



ETF GOVERNING BOARD 29 JUNE 2004

CHAIRMAN: MR NIKOLAUS G. VAN DER PAS, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR EDUCATION & CULTURE

Minutes

Introduction

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed all participants, in particular members from the new Member States attending for the first time in their full capacity. He went on to outline the content of the meeting, which would cover technical issues related to institutional reform, the celebration of the 10th anniversary of ETF, developments in EU policy affecting the future of ETF, the departure of Mr de Rooij after ten years as Director of the organisation and the handover to the new Director, Ms Dunbar.

The Chairman then welcomed a number of new members to the Board: Mr. Srámek (Czech Republic); Mr. Vertmann (Estonia); Mr. Jakab (Hungary); Mr. Wisniewski (Poland). He also welcomed Observers awaiting formal appointment to the Board: Mr. Bandelj (Slovenia); Mr. Pusvaskis (Lithuania); and Mr. Constantinou (Cyprus).

Finally he extended a warm welcome to the new member for Italy, Mr. Perugini, thanking the previous members from the ETF host country for their contributions.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Board adopted the draft agenda, adding one item under Any Other Business: a discussion on the role of the Board in the appointment of the Deputy Director.

2. Minutes of the meetings on 3 November 2003 and 16 March 2004

The Board adopted the minutes of the previous meetings held on 3 November 2003 and 16 March 2004. **Mrs. O'Higgins** requested a short briefing on the actions taken in response to action points identified in the meeting of 3 November 2003, and this was added as an item under Any Other Business.

3. Oral report by the ETF Director on operational achievements first semester 2004

Peter de Rooij opened by welcoming Mr. Johan van Rens, Director of CEDEFOP, adding that his presence testified to the strong relations between the two agencies. He noted the unfortunate absence of Ulrich Hillenkamp due to serious illness, wishing him a speedy recovery and return to ETF after the summer. He also reported on the appointment of Olivier Ramsayer as Head of Administrative & Central Services and Eva Jimeno Sicilia as Head of the Department for the Mediterranean Region, and on the reestablishment of the ETF Staff Committee.

Making reference to the tabled Mid-year Report to the Board for 2004 he singled out a number of achievements as being of particular importance:

- As the former candidate countries acceded to the European Union on 1 May 2004, the 10 Observatories originally set up by ETF were successfully integrated into CEDEFOP's REFERNet in accordance with the agreed strategy, thereby capitalising on the investment made over the last 10 years. ETF would continue to provide support to Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and now also Croatia in the run up to the Maastricht conference planned for the end of 2004;
- Taking its lead from the Thessaloniki agenda, ETF continues to provide support to the countries of South Eastern Europe, and uses its long experience in the new Member States to assist the former in preparing for the next wave of accession, with a particular focus on the development of SMEs. It has organised events in the region on the subjects of adult learning, national qualification frameworks and teacher training with the aim of promoting regional cooperation.
- In the Mediterranean region ETF has been preparing for the responsibility of implementing the regional ETE project and, following discussions with the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB), has also started to lend support to EIB projects in the region. ETF is also increasingly active in DG AIDCO's thematic networks on employment-related issues. In addition, ETF has carried out joint studies with the World Bank on the informal sector in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia that will be published in the near future.
- As negotiations on the European Neighbourhood Policy proceed, ETF has noted a marked increase in demand for services for the Ukraine and Moldova. Meanwhile the Russian Federation continues to be a focal point for ETF support in conjunction with some Members States, while the strategic importance of Central Asia has led to more emphasis being laid on investment in human capital as a means of promoting stability in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. In addition, building on its experience in the Central Asian region, ETF has begun work on training strategies for local development in Georgia, where conditions are now more favourable for reform.
- In order to bolster its capacity to provide expertise services, ETF has also introduced a number of measures that include:
 - An Editorial Board to advise on the quality of publications;
 - A series of internal seminars to promote knowledge sharing across ETF;
 - Strengthened cooperation with other international organisations, including the European Commission.
- The Tempus Department has started to assess applications for Joint European Projects (JEP) and Individual Mobility Grants (IMG) starting in 2004, and continues to monitor ongoing projects. ETF has agreed with the European Commission on a framework convention for 2004-2005. In addition a recent audit of technical assistance provided in 2001 found that, despite the large number of transactions, ETF had no significant weaknesses to correct.
- ETF has been very active in promoting cooperation between the agencies on matters of administration and internal control systems, and during the course of the year major steps have been made in the field of human resource management, financial management under the new Financial Regulation, and computer software and system development. In particular ETF has made significant progress in developing its website, and now wishes to better promote the work of the Governing Board by also including information on Board members.
- In discharging the Director for the financial year 2002, the European Parliament recommended that the remit of ETF be broadened to make more effective use of public money.

