

MINUTES

GOVERNING BOARD

MEETING

25 NOVEMBER 2022

10 February 2023



The ETF Governing Board (GB) meeting took place in presence at the ETF and on-line on 25 November 2022, and was chaired by Mr Joost Korte, Director General of DG EMPL, European Commission (EC). The Chair noted the successful, extraordinary meeting held the previous day when the ETF Director had been selected and wished to have an equally successful meeting on the day.

1. Adoption of the agenda

On a proposal of the Chair, the Board unanimously adopted the agenda for the meeting. No any other business points were suggested.

2. Introductory remarks from the Chair

The Chair welcomed the new members of the Governing Board: namely Mr Nino Buic, new alternate member for Croatia; Mrs Sinead Mahon, new main member for Ireland; Mr Matthew Vella, new member for Malta; Mrs Ilona Juszczak, new main member for Poland; Mr Stanislaw Drzazdzewski, new alternate member for Poland; and Mrs Angeles Maria Herez Lazaro, new alternate member for Spain.

Two recently appointed members of the Board who could not participate: Mrs Miley Sarah, the new alternate member for Ireland and Mr Alexander Farrugia the new alternate member for Malta.

Then two member states who were not represented, neither in person nor online: Bulgaria and the Netherlands.

The European Commission was represented by Mr Mathieu Bousquet (Director, NEAR A (Acting) and HoU, DG NEAR.A.3) and Cécile BILLAUX (HoU, DG INTPA.E.2). Ms Antoaneta ANGELOVA-KRASTEVA (Director EAC.C) as observer, and Mr Jeffrey MASON (Director, IAS.B) was attending online.

In addition, Ms Simone RAVE (NEAR), Mr Lluís PRATS and Mr Alberto FUNES BETANCOR (EMPL) attended in person. Mr Liviu PACALA and Mr Filip VERHOEVEN (IAS), Mr Alexis HOYAUX (INTPA), Ms Unni SAGBERG (EAC) attended online.

Ms Ummuhan BARDAK represented the ETF Staff Committee.

3. Follow-up to previous meetings

The Board unanimously adopted the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 June 2022.

The Chair presented the follow up to the action points since the last GB meeting.

4. Single Programming Document 2023-25 – Annual Work Programme 2023

Xavier MATHEU DE CORTADA (ETF) presented the ETF's 2023 work programme, highlighting that it will be driven by the **policy context** of the EU and the **ETF strategy 2027**, that will represent the third year of a seven-year strategy.

He referred to an **extremely positive Commission opinion**, received in July, which represents the outcome of the inter-service consultation among the different DGs in the Commission with whom the ETF work, and which is finally officially adopted by the College of Commissioners. Building on the Commission opinion, the ETF will maintain the needed flexibility and resilience in order to anticipate needs and be ready for changes.

In line with the previous years, he stressed, in the 2023 ETF work programme, the continued importance of **partnerships** with key actors such as Commission services, international organisation, member states, financial and development international agencies; as well as the concepts of **networking, co-creation of knowledge** and **recognition of valuable expertise in our partner countries**, which ETF want to work with. All the above, **in alignment with the Commission priorities and SDGs**.

The ETF 2023 work programme remains strongly affected by the aggression against Ukraine and as a consequence by the decision to change the status of **Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia** into candidate countries, thus making them gradually enter into the logic of the enlargement process.

As new elements, he pointed out: a new focus on **Erasmus**, where the ETF have been working with DG EAC on VET projects' capacity building; the **European Year of Skills**, the ETF is aligning its activities to those of the Commission and other agencies.

The ETF's main objective, as a **knowledge hub**, will remain to play the role of a global reference for policies, methodologies and knowledge on skills in human capital development through the implementation of its three core services, which will respond to the objectives of anticipation of skill needs, support the supply of skills in the different countries and regular analysis of the performance and progress at system level. The ETF will continue to monitor how the different countries are implementing their own policies and will provide policy advice to the countries, and to the European Union.

The **different ETF projects** will continue and will embed four **main transversal policy priorities**, namely greening, gender, migration and digitalisation. As for the **extra-subsidy projects**, he named DARYA, which started in June; COVES, support for vocational excellence, for which we are waiting for the second phase; the INTPA training, the ETF provided training through seven EU delegations in Malawi and in 2023 in Laos; the ACQF (African Continental Qualification Framework), in which the ETF worked in partnership with GIZ for the first phase and now the second implementation phase will start.

From the **thematical point of view**, he indicated as key highlights for 2023: the skills anticipation and studies in the energy and crafts sector; the European Year of Skills (with emphasis on skills for Fair, Digital and Green Transition and Vocational Excellence); the private sector engagement in skills formation (with emphasis on pact for skills and sectoral / value chain skills needs / provision); and Lifelong learning, a leit motiv of the ETF Strategy, with particular emphasis on micro-credentials and individual learning accounts.

From the **services point of view**, he recalled the emphasis in policy advice to enlargement, notably to the three new candidate countries; the curation of knowledge, meaning how this will be used afterwards for policy advice; the New Monitoring Framework with the second phase of the sixth round of the Torino Process focused on policy assessment. He also mentioned that the ETF signed a new agreement with UNDP, through which the ETF will provide a knowledge transfer of methodologies and guidelines the ETF uses for skills identification and future of skills, which will be then applied to Latin America by the UNPD office in Panama.

From the **geographic point of view**, he confirmed the first priority being Ukraine and the candidate countries. Then the ETF will continue working at regional level; in Africa mainly through the ACQF

project, which has a lot of synergies with ETF work on comparison of qualifications, with useful spill overs then for other countries. The implementation of DARYA in central Asia and the above-mentioned knowledge hub.

From an institutional development point of view, the ETF will continue greening the agency; digital transformation; improving internal processes; preparing ETF contribution to the EU foresight exercise in the wake of the EC Secretary General's request to the EU Agencies' Network of being more active in that respect, while allowing to feed also the ETF own process of foresight for the next strategy period.

He informed the members about **five main communication campaigns**, in accordance with European Union for Skills, around which the ETF will organise activities at cooperate and at project level. The focus being on skills for inclusion, for greening and digital, for a changing world, for educators and learners, and for economic growth.

As for the budget, he highlighted that, in response to an EC request, the ETF included more details via the Activity Based Budget (ABB) methodology with data disaggregated by region & service, through which an estimation of the distribution of ETF staff's costs is provided. In the related annex more information is available also by countries.

