the vocational training system in Egypt and the impact of the EC TVET Reform programme.

The conclusions were supported by stakeholders and incorporated into project implementation. This was the first time that the ETF had provided this type of service in the Mediterranean region, and this support to the EC Delegation will continue in 2008 as the ETF has been asked to provide a further assessment on the reform process in Egypt.

In the IPA region, the ETF supported partner country stakeholders and EC Delegations by providing feedback and technical advice on IPA planning documents, progress reports, technical analyses and material generated by EU assistance projects. The ETF also updated its reviews and analyses of human resources development policies in

the candidate countries for the European Commission. In Kosovo, the ETF was made responsible by DG Enlargement and the European Agency for Reconstruction for facilitating the IPA 2008 programme for education and employment in Kosovo.

Networking and exchanges of experience

Disseminating information and encouraging networking and exchanges of experience and good practice between the European Union and partner countries is another key area of activity for the ETF. In both the Neighbourhood and Pre-accession region, the ETF continued to disseminate information on emerging European practices through its project on 'Education and Training 2010' and the discussion on national qualification frameworks. Study visits played an important role in bringing partner country policymakers into contact with experiences in Member States and with other partner countries facing similar policy challenges.

In 2007, the ETF initiated a dialogue on the contribution of human resources development to promoting social inclusion in South Eastern Europe. The activity brought together national experts from all the countries of the region to take stock of the variety of initiatives being pursued in each country and exchange information on the types of problem being addressed in the region. The dialogue also drew contemporary approaches in Member States.

The regional network of stakeholders in the Mediterranean countries established through the Meda Education and Training for Employment project was further strengthened through plenary meetings, study visits and workshops. The ETF manages this project on behalf of the the European Commission as part of its overall assistance to the region.

Analysing the overall effectiveness of training assistance

In the course of the year, at the request of the European Commission, the ETF concluded major country evaluations on the overall effectiveness of training assistance in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. The evaluations identified the contribution of ETF support to education modernisation and identified key areas where it could be optimised. They found that ETF activities were relevant, in line with EU and in-country policies and "highly appreciated by the stakeholders and beneficiaries." In terms of efficiency, ETF money was "well spent" and in each country the disbursement ratio was over 80%, a significant achievement considering the modest size of the projects.

The ETF also undertook a review of its project identification methodologies through an analysis of 27 project specifications it prepared for the Commission during the period 2003-07. The projects amounted to approximately €40 million worth of EU assistance to partner countries. The review revealed an increasing demand for policy related support with a stronger focus on lifelong learning. It included a comparison of ETF processes with aid agencies from Denmark, (Danida) and Norway (Norad) and highlighted the increasing importance of knowledge management both within the ETF and between the ETF and its stakeholders.

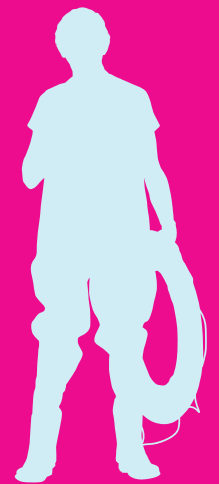


A look ahead...

In 2008 the ETF faces the challenge of preparing for its recast regulation which provides a formal framework for deepening involvement in lifelong learning and related labour market issues. The financial statement supporting the recast regulation foresees a budget framework for the ETF that supports a stronger emphasis on policy analysis tasks – including increased expertise requirements which will mean additional recruitment and staff development.

Projects that are already underway will be consolidated. For example, further research on the potential links between greater transparency of skills and the supply of skilled migrants to the EU will be carried out in 2008 in Egypt. Capacity building actions in Morocco, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Ukraine will continue as part of the ETF's policy learning project, while support for policy development in South Eastern Europe will be strengthened through further dialogue on the role and contributions of social inclusion measures for minority groups through the modernisation of education and training systems.

The ETF is also anticipating more interest from partner countries in qualifications and mobility issues arising from the approval of the European Qualifications Framework. The growth of lifelong learning and ongoing demographic change in ETF partner countries is expected to increase the need for support for formal and informal sector partnerships, measures that promote transparency in the transnational recognition of qualifications, linkages between different sectors of education, including general education, vocational education and higher education, as well as greater support for labour market measures related to employment policies and workforce development.



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