In conclusion **Peter de Rooij** emphasised the progress ETF had made in fulfilling its role as a centre of expertise, as evidenced by the increasing number of requests for its services.

He also indicated the intention of ETF to increase the visibility of the Board and facilitate contacts between members by including members' photographs and contact details on the ETF website, to which the Board concurred.

4. Miscellaneous Administrative Issues

4(i) Internal Control Standards

Mr Olivier Ramsayer (ETF) outlined the requirement in the Financial Regulation for ETF to adopt internal control standards that emphasised greater attention to risk management. These 24 standards should gradually be introduced, with the advice and assistance of the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission, and would give the Governing Board and ETF management better information on the measures put in place to ensure proper administration. Mr. Ramsayer made reference to the draft decision to be taken by the Governing Board, an internal assessment on compliance, and a first draft of the action plan that would ensure full compliance with the baseline standards by the end of 2004.

He assured the Board that ETF would make regular progress reports on compliance in the Annual Activity Report and through appropriate reports at Board meetings.

Mr. Gordon Clark (DG EAC) brought the Board's attention to the progress already made by ETF to comply with the standards, and asked the Board to formally adopt the 24 Internal Control Standards in accordance with article 38(4) of the Financial Regulation.

Ms. Micheline Scheyes (Belgium) requested clarification on the role of the Governing Board in applying the standards, since this was explicitly stated only in Standard 7, and in particular whether the Board would be involved in setting the performance indicators.

Mr. Ramsayer replied that the standards were first and foremost a tool for internal management, but that nevertheless the targets, and progress made towards these targets, would be set out in the ETF Work Programmes and Annual Activity Reports that require the direct involvement of the Board.

Mr. Clark confirmed that article 40 of the Financial Regulation required that the Annual Activity Report would report on the implementation of the standards.

The Chairman drew parallels with the implementation of the Internal Control Standards by the European Commission, and to the fact that the Commission remained fully accountable to the European Parliament for its actions in this field. By analogy he confirmed that the ETF would remain fully accountable to the Governing Board for its actions.

Mr. Andrea Perugini (Italy) began by pledging his full cooperation to the Board as the new member for Italy. He then drew the Board's attention to Standards 1 and 14 and requested more information on:

- Standard 1: how ETF would ensure that all staff members are aware of their obligations under this standard;
- Standard 14: how ETF would ensure that staff members would be protected when reporting improprieties in the management of the organisation.

Mr. Ramsayer replied that

- Standard 1: the ETF systematically informs new staff members of the main rules and obligations in the Staff Regulations, and moreover that all staff members have recently undergone some training on the new rules. Once the Board had adopted the 24 Internal Control Standards, ETF would be in a better position to take appropriate action to raise staff awareness, drawing inspiration from good practice in other organisations.
- Standard 14: the Financial Regulation contained clear provisions on the steps to be followed in this case, but that it was the intention of ETF to introduce measures to help staff members to better understand their rights.

Ms. María José Muniozguren Lazcano (Spain) requested clarification on the types of risk covered by the standards, and in relation to Standards 14, 20 and 21, the role of the Board in assessment and evaluation.

Mr. Ramsayer referred to his reply to Ms. Scheyns and emphasised the wish of the ETF to be completely transparent in submitting progress and audit reports to the Board. With regard to the type of risks covered by the standards, he replied that all risks related to the activities of ETF are taken into account. He highlighted by way of example a recent decision taken to protect staff against risks to which they are exposed on mission, and another taken to respond to the provisions of Italian Law 626 on health and safety on the premises of the ETF itself.

Mr. de Rooij underlined the link between the Internal Control Standards and the approach promoted in the new Financial Regulation that puts emphasis on the sense of responsibility required of each individual.

The Chairman added that his experience had shown it to be a very demanding operation that went well beyond the point of formal implementation of measures to strengthen accountability at all levels, and required a practical change in the way each staff member works. He stressed that ensuring ownership on the part of the staff would take time and considerable investment in training.

Responding to Mr. Perugini, he assured him that staff members in the Commission were fully entitled to a fair reply from the hierarchy in reporting improprieties, and had the right to address higher levels in the hierarchy and even under certain specific conditions to go public if absolutely necessary.

Having heard the responses to its questions the Board adopted the decision to implement the 24 Internal Control Standards within ETF services.

4(ii) Annual Activity Report 2003

Mr. Peter Greenwood (ETF) introduced the Annual Activity Report 2003 by underlining the modifications influenced by the new Financial Regulation and Council Regulation 1648/2003, in particular article 40 of the Financial Regulation requiring the Governing Board to adopt the report and provide its own analysis and assessment of the report.