He pointed out that the distribution of resources by regions has been quite stable over the last ten years, namely providing one third of the resources for the candidate countries; one fourth for the neighbourhood south and east; around 15% for central Asia.

The Chair thanked Mr MATHEU DE CORTADA for his presentation.

Ms Marta STARÁ (Czech Republic), representing the Presidency, on behalf of the other GB members, thanked the ETF for the important work done in the partner countries and for the ability to adapt the ETF portfolio outside of the agreed work programme to be able to respond to unexpected crises, such as the COVID pandemic before, the Russian aggression to Ukraine as well as other crises that were on the CARDS. She appreciated the ETF had been able to immediately implement activities aimed to support Ukraine and its refugees and will continue by rebuilding their education system after the war. She expressed the wish to see ETF work more presented and thanked for the work carried out.

The Chair invited Mr MATHEU DE CORTADA to react.

Mr MATHEU DE CORTADA thanked Ms Stará for the appreciation and acknowledged that often the ETF is not well known in the EU member States likely because of its focus on partner countries outside the EU.

He mentioned that to counter this situation, the ETF has been trying to work much more with local institutions, as well as to represent ETF activities in the DGVT and ACVT meetings to disseminate information on the ETF work, at least for specialised bodies. In particular, he referred to the positive results of ETF communication campaigns, through which the ETF hugely increased its number of social networks' followers and the impact of ETF's website. He also recalled the efforts made to participate to the EP event on the theme of Youth together with the other EMPL agencies. He confirmed the ETF will continue to further improve and reach levels of excellence in this respect.

Concerning Ukraine, he pointed out that this country has been an ETF priority for years, and that in 2022 the ETF tackled the situation by rearranging all its activities to better respond to their needs and will now be ready as soon as the situation changes for rebuilding their learning system basing proposals on a study carried out some years ago on the remapping of the vocational and education

and learning system in Ukraine coupled with an analysis of their needs in the 21st Century, not to rebuild just what was before, but also to improve it.

He confirmed ETF effort to continue being flexible and able to re-prioritise its activities as much as possible and to be service-oriented.

The Chair asked for questions and gave the floor first to Ms Mendes (Sweden) and then to Mr Bousquet (DG NEAR).

Ms Malin MENDES (Sweden) agreed on the appreciation of the ETF work and then put forward two questions after having read the SPD document:

- As the ETF works in many volatile or conflict regions, or close neighbouring to conflict regions, are there any special measures to ensure safety and security of the ETF staff when working in these regions?
- As the ETF is working a lot on complementing other agencies' work and in the SPD there is reference to an increasing competitive and vibrant situation against which the ETF has to position itself: what is the competition in all this world of collaboration?

Mr Mathieu Bousquet (DG NEAR) took the floor to express a high degree of satisfaction on the collaboration with the ETF, notably in providing advice and expertise to their colleagues, both in headquarters and in the delegations. He very much appreciated the presentation of the ABB budget as response to a previous recommendation.

He confirmed DG NEAR welcomes the increasingly important role played by ETF in advising on policy and working at strategic level and considered important that ETF continues to position itself as a professional agency on human capital development and lifelong learning. In that respect, he mentioned as good example, the assistance the ETF provides to the recovery in Ukraine, through shaping the professional debate on strategic topics, involving experts and policy makers. DG NEAR also welcomes the ETF input in relation to Chapter 26 in the enlargement policy, notably the input for sub-committees, but also the country fiches to report progress in the enlargement countries. He stated the SPD reflected well this approach, while leaving the necessary flexibility. He stressed the importance of keeping the overall mission of the ETF in mind when taking decisions on individual activities, as well as on the extra-budgetary activities, to rightly prioritise the strategic direction.

He also pointed out the importance of the ETF work done regarding the rapid education diagnostic studies in Kosovo and proposed the ETF to include resources, at least one, and preferably two, more diagnostic studies in 2023.

Then he highlighted 2023 being the European Year of Skills, and the recognition of qualifications in third countries being one of the objectives of such year, DG NEAR would welcome the ETF active involvement.

He recalled the serious concern of the partner countries about brain drain, brain waste, brain gain, and indicated that DG NEAR would like to see ETF guiding them on how recognition of skills can be accompanied by measures to mitigate brain drain, improve brain gain, and avoid brain waste and create win/win situations. They would also welcome new opportunities created by the digital economy to that purpose.

Finally, he mentioned DG NEAR very much welcome the revised Torino process and would like to see it helping them to better link policy and programming by targeting the root causes in skill development, while linking it to a policy dialogue in the partner countries.

He concluded by thanking ETF for the work done and stressing DG NEAR support.

Ms Eva JIMENO SICILIA, prompted by Mr MATHEU DE CORTADA, replied to Ms MENDES by indicating that the ETF has a close collaboration with the European External Action Service (EEAS) that provides support by advising on countries that are considered of high risk. And then she referred to an Inter-Agency new contract under exploration with a private company, International SOS, that will allow to receive travel advice for all countries (not only those at high risk) and additional services while on site.

She stressed that information prior to the mission taking place is key for a sound assessment to be done before going there.

Mr MATHEU DE CORTADA complemented the reply indicating that a lesson learnt from the pandemic period has been how to work by digital means and this has allowed to continue working with many of our stakeholders without being physically in the country, e.g. Ukraine.

He also mentioned the possibility of a sudden outbreak of a crisis, to tackle which it is important to have other means, hence the collaboration with EEAS and International SOS.

Mr MATHEU DE CORTADA then went on replying to Ms MENDES to the question on competition vs collaboration. He indicated the best way to make use of limited resources is to collaborate with other agencies, private companies, that sometime are very dynamic and even aggressive at times.

He then reacted to Mr BOUSQUET' intervention stating that as for the Rapid Diagnosis, ETF is very proud of the work done in Lebanon and then in Kosovo, though it requires an important effort and that should the ETF implement such activity in a higher number of countries there would be need for some support in terms of additional resources. He indicated that for 2023, the ETF will try to agree with DG NEAR on the countries to be targeted in that respect, and that will constitute the third year of activity in the area.