He pointed to two main elements:

- At operational level the report contained a picture of the achievements against the objectives set out in Work Programme 2003, and attempted to demonstrate the return on investment.
- At administrative level, the report described the internal structures and controls put in place by ETF, and included a declaration by the Director that the report provided a true and fair view of achievements.

He nevertheless indicated that there was room for improvement in describing achievements and assessing risks.

The Chairman pointed out that the Commission followed a similar procedure to report on activities and identify any irregularities or elements of risk.

Mr. Clark made a distinction between the procedure for the Annual Activity Report set out in article 40 of the Financial Regulation, and the procedure for the annual accounts set out in article 83. The Board would be asked for its opinion on the latter once the Court of Auditors had provided its observations following an audit carried out in May 2004.

Ms. Deirdre O'Higgins (Ireland) requested on behalf of the Board that the Advisory Forum support the Board in assessing future Annual Activity Reports by providing its opinion on the more technical aspects. This request was supported by **Ms. Muniozguren Lazcano**.

The Chairman replied that this decision would need further reflection and that the Board would come back to this issue at the next meeting in November 2004.

Mr. Dietrich Nelle (Germany), **Ms. Scheyns** and **Ms. Muniozguren Lazcano** welcomed the fact that the report concentrated more on actual achievements rather than just budget execution.

Ms. Madlen Serban (Romania) remarked that ETF should attempt to make the report more transparent in the future by providing more analysis on the actual impact of its activities on the partner countries.

Mr. Greenwood replied that the monitoring and evaluation policy adopted by the Board in April 2004 laid the emphasis on impact assessment at project and country levels, and this would provide the mechanism for ETF to evaluate its work better and report back to Board.

The Board adopted both the Annual Activity Report 2003 and its own analysis and assessment with the slight textual modification requested by Ms. Scheyns.

4(iii) Implementing Rules for the New Staff Regulations

Mr. Ramsayer introduced the Board to a technical question linked to the implementation of the new Staff Regulation that entered into force on 1 May 2004. The European Commission adopted implementing rules shortly before that date, and the agencies were not in a position to have their own implementing rules approved in time. The Commission recommended that all agencies apply its implementing rules while elaborating their own rules over a one-year period. In most cases ETF would be able to adopt the Commission's rules by analogy, but in some limited cases it would need to adapt them in order to take into consideration specific conditions.

The Board adopted the decision that the ETF director, after consultation with the ETF Staff Committee and in agreement with the European Commission, would present the Board with a complete set of adapted implementing rules for the new Staff Regulations by 1 May 2005.

4(iv) Contract of the new Director

Mr. Ramsayer briefly introduced the main features of the contract of employment for temporary agents in ETF, and made reference to specific conditions in the contract of the new Director. This contract is in line with the conditions of employment set out in the new Staff Regulations, and with article 7 of the ETF's founding regulation, in particular as regards the duration, the probationary period and the rules linked to termination of the contract. The maximum duration of the Director's contract was 10 years and the appointing authority was the Governing Board.

The Chairman, noting the agreement of the Board, informed members that he would proceed to sign the contract on their behalf.

4(v) Probationary period for the new Director

Mr. Michel Richonniere (European Commission) explained to the Board that under the Commission's implementing rules for the new Staff Regulations, persons recruited to senior management positions (Directors and Director Generals) must serve a probationary period like any other grade or category of staff. By analogy, a provision was included in Ms Dunbar's contract on a probationary period. It was therefore necessary for the Governing Board to adopt implementing rules for this provision.

Mr. Fitou suggested that this approach might be even more profitable if supplemented by an action plan agreed by the European Commission and the Director.

Ms. Scheyns expressed concern that imposing a probationary period might send an unwanted message to staff members on the permanence of ETF.

The Chairman replied that the probationary period was an integral part of the overall reform of the European Commission and therefore in no way implied that ETF had a short life expectancy.

Mr. Perugini expressed support for the spirit of the reform and the wish to include a probationary period, but requested clarification as to whether this recommendation of the European Commission was binding on the Board.

The Chairman confirmed that the final decision would lie with the Board as appointing authority and that he would transmit the spirit of members' remarks to Ms. Dunbar when signing the contract on their behalf.

4(vi) External Evaluation Action Plan

Mr Greenwood introduced the third report on implementation of the action plan approved by the Board in June 2003 in response to the external evaluation. Around 80% of the actions had now been completed, with a priority on aligning ETF services with the needs of the European Commission and bolstering external communication capabilities. The actions still underway were:

- A cross-country sustainability policy for Observatories;
- A policy on ETF cooperation with other organisations, currently being piloted with Céreq;
- Implementation of the Internal Control Standards;
- Implementation of the monitoring and evaluation framework based on the policy approved by the Board in April 2004;

ETF would provide a final report by the end of 2004, which will pave the way for a new external evaluation cycle in 2005-2006 in accordance with the ETF founding regulation.

Referring to the earlier request of Ms. O'Higgins, he also briefed the Board on the actions identified at the previous meeting of the Board:

- The induction package for Board members was now available on the ETF web site;
- ETF Observatories in the new Member States had been integrated into CEDEFOP's REFERNet in accordance with the agreed Entry-Exit strategy. At the request of the European Parliament, ETF and CEDEFOP had also produced a joint final report to support deliberations on discharge for the financial year 2002;
- By the end of 2004 ETF would provide the Board with a report from the Advisory Forum meetings held in 2004. The process of appointing new members of the Advisory Forum had almost been completed, and the newly constituted Forum would continue to meet for two years at regional level and in the third year in plenary.

In order to deal with the matter before the new Director joined the meeting, the Board returned to the issue of the appointment of the Deputy Director. **Mrs O'Higgins**, speaking on behalf of a number of members, suggested that Board should have the opportunity to confirm the appointment of the Deputy Director at the end of the probationary period. However, in view of the fact that such appointment would not take place before November 2004, the Board agreed to address the issue at its next meeting on 9 November 2004.

Mr de Rooij added that the normal practice was for recruitment panels to be composed of members holding a similar grade to that of the position for which they were interviewing. In this case only the ETF Director held such a grade and hence the Board should give some thought to enlisting panel members from other organisations such as the European Commission or from the organisations represented on the Board itself.

Mr Perugini suggested that ETF should circulate to Board members before the November meeting a comparative analysis of procedures adopted to appoint Deputy Directors at other agencies.

The Chairman welcomed these suggestions and confirmed that they would be taken into consideration for the next meeting of the Board.

In anticipating the short briefing on the actions taken in response to action points identified in the meeting of 3 November 2003 as requested by Mrs. O'Higgins, the Chairman referred to two series of actions to be taken one by the Commission and the other by ETF.

Mr Greenwood already reported on the action taken by ETF.

Mr Otto Dibelius (DG EAC) made reference to the minutes of structured dialogue meetings that should have been notified to Governing Board Members. Because strategic level meetings could not take place there has not been any record of related discussions. He assured the Board Members that detailed minutes would have been made available to them for the next meeting in November following the structured dialogue planned in September 2004. Concerning the update to the Board on the progress made in the decision process on the location of Tempus technical assistance, he anticipated that the Chairman would brief the Board on this issue.

5. Update by Chairman on progress on Commission policies and programmes affecting the future of the ETF

The Chairman briefed the Board on recent events that would influence the work of ETF in the future. He concentrated on the discussions taking place on the EU financial perspectives for 2007-2013 and the tensions caused by the desire of some Member States to cap the budget despite the recent accession of 10 new Members States and the need for further development.

The two key issues in the policy discussions concerned the European added value and the capacity to implement policies. These two elements therefore also formed a core part of policy proposals from DG EAC, and their complexity had led to delays in defining the content of those policy proposals.

Nevertheless the Commission intended to adopt a series of texts on 14 July 2004 that would include the policy package for DG EAC outlined in the Commission Communication of 9 March 2004. The package would emphasise the ever-closer relationship between education and training in the context of Lifelong Learning and, unlike the current programmes, would be an instrument to implement an EU policy objective at the highest level (the Lisbon strategy). This ambition would require a quadrupled budget, but even with this level of funding the Socrates and Leonardo programmes would only be able to reach a small, albeit significantly increased, percentage of the overall EU population.

The Commission would also adopt a Communication on the creation of an executive agency to manage education programmes from 1 January 2005. A background cost-benefit study had included both ETF and CEDEFOP at the recommendation of the European Parliament. However a final decision on the best solution for technical assistance currently provided by ETF could only be made in the light of a clear position on the role of the ETF in the European Neighbourhood Policy .

Mr David Lipman (DG RELEX) then briefed the Board on recent developments in the external assistance programmes that would benefit from small budget increases. The new proposals would be policy driven and would concentrate on three policy areas: the European Neighbourhood Policy; sustainable development in developing countries; and the EU as a global player.

Referring back to the discussions on EU financial perspectives, he explained that the European added value of the external relations policies was not in question, but that there was considerable scope for simplification. It was proposed to reduce the number of instruments from 47 to six, of which three would be thematic and three geographical:

1. Humanitarian aid;
2. Macro-economic assistance;
3. Peace and security;
4. Pre-accession instrument covering Turkey and the Western Balkans;
5. European Neighbourhood Instrument covering Mediterranean countries (Barcelona process), the western New Independent States and the Southern Caucuses;
6. Economic cooperation and development for all other countries.

The legal instruments would be proposed in September 2004, and ETF would principally be concerned with the European Neighbourhood Instrument .