As for the recognition and validation of qualifications, of their content, he stated that the ETF role in that respect had already been mentioned in the Commission policy approach on mobility partnership and that the ETF had been working with several countries in those areas. In particular, he mentioned the ETF has been doing several inventories of validation systems in several countries, whilst reflecting on the south-south migration and circular migration. He pointed out the complexity of reaching a win/win/win situation (sending country / receiving country / migrants) and indicated that to aim at such a result one needs to assess a variety of elements: not only the ROI of the learning provided by the country of origin, but also the remittances of the emigrants, the benefit of having less competition in the internal labour market of the country of origin, but also to assess the policies supporting who leaves as well as those to integrate migrants. Not to forget the issues related to the circular migration, and the possibility of people returning to the original place with their experience and knowledge acquired while doing their migration cycle.

As for the Torino Process, he thanked DG NEAR for the interest shown and presented the revised Torino Process as a two phases process: one being follow up on the basis of some indicators and then having a more specific analysis carried out in some voluntary countries, in 2023 on lifelong learning policies. The focus here is not only on the formal education system, which is requested by our partner countries' ministries, but also the second phase relates to the informal education system, which can be important to develop a skills agenda to upskill and reskill those people that are already in the labour market and that might lose their jobs because of the transition to a digital and greening economy.

He indicated that in December the ETF would be organising a few visits to the EC services to explain in detail the methodology and scope of the revised Torino Process and this could also be done for the DGVLT members, in case of interest.

The Chair thanked those who intervened and Mr MATHEU for his elaborated replies. He pointed out that communicating on ETF and also on EC activities and explaining their work has and will be always a tough task. Nevertheless, he confirmed it is an important work to accomplish and that the appointment of the ETF Director made the previous day will for sure help the ETF in this respect as Ms Torsti will be an excellent communicator very keen to explain the relevance of the agency everywhere.

He also emphasised that the ETF as well as the EC is essentially there for the Member States, but that of course the public needs also to understand the work done. He invited GB members then to report back home the relevance of ETF work.

He also referred to the need to continuously explaining also to the EP the work done by the ETF and the other EMPL agencies and considered the EP hearing to which Mr Torsti will be invited in January as a good opportunity. He recalled to the event organised in Brussels **in September** on Youth by the Chair of the Employment Committee, to which all the five agencies under the DG EMPL remit were invited together with representatives of youth organisations, an extremely good event, which also helps in communicating about the activities of the various agencies.

He indicated he considered that a good initiative and he himself asked his people to organise a similar event every year. Thus, in September every year in Brussels DG EMPL will organise an event where all the five agencies will participate and put on display their activities.

Following this discussion, the GB unanimously adopted the ETF 2023–2025 SPD/Annual WP 2023.

5. ETF Budget 2023

Ms Eva JIMENO SICILIA (ETF) presented the ETF Budget 2023 and pointed out the fact that the ETF subsidy is fully covered by the EU budget, with an exceptional one off increase of the EU contribution reaching 4% . She described that as an exception and indicated that as of 2024 the increase will be back to the standard 2%. The reason for such increase relates to the inflation and the crisis on utilities, which brought about an increased budget across the board for all EU institutions.

Then she focused on the extra-subsidy projects for an amount of EUR 2,060,000, out of which EUR 2,000,000 are meant for the DARYA project in Central Asia and EUR 60,000 for the cooperation with EU-OSHA for the sharing of accounting services the ETF provides. The total amount of the extra-subsidy projects is likely to increase once the projects ACQF Africa and COVES will be signed, currently under negotiation.

Then she pointed at the reduced amount of funds the ETF will give back of EUR 93,000 with respect to previous budget years, thanks to a positive trend after the COVID period.

She guided the members of the Board by describing the changes of the budget titles as follows: the most important increase on Title I mainly due to impact of inflation on staff's costs, but also including expenses linked to training reaching pre-Covid target, traineeships and medical support services); increase on Title II (infrastructure), mainly due to cyber security, utilities remaining at similar levels as in 2023; and a decrease in Title III on the operational funds, with the positive outlook of a decrease that went from the initial cut of 12% to a 10% thanks to planning and efforts that the ETF have been doing that will continue in 2024 such as savings on utilities.

She also explained that as discussed in the previous GB meeting, for the sake of transparency, all the funds related to the extra-subsidy projects will be under Title IV, a separate title.

She explained that as for **Title I**, the main increase of 7% is due to the adjustment of salaries as well as to the assumption to increase the number of trainees to ten trainees per year. On the missions, she indicated the wish to decrease administrative missions to the benefit of the operational ones and those shown in the table refer to missions only for Directorate and her Department. Then she pointed out that the other significant increase is linked staff development, targeting in 2024 to reach pre-Covid levels. Then she indicated that the representation expenses, after the COVID period, are expected to increase although impact is very low on overall budget.

She clarified that in case of inflation picks, then the ETF will compensate through re-prioritisation i.e. training budgets, or traineeships, or alike reshuffling funds within Title I.

She explained that as for **Title II**, the building increases by 16% as on one side there might be a potential higher price for gas and electricity and on the other side there will be maintenance costs of the building which had been postponed from 2022 to 2023 (electric cabin works to be carried out by the Region), as well as costs related to a detailed design of a possible move of ETF to a different premises post 2027. Linked to IT, 13% relates mainly to cyber security and to face the increase in price of chips and other IT materials. The administrative cost increase is mainly due to insurance, which has been widened to adapt it to the hybrid modality. As for the GB meetings, they will go back to the two ordinary meetings.

As for **Title III**, she reminds that this includes funds that cover operational actions, staffing costs of experts and other staff working projects are reflected under Title I. The ETF will keep the same amount for communication activities also considering that 2024 will be the Year of Skills; the decrease of 11% is expected to be absorb the decrease on number of events face to face, joining forces/use events organised by other institutions, using new instruments of cooperation such as networks and communities of practice, which are a source of expertise that is not based on fees. Missions will remain stable in relation to 2022 as it is considered to be very important to be on the ground to ensure sustainability of networks, updated knowledge and understanding of country situation etc.

She recalled that in case of signature of the extra-subsidy projects, then members of the Board will receive an amended budget with those amounts included.

Finally, she indicated a stable level of staff, 129.

The Chair invited Ms Starà to comment upon.

Ms Marta STARÁ (Czech Republic), representing the Presidency, on behalf of the other GB members, recognised the difficulty of estimating a budget under the current volatility of utilities costs and asked whether such an increase will be at the expenses of the projects funding.