M. Dirk Meganck (DG ELARG) provided details on the European Relation instrument envisaged by the European Commission for 2007-2013 for pre-accession (IPA) which aims at emphasising strategic planning and coherency on the various components of the European Union pre-accession strategy. Its geographical coverage would be:

1. Countries with the status of candidate country according to article 49 of the European Union Treaty, presently Turkey and Croatia; and
2. Countries with potential membership status, the Western Balkans

The IPA would focus on two main priorities:

1. Helping countries to fulfil the political and economic criteria (Copenhagen criteria for membership); and building administrative and judicial capacity; and
2. Helping countries preparing for the EU Structural Funds.

The programme of implementation of the IPA would be differentiated according to 5 main components:

1. Institutional building;
2. Regional and cross-border cooperation;
3. Regional development;
4. Human resources development;
5. Rural development.

The approach of multiannual programming would allow more flexibility between the different components.

The European Commission would prepare in October the regular annual reporting for Bulgaria and Romania assessing their status on the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria for accession.

For Turkey the annual regular reporting would make assessment of the political criteria. For Croatia the date would be fixed to start negotiations as well as for the opening of the pre-accession instruments.

Mr Diertrich Nelle (Germany) thanked the speakers for the exhaustive information provided by the Commission. He was pleased to note that for the time being the technical assistance for the Tempus programme would remain in Turin because this would mean stability for ETF as well as for the Tempus programme. Mr Nelle then asked about the state of play of the Tempus plus proposal.

Mr Ossi Lindqvist (Finland) expressed full support for the new policy of integrated and comprehensive approach to education and training that takes into account the increased need for training at all levels and in particular for practical training.

Mr Perugini in adding to the appreciation for the presentations made by the European Commission representatives presented the position that Italy would plan in supporting the future of ETF. He underlined that within the context of the new concept of integrated education and training further enhancing and updating of the role of ETF should be recognised. He reported that Ms Moratti, the Italian Minister of Education, had already raised with Ms Reding last February, on the one hand the need for an upgrade of the role of ETF and on the other hand concerns on potential reduction of its scope as a consequence of the setting up of a new executive agency. The value of the work of ETF has also been recognised in the European Commission Communication to the Parliament and the Council on 22 May 2004 and would need consolidation. In addition, the creation of a new executive agency would generate additional costs adding up to the one of ETF and would be in conflict with the recommendation of the European Parliament for a more efficient use of existing Agencies. Mr. Perugini then asked clarification on the specific outcome of the cost benefit study on the Tempus technical assistance and how it relates with the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The Chairman clarified to Mr. Nelle that the structure of the Tempus plus proposal would still need be fine-tuned and looked at in the context of financial availability and therefore would not be ready on 14 July 2004

In reply to Mr. Perugini, the Chairman clarified that on the executive agency the European Commission would adopt a Communication and not a proposal. It would be a transparent procedure vis-à-vis the Parliament. He outlined that the cost benefit study had come to a positive conclusion on the inclusion of the Tempus technical assistance in the executive agency. However he highlighted that a final decision on the best solution for technical assistance currently provided by ETF still had to be made in the light of a clear position on the role that the ETF would play in the European Neighbourhood Policy.

6. Director's bilan ETF 1994-2004

Mr de Rooij presented a short history of the ETF from its establishment in spring 1994 to the celebration of its 10th anniversary. He illustrated the growth of the organisation as it was gradually given more responsibility for managing VET reform programmes under the Phare, Tacis, MEDA and CARDS Programmes. He also referred to the difficult period in 1999 when the staff was reduced by 25%, and to the remarkable response of the organisation to the new challenge of establishing itself as a centre of expertise.

He declared that he was proud to handover to Ms Muriel Dunbar an organisation long pronounced healthy by the Court of Auditors, a position corroborated by the outcomes of two external evaluations. Furthermore he was satisfied with the organisation's good relations with the European Institutions, Member States, partner country authorities and networks of professional organisations. However, he also sounded a cautionary note on the need for a stable perspective for ETF and encouraged the European Commission to come to a swift decision on the future of its programmes.

Finally he thanked the members of the Board, the European Commission and the ETF management team for their support throughout his tenure as Director, and hoped that it would continue during the term of Ms Dunbar.

7. Recognition of personal contribution of the Director

The Board heard a number of tributes to the work of Mr de Rooij over the last 10 years. The full texts of these tributes can be found in annex.

8. Handover to Muriel Dunbar

9. Other Business

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 9 November 2004.

ACTION POINTS:

1. **ETF** to circulate to Governing Board Members before the November meeting a comparative analysis of procedures adopted to appoint Deputy Directors at other agencies.
2. **European Commission** to make available to Governing Board Members for the next meeting in November detailed minutes of the structured dialogue meetings planned in September 2004.

ANNEX 1: TRIBUTES TO PETER DE ROOIJ

From Micheline Scheyns

On behalf of the GB, I would like to say a few words to honour Peter De Rooij as director of the European Training Foundation. Since the establishment of ETF in 1994, Peter has been at its steering wheel. He managed not only to keep his vessel afloat during different storms and changing currents, but could also steer it into new directions.

Being a member of this GB for more than five years now, I have witnessed that it was not an easy job. It is a challenging job that demands a combination of different kind of capacities and talents. During his ten year mandate Peter had to build out a new organisation with a specified mission in VET reform in countries in transition and he also had to search how he could use his capacities in the most profitable way for the development of the organisation.

As a director he could use his managing capacities in order to realise the targets of the ETF within the boundaries set by budgetary restraints and the organisation's regulations. It was an important challenge to continuously motivate the personnel and to adapt the human resources to the changing environment within which the organisation had to work. We have to admit that the conditions in which ETF had to be transformed into a centre of expertise put an additional strain on the capacities of the director and the motivation of the staff.

Peter could use and develop his communication skills in order to assure a good balance between the demands of the commission, the expectations of the member countries and the needs of the partner countries. During the process of the structured dialogue Peter had the opportunity prove his diplomatic talents more than he ever wished to do.

Working in the sector of VET reforms demands an openness to the world, its problems and its challenges, it demands a keen eye for innovations, a good understanding of human resources development and labour market policies and sufficient common sense to understand the difficulties to apply new ideas to existing situations. What struck me the most in the way Peter took up his mandate as director was his commitment to the mission of ETF: realising social cohesion and sustainable labour markets and economies through education and vocational training. I am convinced that Europe needs more than ever people like Peter De Rooij who want to invest their time and energy in assuring that employability of people is based on solid competencies procured/delivered by sound vocational education and training systems and well organised policies and institutions.

During Peter's mandate a lot has been realised in and through the ETF. The different project results can testify that.

A very apparent change is the number of member states that grew from fifteen to twenty five. We must not forget that five years ago we were still discussing what the role of the ETF could be in the realisation of the *acqui communautaire* within the accession countries. In the meantime ETF has helped to prepare the education and training systems and the labour markets of ten new countries for their membership of the EU and is working on the accession of the remaining countries.

Another important transition has been the widening of the geographical scope of the ETF. This transition enriched the experience on vocational education and training of the ETF in the central and eastern European countries and Central Asia through new challenges in the Mediterranean region. The geographical shift has been an important opportunity for the ETF to refine and deepen its information and knowledge on VET-systems and experiences in fundamentally different societal and institutional settings.

How the future of ETF will look like is still an open question. On different occasions I already expressed my disappointment about the lack of perspective for the work of ETF beyond 2006. I secretly hoped that the commission would have given this awaited for long term perspective for ETF as a goodbye present for Peter De Rooij. But I realised that this was impossible.

Nevertheless, Peter De Rooij leaves an organisation with a lot of valued information and experience and a capacity to develop new strands of experience. I am sure that Muriel Dunbar, the new ETF director will be able to consolidate the legacy of Peter De Rooij's work and develop the ETF as the centre of expertise for VET reforms within the partner countries.

From Ulrich Hillenkamp, Deputy Director of ETF

Mr. Chairman, dear Members of the Board, dear Peter de Rooij

I am sure you can imagine that I had hoped very much to be with you today. Unfortunately I still have to undergo some more treatment to consolidate the good result reached. The doctors and I are confident that I will be back to the Foundation beginning September. Let me thank you all for your good wishes, they helped me a lot to get better through this dark period of my life.

Though not able to address you in person I would not like to let this occasion go without saying a few words to Peter de Rooij's farewell. I have asked Peter Greenwood to read them out on my behalf.

I still remember my first meeting with Peter de Rooij after he had been elected Director of the European Training Foundation in 1994. It was in Bonn. . I was at that time in charge of the bilateral cooperation of Germany with all (former) socialist countries to support the reform of the education sector linked to Labour market and economic development. We discussed the challenge of establishing this new agency as a focal point for cooperation between the European Union and the Partner Countries in training matters Our discussions showed a high degree of common perception, ideas and approaches for the remit, challenges and way of working of this new institution of the European Union. Peter de Rooij was full of enthusiasm for his new job which he saw as a unique chance to make the cooperation more efficient and effective. So when I became Deputy Director of this institution we started a long, fruitful and inspiring cooperation which now comes to an end only because Peter's mandate is expiring.