The Chair thanked Ms Starà and invited Ms Jimeno Sicilia to reply.

Ms JIMENO SICILIA (ETF) replied that the ETF will reprioritise within its Title 1 and Title 2, so as to avoid as much as possible further reductions on projects funding.

Ms Malin MENDES (Sweden) welcomed the separation of the extra-subsidy funds as a Title on its own and then asked whether the move towards the hybrid way of working / new normal would be more or less expensive.

Ms JIMENO SICILIA (ETF) replied that already in 2022 the ETF started separating the budget, with full clarity in 2023. As for the hybrid work, she considered that the answer is no straightforward. Savings have been made on e.g. mission or events that allow to free resources for other kind of

actions. It could be less expensive if one could use premises and office space differently, considering lower occupancy; in the mid-term this could reduce expenses.

Given that there were no further questions nor observations, the GB members unanimously adopted the ETF Budget 2023.

6. ETF Amending budget 2022/2

Ms JIMENO SICILIA (ETF) presented the second amending budget for 2022 and referred to the long discussion held back in June, where a lot of work was one to mitigate the budget risk posed by high inflation and increasing prices of utilities. She confirmed that thanks to that anticipatory work done there are very minor changes in this second amendment in particular in relation to expenses. As for the revenues the current amended budget includes additional EUR 100,000, which represents the funds given by DG INTPA for a training to EU Delegations; and EUR 208, interests.

Then she made reference to the expenses and again highlighted the small adjustments needed. Changes relate to EUR 6,000 from the title I, administrative expenditure, that has been moved to the Title II, mainly on IT and infrastructure.

Ms Marta STARÁ (Czech Republic), thanked Ms JIMENO SICILIA for the introduction and the good discussion held in the previous meeting and confirmed no further questions.

The GB members unanimously adopted the ETF Amending Budget 2022/2.

7. HR IMPLEMENTING RULES TO BE ADOPTED EX ART 110 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

Ms JIMENO SICILIA (ETF) informed the GB members on the two HR implementing rules to be adopted ex art. 110 of the Staff Regulations, notably by analogy:

- EC Decision C(2022) 1715 of 24 March 2022 on home leave for staff residing on 3rd countries
- EC Decision C(2022) 1788 on working time and hybrid working

As for the **EC Decision C(2022) 1715 of 24 March 2022 on home leave for staff residing on 3rd countries**, she stressed the requirement that the decision applies only to staff residing in third countries. She explained the ETF had initially thought of opting out since ETF staff reside in Torino, but DG HR indicated they would prefer agencies to adopt these rules even if they are of no consequence, to consider the future possibility of such as case becoming relevant. On such basis, she confirmed the EC decision had then been submitted for approval to the Board, although there will be currently no implication whatsoever in the ETF.

As for the **EC Decision C(2022) 1788 on working time and hybrid working**, she presented the decision as applying by analogy the one passed by the EC. It relates to hybrid working, which mixes modality between working in the office and working from somewhere else, as well as which regulates the flexibility on the working time.

She indicated that the proposal to the GB was to adopt the decision of the Commission, by analogy, being applicable in the ETF from the 1st January 2023. She presented the minor adaptations that the ETF needed to take care of such as:

- a glossary translating some of the terminology for the Commission on roles and responsibilities to what it implies for the ETF, which took the form of an annex;
- the inclusion of the relevant legislation applicable to the ETF;
- a specific document on how the Joint Committee that ETF already has, works.

She also clarified that by adopting such rule, the GB will be repealing the former decisions on working time and on teleworking.

She confirmed that the Staff Committee had been consulted before approving and implementing the rule and would be further consulted when the detailed guidelines will be prepared.

She also made reference to the dialogue EUAN established with the Commission to try and negotiate on the possible flexibility to deviate from this decision on issues ETF considered key, notably the teleworking outside place of employment. Once the Commission indicated that the point on teleworking outside the place of employment was not a negotiable one, then the ETF agreed to apply by analogy this Commission decision. However, this new decision allows for some flexibility. The EC Decision is expected to be reviewed in September by the Commission.

She went through the main features of the decision providing all details and pointed out that working at the office and teleworking are put on an equal footing, both are a right. It also considers the need for staff to be together at certain moments, thus continuing nurturing teamwork and engagement. It also puts attention to the digital disconnection. As for the teleworking outside the place of employment it is envisaged up to 10 working days per year.

She informed that the ETF was developing implementing guidelines for staff.

Ms Marta STARÁ (Czech Republic), representing the Presidency, confirmed the importance of having such rules in place. She asked how satisfied the staff was with these new rules.

Ms JIMENO SICILIA (ETF) answered that the main issue of concern raised by staff was mainly on teleworking outside the place of employment. She asked Ms Ummuhan Bardak, representative of the Staff Committee to intervene and complete as needed.

Ms Ummuhan BARDAK (ETF), representative of the Staff Committee, indicated that indeed the majority of the staff was hoping to get a bit more flexibility on the teleworking from outside the place of employment and that was due among other reasons, to the fact that:

- Turin is not very well connected in terms of international flights;
- There is an impact about attracting and keeping talent profiles – one colleague resigned because there was no possibility of teleworking from outside the place of employment, as there are also different family related issues, not only children or parents but also other types of obligations.

She confirmed that other aspects of the new decision are mainly welcomed by the staff.

Ms Rossella BENEDETTI (EP independent expert), asked to further elaborate the gender aspects of this agreement as it was mentioned children and other family problems and it is known that in most of the countries still women do have to bear family responsibilities.

Ms JIMENO SICILIA (ETF) reacted on the issue raised by Ms BARDAK on attractiveness, which was also part of the debate of the agencies with the EC. She confirmed that being decentralised from important cities; it is a problem for attractiveness. This is experienced also at the stage of the selection process and in turns this increases issues of balance and diversity of nationalities.

Then she moved the Ms BENEDETTI's question on gender and replied that the EC had been quite forward looking as requests can be submitted on an individual basis, with flexibility to adapt to individual needs, to cope for specific needs linked to family issues.