Ten years are a long time. The Foundation today is a well established and well recognised centre of expertise. This had not always been the case and the Foundation has seen some quite difficult times over the years. In leaving the Foundation you – Peter - can be proud on what has been achieved. You have developed your vision, you have looked out for new challenges, you have cared about an efficient and effective management of the Foundation – the results can easily be seen. In our world of today it is not easy to manage an EU institution of this kind and execute the budget in full respect of all the regulations. You have managed this, as acknowledged by external evaluations, the Court of Auditors and the recent discharge by Parliament. I know from you that the management function of your position had always been at the centre of your attention – and if you allow me to say so you have done this well.

You have also been very courageous in striving for new opportunities and challenges for the Foundation. I still remember a famous "condition" set by Member States and the Commission when it came to the extension of the mandate of the Foundation to the so called Meda-countries. The condition was that this extension would have to be executed without any additional post in the tableau des effectifs. I was more than reluctant to accept this condition but you convinced me that we should take this risk and come back to the question of resources only when we had proven our capacity by making a good start - and it worked. If we had not accepted, we would have lost a unique chance to work in this part of the world which many would pity today

In more recent times you have argued that the experience of the Foundation could be of even greater value for European Union external relations priorities. The EU's Neighbourhood Policy represents an excellent framework whereby support for reform in education and training can significantly contribute to EU priorities across issues as governance, employment, social cohesion and so on. You have also argued that the Community could get a better return on its investment in ETF if the Foundation's expertise could also be made available to other regions. I share this view. You might have been more successful in making this case if you would have followed more closely the so-called "Polder Model", a recommended model of yours to use inside the Foundation to come to an agreement in difficult cases. (I guess the Polder Model is known also to non-Dutch people, if not Peter will be more than happy to explain it later). I take this opportunity to encourage the Commission, the Governing Board and the budgetary authority to consider these perspectives in reflections regarding the future of Community programmes, external relations policies and the ETF.

The Foundation – unlike Cedefop – had and has the task to give political advice to decision makers in our Partner Countries. Peter, you have always seen this task as quite a challenge for yourself. Over the years you have established an intensive relationship with numerous key persons in charge of the reform of vocational education and training from government, social partners and the private sector. I know from many of them how much they have appreciated meeting and working with you. This is something which counts and stays.

I think it is no secret that one of your fundamental convictions has always been that teachers and trainers play – or more precisely: should play - a key role in all educational reform processes. That teachers and trainers must be seen as key change agents. It is therefore a “logical” coincidence that at the time of your departure the Foundation is now taking stock of what has been done on this crucial topic over the years and what the issues at stake are. I can assure you that this topic will not be neglected after you have left.

Both of us have always seen the topic of vocational education and training in a broader context: linked to the Labour market, to the needs of enterprises and the economy as a whole but also as a major area to promote social and economic cohesion and the development of the individual. Both of us have also seen investment in education and training as one of, if not even the most important investment the State, the society, the individual can make. I don't have to quote all the political statements, decisions and processes setting out or confirming this belief like for example the well-known Lisbon process. But I would like to recall our November 2003 event “Learning matters” which had a lot to do with those fundamental beliefs, which was an absolute highlight in the – still short – history of the Foundation and which I am sure you will always remember in looking back to your professional career.

I know that you are not looking for retirement. You are up to new challenges in making use of your professional experience gained over these ten years of responsibility for the Foundation. But you will of course also draw on past experience of your professional life in the Netherlands. That you also will leave Italy and especially Torino makes you sad having liked so much to live here. You recently told me that you - together with your wife Ellen - have managed to go to each region of Italy at least once. You like art and music very much and you are an expert now in Italian history, architecture, art, not only with regard to Torino and Piemonte. You are well experienced in “sci di fondo – cross country skiing” where there is a clear advantage of Italy – your favourite places had been Cogne close to the Gran Paradiso and the Dolomites - against the Netherlands.

Let me close by saying that these ten years of work together had been for both of us an exiting time. I would personally like to thank you for the trust and the direct way of cooperation you have shown and practised. Building a new institution from scratch, caring for quality, creating trust on what this institution can offer, building a memory of reform processes in our Partner Countries, promoting processes, in effect: making a difference and becoming a well recognised partner has been the real challenge. You have all right to say that we are there!

I wish you all the best.

From Nikolaus van der Pas, Chairman of the Governing Board

Where to start? Where to start in summing up 10 years of a man's career, of a man's life in fact, because if anything Peter de Rooij will be remembered for his deep personal commitment in everything he did. Leading the ETF for him was not just a job, it was a vocation, a mission. This came through again clearly today in Peter's reports and statements.

To start at the beginning, Peter came to the European Training Foundation in the midst of a very rich and diverse career which started with geography teaching and led quickly into higher education management and then public administration in the education field. Before joining ETF, Peter held a senior position in the Netherlands education ministry as Director for Polytechnics.