The Chair indicated that very similar discussions were taking place within the Commission and that he considered there was still room for flexibility and change. He pointed out that the diversity of nationalities of colleagues working in the EU is also an issue. Teamwork makes it important to ensure meetings at least once or twice a week. A second point, he made reference to, was the teleworking outside the place of employment and the flexibility offered by the Decision for the responsible authority; he had already a number of extra requests for which he was inclined to accept them, provided people deliver. He pointed out however that the limit in this respect came from the Staff regulations, which provides for the expatriation allowance, a compensation for leaving the country of origin. A legal issue confirmed by the lawyers of the Commission, as they indicated you cannot simply waive such a right.

The GB members unanimously adopted both decisions.

8. Oral reports (see annex)

9. Any other business

The Chair addressed **Ms MENDES (Sweden)** who was at her last ETF GB meeting and seize the occasion to thank her on behalf of the whole Governing Board for her contributions.

The Chair closed the meeting by indicating that yesterday they had a very successful vote and discussion on the appointment of the next ETF Director. He thanked in particular **Ms Slavica CERNOSA** for her excellent contribution all along that long process, which ensured full transparency and made it easier to come to a quick decision as everybody knew what had happened in the previous two stages.

He also recalled that the next step will be for the EP to invite **Ms Torsti** to the EP hearing, expected on 12th January, and he confirmed the willingness of Ms Torsti to start as soon as possible, therefore possibly before the next meeting of the Governing Board.

He then went on thanking **Mr MATHEU DE CORTADA** for the good work done as Director ad interim and for his readiness to ensure a good transition to the new director.

He then recalled GB members' attention on the need to submit their declarations of commitment and interest for 2022 and for 2023.

10. Date of next meeting

The next regular meeting of the GB will take place in Turin on 13th June 2023, still a provisional date.

The Chair concluded thanking all participants for their constructive attitude and for the fruitful meetings. He also thanked the ETF staff for the organisation and the technicians and the interpreters for the support provided.

He then closed the meeting.

Follow up actions:

To provide the WP 2023 to the budgetary authority by 30 November 2022.

ANNEX

8. Oral reports

Progress on Commission policies and programmes that have an impact on the ETF

DG EMPL

The Chair indicated that the European Union and the members states overcame COVID quite successfully as they showed unprecedented solidarity.

The EU budget thanks to the Next generation EU and the Recovery and resilience facility went up from 1% to 2% of the GDP, and this coupled with member states' initiative on short-time work schemes and other funding had a very positive impact. Of course, the Russian aggression against Ukraine triggered an energy crisis with high inflation, and current prospects for 2023 are not very good. He indicated that a united EU will help overcoming that crisis as well.

In this context, he continued saying that the immediate response provided by the ETF to the crisis triggered by the Russian invasion had to be recognised and welcomed. The **emergency package to support continuity in learning** of young Ukrainians via online courses and the **employability of Ukrainian refugees** outside their country are key elements of ETF activity.

On the Brussels side, he recalled the **Talent pool initiative**, a pilot project jointly set up by DG HOME and DG EMPL making it possible for Ukrainians who are in the EU and have a legal status under the temporary protection special directive, to work, children to go to school, to have access to health care and everything else by virtue of this directive.

In practical terms, Ukrainians can send their CV to the EURES database, a European platform / network of the public employment services, managed by the European Labour Authority. This is important to support Ukrainians, but this is also a micro-pilot testing the ground for a much bigger talent pool initiative that the Commission intends to create, the Talent Partnerships for people from three countries, all of them within the ETF mandate: Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.

He mentioned that the main difficulty in those countries is not to find people, but the recognition of qualifications obtained in a third country. And also in the EU member states the automatic recognition is there only for a few regulated professions.

Ms Von Der Leyen in her *State of the Union* speech when she announced the **European Year of Skills** for 2023 she made a nice mix of different considerations, from labour shortages, transitions, digital and green transition, need for new skills and this third country dimension, with the need to ensure recognition of qualifications from third countries and the need to find people with the right skills.

The Chair pointed out that the European Year of Skills proposal was very much focused on skills and the labour market, on the jobs, and also on the competitiveness of Europe, as compared to the United States, Japan and other competitors, the EU find itself with a huge gap in skills. EU agencies are specifically mentioned in this decision, specifically for the organisation of the European Year of Skills. He clarified that being a legal act, the negotiation had to go through the Council and Parliament and thus the European Year of Skills would not start on the 1st January 2023. He recalled Commissioner Schmit explained what the European Skills is about by saying 'Skills means jobs', hence the focus on the labour market.

The Chair informed the members of the Board on the adoption of the **micro-credentials recommendation** and **of the individual learning account recommendation** as well as the **Centres of Vocational Excellence** where the ETF plays a very important role.

He also provided information on the **new legislation on platform work** in particular, a very important proposal to obtain European rules and directive on the classification of the people who work in platforms such as Uber, Deliveroo and others. The question is to avoid those platforms circumventing normal rules of labour law, which apply to normal businesses.

DG NEAR

Mr Mathieu BOSQUET (NEAR) informed members on the new Director General of DG NEAR, Mr Gert Jan Koopman, due to start on 16th January 2023. He was the Director General of DG Budget for several years.

Then he referred to a number of policies and initiatives of the EU falling under the responsibility of DG NEAR and relevant to the activities of ETF. In particular:

- He mentioned the support the EU is providing to the **Economic Investment Plans (EIP)**. This includes for the period 2021-2027 an EU pledge of EUR 9 billion for the Western Balkans, EUR 2.3 billion for the Eastern Partnership the EIP and EUR 7 billion for the Southern Neighbourhood. Each of these EIPs are expecting to leverage 2 to 4 times the grant amounts by mobilising public and private investments. Human capital development features prominently in all the Economic and Investment Plans (EIP).
- He recalled the major impact of the Russian aggression in Ukraine with major destruction of the education and science infrastructure. He noted that the EU together with member states are **leading on financing education** in Ukraine. He recalled the
 - EUR 100 M pledge of President Von Der Leyen for the rehabilitation of schools,
 - EUR 14 M to purchase school busses and launching the solidarity campaign to mobilise donations of busses.
 - DG NEAR diverted EUR 25 M from ongoing projects to meet the urgent need of the Ukraine civilian population, this includes ambulances, firefighting equipment, food, surgical and medical equipment.
 - EU for skills, better skills for a modern Ukraine – a multi-donor action, funded by the EU, Finland, Germany and Poland since 2019, with an overall budget of EUR 63.5 M. Some of the results and activities of the technical component implemented by GIZ has been repurposed since the beginning of the Russian invasion with a view to improving the resilience of the VET sector in Ukraine in very concrete terms to respond to very basic needs.
 - The emergency support in education - to respond to the immediate crisis through online and offline schooling solutions addressing the need of the safe physical environment.
 - *New Ukrainian school hub* - to support Ukrainian refugee learners in Ukraine by facilitating access to supplementary education and resources.
- He stressed DG NEAR's welcome to the ETF's involvement in the recovery and crisis response through the emergency support programme.
- He highlighted the quick EU move, though based on solid evidence, from the application by Ukraine, Moldova Georgia on in February/March to the Commission opinion on 17th June. He indicated next steps including the preparation of analytical reports for the key chapters for each of these countries by the end of 2022.

- He referred to the **Commission communication on the Eastern Partnership policy on 2020 featuring education and vocational training as a priority**, including a new deal for Youth, active labour market measures such as the youth guarantee adapted to the partner countries' labour markets. He then pointed out the need for the continued cooperation between ETF and the EU on Youth.
- He recalled the EC allocation of **€13mio for humanitarian operations in Moldova**, facing a high inflow of Ukrainian refugees, and providing inclusive access to education.
- When talking about the **Western Balkans**, he mentioned the youth guarantee as being of key importance for young generation to deliver growth and jobs on a fast and sustainable basis. He seized the chance to warmly thank ETF for the contribution and support in drafting the youth guarantee implementation plans in the partner countries, acknowledging almost all the Western Balkan economies had already submitted a draft plan. He noted the sharing of the ETF expertise with the youth guarantee coordinators networks, in particular in the skills component, as being instrumental for the implementation of this flagship of the EIP, and top priority for the region. He also praised the collaboration with the ETF on the preparation of several workshops with TAIEX regarding the design of traineeship and apprenticeship skills, in the context of the youth guarantee.

He also mentioned the dedicated innovation agenda for the Western Balkans, launched in September 2021 and aimed at promoting scientific excellence as well as reform of the regions education systems, create further opportunities for youth and help prevent brain drain.

Furthermore, he referred to the Economic Reform Programmes (ERPs) in the Western Balkans which define key structural reform measures, and remain the key Policy Framework. The structural reform agenda of the ERP includes reforms in the field of human capital development. Education has been identified in most countries as a key challenge.

He mentioned the good work of ETF on the education diagnostic study launched in Kosovo. Two further diagnostic studies are ongoing in Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia with IIEP, while a wider analysis was done in Montenegro.

Finally, he mentioned that both Education and VET are important sectors of support for Türkiye. This includes EUR 530 M of support for inclusive education of refugees in Türkiye but also support under IPA bilateral envelope (approx. EUR 84,5 M). Türkiye has expressed interest for continuous support in these areas.

- As for the South, he stated that education and vocational training coupled with higher education remain key priorities and that a process had been launched in 2021 on how to translate at the regional level the global challenge of the recognition of qualifications as well as the internationalisations of higher education in the Mediterranean area. He mentioned the meeting of the Union for Mediterranean Ministers on Higher Education planned for the second half of 2023.

Finally, he mentioned that the EU is supporting various education and VET programmes in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. Large contributions are provided also for Syrian refugees and other vulnerable groups for access to education in Jordan and Lebanon.

DG INTPA

Mrs Cécile BILLAUX (INTPA) presented DG INTPA's geographical areas of interest: mainly sub-Saharan Africa and also Central Asia, and Latin America and Asia.

She indicated their main interest being to work on Sub-Saharan Africa together with some EU member states on **Team Europe initiative**, on Opportunity driven skills and VET in Africa. They are shaping how to put in place their programme to support VET in the partner countries considering their labour market needs. She stressed the continent being a fast-growing young population and that by 2050 one out of four people in the world will be African. She indicated most of their work is in the informal sector, which makes their intervention on VET more complex.

She confirmed the EU-Africa Global Gateway Investment Package as the guiding framework to support partner countries also in TVET. Nonetheless, she referred to the importance associated by the AU partner countries to the Africa Union's vision 2063, including both the so-called *African Continental Free Trade Agreement* as well as the *AU Continental Strategy for TVET to foster Youth employment*, through which they are trying to get more regional interaction and trade among the different 54 countries in Africa.

In most partner countries, DG INTPA is shaping support programmes, also with ETF contribution, on how to best link them to the employment and job dimensions, maintaining a closer look to the labour market and the private sector needs.

She indicated DG INTPA, through the **Team Europe initiative**, will continue to use three main components as part of this Team Europe approach: have a **technical assistance on demand** to help countries to shape their programmes via their VET Tool Box, which in its third edition, will be very much more driven by the labour market dimensions and also scale up their support for partner countries; make use of **regional platforms to exchange on PPPs** and of **Erasmus plus for developing PPPs and building capacity building**.

She stressed the ongoing work to enlarge the number of member states and private sector (from pharmaceutical to agri-food and alike, including the TVET component) participating to the Team Europe initiative

She then focused on the activities together with the ETF:

- The **training seminars** organised with the ETF, as well as with ILO - one took place in sub-Saharan Africa in Malawi in November 2022 and one is foreseen in Asia, in Laos, in March 2023. DG INTPA provided ETF with €100,000 to organise this seminar with their delegations in partner countries to provide them with capacity building on how DG INTPA can design programmes that are close to the labour market needs and the private sector, how to build PPP into place.
- **African Continental Qualification Framework (ACQF)** - ACQF 1 is a policy initiative of the African Union to see how they can build together a continental qualification framework, or at least compare the existing framework at a national level and try to make some comparable and in transparency in the way of each of the national qualification system is being done.
- **Dialogue and action for resourceful youth in Central Asia (DAYRA)** - a five-year programme now launched between the five central Asian countries and focused on how to improve employability of young people within a labour market-oriented approach. Next three steps will be: 1) building together data and evidence to support the shaping of the policy, 2) put stakeholders together to have a common stakeholder and qualification approach and 3) the link to the labour market and how to make learning approaches relevant.

DG EAC

Ms Antoaneta ANGELOVA-KRASTEVA (DG EAC) made a presentation to provide the member of the Board with a short update on developments on the side of DG Education and Culture and Sport, being of interest and relevance to the ETF activity.