Peter's first task as Director of the ETF was a very challenging one: creating the European Training Foundation, turning an idea into concrete reality. The idea of the ETF was born in the heady days of the late 1980's when the Berlin wall fell and the prospect suddenly opened up of reuniting Europe with regions that for decades had been separated from it by the Iron curtain. The idea of the ETF was born at the same time as the Phare programme and the Tempus programme, initiating a process that has led to us welcoming today the representatives of 10 new Member States as full members of the Governing Board.

The founding fathers of the ETF, Jacques Delors in particular, perceived from the very start the importance of human resources development – of vocational training and retraining - to countries that were about to undergo a rapid and radical transition from central planning to the market economy. They also recognised that the European Union had a stock of expertise and good practice in the VET field on which the ETF could draw in its work in partner countries. And so the idea of the ETF was born.

But much of the credit for transforming ETF from a potentiality to a reality goes to Peter de Rooij. Of Course Peter benefited greatly from the constant support of the Italian government and of the local and regional authorities of the host city. And in this context we must mention my predecessor Tom O'Dwyer, whose unflagging personal commitment was an important driving force in the early days of the ETF.

This process was not an easy one. Four years elapsed between the adoption of the ETF's founding regulation in spring 1990 and the first meeting of its Governing Board in spring 1994, and its first job was to appoint a Director. That Director was of course Peter de Rooij.

Setting up a new entity from scratch is no mean feat. Anyone who has experienced them, knows all about the birth pangs of an organisation, when everything is to be done: buildings to be found and fitted out, staff to be recruited and set to work, equipment to be purchased and installed, processes, procedures and systems to developed and put in place. And it does not stop there: the early years are a constant process of adaptation and adjustment, a succession of crises large and small as systems and processes designed on paper react to the strain of an increasing volume and complexity of work.

Peter de Rooij deserves the praise and gratitude of the Governing Board for having led the Foundation through this critical period.

From the very beginning, the context in which ETF operated was one of constant evolution, not to say revolution. The Founding Regulation was amended before the organisation had even found its feet to include the TACIS programme, which was the Union's response to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The organisation's mandate was extended to the Meda and Cards countries four years later in 1998. Most dramatic of all in its consequences was the major restructuring of the Commission's external relations architecture starting in 1999 which entailed a major reorientation in the role of the ETF and in its activities.

I have spoken of the challenges of leading an organisation in its start-up phase. In my view, leading an organisation through an important restructuring exercise is an even greater strain on one's managerial and human capacities. Hard decisions have to be taken, projects that one has nurtured have to be sacrificed, people have to be redeployed, not always to their liking.

Again, Mr de Rooij brought the ETF through this difficult stage and on behalf of the Governing Board I convey our thanks for his leadership during this period. A period from which, the ETF has emerged as a stronger institution, with a clearer idea of its role and purpose and a sharper profile in the eyes of its stakeholders as a centre of expertise. Above all, it has carved out for itself a distinctive place in the European Union family.

For the leader of an organisation, there is no such thing as a good time to leave. There is always so much still to be done, so much unfinished business. But if there is a less bad time, it is at a juncture such as this which marks a turning point in the life of an institution. The ETF was set up to assist the central and eastern European countries in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin wall. Most of these countries are now full Members of the European Union, and their representatives sit with us here today as full Members of the ETF Governing Board. The ETF has made a decisive contribution to their preparation for enlargement and Peter can be justly proud of this achievement, something he can look back upon and say "mission accomplished".

The ETF itself is Peter de Rooij's most valuable legacy: an excellent team of people with a clear mission and a strong sense of purpose, a recognised pool of expertise on vocational education and training reform in transition economies, a valuable and valued resource at the service of the EU's external assistance efforts in the partner countries. Peter de Rooij came to the ETF when it was no more than a project, and a rough draft of a project at that. And he leaves it as an effective instrument of change: an instrument that has made a difference in the past and will make a difference in the future.

As a representative of the Commission, I would like to assure you of the Commission's attachment to the ETF and its work. We want the organisation, which you have led from its birth to adulthood, to prosper further – also because it is a powerful instrument in the service of our External Relations, in particular the relations with all those countries for which the EU feels a special responsibility. Once the policy towards those countries has been worked out – between the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament – the ETF's role in that policy will fall into place. This is my reply to the impatience which I noted in some of your remarks. The latter confirm fully what I said before: for you, this was not just a job but a mission. This then is my message to you: your achievement will be well looked after. It is at the same time a message for Mrs. Dunbar, your successor.

Peter, on behalf of the Governing Board and on behalf of Commissioner Reding, I would like to thank you for your hard work, for your commitment, for your ability in leading the ETF, through thick and thin, in its first 10 years of life and wish you very great satisfaction and success in whatever you choose to do next.