- On Ukraine, she referred to the creation of the **EU education solidarity group for Ukraine**, a very important initiative already presented during last GB meeting, through which support to Ukraine has been intensified over the past months in the field of education, notably with reference to the training for young Ukrainian refugees and which provides also guidance in respect to the European Education areas.

In April 2022 DG EAC put in place a **policy guidance for supporting the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees in the education system**. She mentioned also a call, under the Erasmus plus programme, with a budget of €5mio, to support the creation of an **open education digital environment** to offer quality higher education for students fleeing from Ukraine and internally displaced students.

DG EAC also created a **scheme** with a budget of €25mio **to support displaced researchers from Ukraine** and enable them to continue their research activities at host organisations in the EU member states (the call for applications was published on 28th September and officially launched on 6th October, there was a high level of interest with 900 participants).

She mentioned also the activities of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its knowledge and innovation communities which are also supporting Ukrainian stakeholders through their activities. In particular:

- they provide a budget of €500,000 for Ukrainian universities to join the **higher education institutions initiatives** currently implemented by the EIT;
- they implement the **Girls Go Circular programme**, which is for secondary school girls to train them in digital and entrepreneurial skills and whose e-content has been translated into Ukrainian. The plan is to train around 500 girls in the next few months.
- As for the partners in the **Western Balkans**, she mentioned DG EAC's cooperation is guided by the *Agenda on innovation research education culture, youth and sport*. Their first in person ministerial meeting after the COVID crisis on the 27th and 28th June 2022 launched the **new enhanced partnership under the Erasmus+ programme**, which will allow to extend and reinforce the participation of the Western Balkan partners not yet associated to the Erasmus+ programme. In 2023 this enhanced partnership will be on the **action for European universities** and DG EAC is currently working together with DG NEAR to further define the operational aspects. During such ministerial meeting held in June, there was also the opportunity to discuss the *measures to promote learning for sustainability* and to present the *EU measures foreseen on learning for the green transition and sustainable development*.
- With regard to the **Southern Mediterranean countries**, DG EAC foresees, in close cooperation with colleagues DG NEAR, DG INTPA, the member states and the partner countries, for the **first** time to have a **ministerial meeting** in the last quarter of 2023 **on higher education**.
- About Digital education and skills, a key area of cooperation with their international partners, she indicated that a recent development had been the adoption of **two sets of guidelines**, available for teachers and educational staff that can be used as teaching and support material beyond EU member states, one on **tackling disinformation and promoting digital**

literacy, and another one **on the use of artificial intelligence and data in teaching and learning**.

On the EU side, she referred DG EAC was currently working on **two council recommendations proposals** together with DG Connect and DG EMPL, one will be dealing with the **enabling factors for the successful digital education**, primarily focused on key elements needed for the development and implementation of an ecosystem that delivers accessible high quality and inclusive digital education; and another one on **improving the provision of digital skills in education and training**, and the focus will be on tackling the low level of digital skills of different segments of the population. Such recommendations will put forward the most strategic outlook to digital skills development by addressing all levels of education and training, including VET and adult learning.

She then praised the continuous excellent support provided by the **ETF** and the strong cooperation in promoting the **Selfie tool**, which experienced a steady increase in the use of the tool by international partners in the Western Balkans, in the southern Mediterranean countries, as well as in Africa with still a potential for growth.

Digital education and Hackathon is another initiative implemented under the digital education action plan, which next year will be further enhanced and upgraded. The initiative has a wide international dimension, and it includes also the VET sector. DG EAC will very much rely on **ETF** support and cooperation to promote the initiative amongst the partner countries covered by its mandate.

- She mentioned that in July 2022 the EC adopted the **new European Innovation Agenda**, designed to position Europe as a leading player on the global innovation scene and that the EIT will be meant to play a key role in implementing some of the actions and in particular to coordinate the so called DIPTECH talent initiative having the ambition to train one million talents by 2025. Such an initiative will also contribute to the **European Year of Skills**. In 2023, DG EAC's website will present a report on the achievements of the European Year of Youth in connection to the European Year of Skills.
- Finally, she mentioned that under the **ERASMUS+ programme**, DG EAC has the **action capacity building for VET**, with a budget of €21.3mio, which fosters cooperation between organisations from different regions of the world, including the Western Balkans. In 2022, the EACEA selected 58 projects under this section to help raise the capacity of VET providers especially in the field of management, governance, inclusion, quality assurance and innovation so that they are better equipped to address the needs of the jobs market. In this respect, she thanked very much the support provided by the **ETF**, with its cooperation expertise in the evaluation process. In addition, she mentioned DG EAC will rely on the ETF to make the 2023 general call for proposals of the ERASMUS+ programme, having a budget of €4.2 billion for the individual actions and policy areas, better known among the ETF partner countries.

EEAS

Mr Daniel McCORMACK (EEAS) shared the EEAS perspective on ETF.

He started by describing an increasingly challenging dual political context of operations, where the EU has to demonstrate through international cooperation to have a competitive alternative to offer to partner countries in comparison to other geopolitical offers. In this context, he highlighted both the Commission and the EEAS' special interest in the ETF's work.

He defined the ETF as a trusted implementation partner, key to implementing their external activities especially given the thematic focus of the ETF on human capital development, which aligns very well with the EUs political priorities and external actions. He stressed how much the EEAS value the ETF's expertise in partner countries as ETF reports and background documents often provide a very helpful, and again in-house contribution to policy dialogues on bilateral and regional levels.

In that spirit, he welcomed the ETF is broadening its geographical focus including also sub-Saharan Africa and indicated EEAS sees further opportunities to expand working with ETF, particularly as part of the EU AU partnership which has a strong emphasis on qualifications and TVET.

He confirmed the appreciation by EEAS of the ETF's capacity to provide again in-house training to EU delegations on human capital development as this will also benefit the capability of their EU delegations to programme human development related actions and thus also the implementation of global Europe as such. Hence, he expressed EEAS' wish to an intensive dialogue with the ETF on the above-mentioned topics.

The Chair noted the very positive contributions from EC and EEAS colleagues on the ETF work and then let Ms Katalin ZOLTAN (HUNGARY) take the floor.

Ms ZOLTAN mentioned she considered highly relevant the information regarding the Year of Skills to better frame the concept of skills by including not only competences but rather a large thematic concept focusing on adult learning and job focused skills enhancement.

Then she asked what was the stage of development of the African continental qualification framework project and whether it was already matching the EQF.

The **Chair** agreed with Ms ZOLTAN on the need for clarity concerning the Year of Skills, but indicated it was still about a proposal and that the co-legislators could modify it. He also mentioned that Member states were called to appoint a coordinator. He then invited Ms BILLLAUX (DG INTPA) to reply to the question on the ACQF project.

Mrs Cécile BILLAUX (INTPA) replied to Ms ZOLTAN indicating that the reference document was the policy document that had been sent to the different African union member states and next step would have being an action on governance and so on. She indicated that such a document was the main achievement reached and that had taken a long time.

IAS

Mr Jeffrey MASON (IAS) took the floor and presented the results of the recent IAS audit on the cooperation coordination mechanisms between the ETF and the European Commission services.

He indicated that the IAS is the internal auditor for both the ETF and the partner DGs and that since the internal IAS reorganization they started to undertake a series of multi-entity audits, including the one here presented on coordination and cooperation arrangements following. In order to respect the different accountability chains, the IAS produced two separate reports and he was going to refer to the ETF one.

He presented the IAS audit objective as to assess the adequacy of the design and the effectiveness of the management and control systems put in place by both the ETF and the EC DGs to ensure a successful cooperation and coordination between them. To that purpose he indicated they covered the strategic and operational mechanisms, arrangements around the preparation of the single programming document and the functioning of the structural dialogue. Then he added that within the ETF, they looked at controls over resource allocation during the planning process and also the

prioritisation of activities and tasks; whilst from the DGs' side they looked at arrangements in DG EMPL, DG NEAR, DG INTPA and DG EAC.

He then tackled the main objective of its presentation and confirmed ETF has indeed put in place adequately designed management and control systems to support the coordination cooperation mechanisms, though they found two significant weaknesses that could affect the effectiveness of those processes in practice.

Hence the IAS qualified audit conclusion included two very important findings, which are considered to be high risk and two important findings which are of medium risk. He indicated such a conclusion is a quite common one and that it is key to be aware of the risks and to implement actions to mitigate them.

He highlighted also they explicitly recognised some strengths related to the knowledge base of ETF staff and the setup of the structured dialogue between ETF and the Commission DGs taking place twice per year and those were included in the report.

Then he provided more details on the findings:

- **First very important finding** - on the ETF's mandate. They noted that following an update in January 2022 of the regulation applicable to define EU support to third countries, the ETF and the EC DGs are yet to clarify whether ETF's current mandate has been enlarged to cover this wider scope provided by January 2022 regulation. Moreover, they noted that ETF's work include a number of countries allowed under the founding regulation but subject to certain conditions being satisfied including a formal GB decision.

Therefore, to address this IAS recommended to clarify the ETF's mandate with respect to this wider scope of the January 2022 regulation, to regularly monitor changes to the instruments referred to in the mandate, and finally to make sure that any work in the other countries under Art. 1C of the founding regulation is duly supported by a formal decision of the governing board.

- **Second very important finding** – on the use of appropriate indicators to assess progress against the single programme document and the current lack of clear deliverables. IAS referred to e.g. the time recording system and the lack of a system to track how published knowledge products are being used in practice.

Therefore, they recommended to define better for the deliverables, properly supported indicators and also to make sure that the project outcomes document allows progress to be assessed in practice, to refine the current time recording system to allow for more granularity and to regularly monitor it, to monitor the dissemination of knowledge products.

Then he provided more information on the two important or medium risk findings:

- **First important finding** - concerns the alignment of ETF's and the Commission's priorities. Although IAS recognised a well-established process to align priorities in the short run, they considered the present arrangements don't allow for a more forward looking and strategic perspective.

Therefore, IAS recommended to put in place a process together with the EC DGs to agree on longer term priorities in a more advanced basis.

- **Second important finding** - in relation to the management of EU requests coming from the EC DGs and annexed to the single programming document. IAS considered the ETF database is not optimally updated and information is not readily available to those needing it. They also found mismatches between the allocated resources compared to the actual time

dedicated in practice. They also considered the strategic planning and management of EU requests offered scope for improvement.

Hence IAS recommended to update the database, come up with a methodology to better estimate the budget for planned and unplanned EU requests and update the procedure for strategic planning and management of such requests.

- **Action Plan** – IAS indicated all the recommendations were accepted and the next stage of the process was the presentation of an action plan to be submitted by 16th December, which will be assessed by IAS on its capacity to being satisfactory with respect to address the identified risks.

Mr MASON indicated that IAS recommendations were a mix of very specific issues and rather more general recommendations with the aim of allowing the ETF some margin for manoeuvre to actually consider actually what actions are feasible and proportionate. They expect the ETF taking ownership of the identified issues and of the action plan.

The **Chair** thanked Ms MASON and agreed on the need for improvement on the identified issues, he then gave the floor to Mr MATHEU DE CORTADA.

Mr MATHEU DE CORTADA (ETF) thanked the IAS and indicated the IAS recommendations as highly relevant to the strategy and the coordination with the EC Services, as well as to support the strategic prioritisation and improve internal processes. As for their recommendations, he highlighted that the ETF has included an annex to the SPD with the analysis on the involvement in the different partner countries outside the ETF mandate and also he made reference to the effort to present the ABB budget to better present staff allocation to the various services. As for the action plan, he indicated the intention to present by the given deadline a common EC DG EMPL - ETF action plan. HE finally thanked a lot IAS for their valuable work and opportunity to improve ETF internal processes.

TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS AT THE ETF

Mr MATHEU DE CORTADA (ETF) provided an update on the main trends and developments at the ETF. He reminded the four main priorities of ETF 2022 SPD, starting with the support to the EU external actions, strengthen partnerships, operationalise 2027 Strategy, new structure, systems and processes for strategy implementation 2022.

Making reference to the appreciation received from the various EC DGs and the IAS recommendations on improving the management of the EU requests, Mr MATHEU confirmed the support to the EEAS and the EC as a key priority. He illustrated the operationalisation of the ETF strategy and the interlinkage of the three services. He referred to the continuous improvement of the ETF matrix organisation.

As for Ukraine, he mentioned a very concrete pilot exercise on micro-credentials in the region of Dnipropetrovsk to support local companies in upskilling and reskilling their staff.

Concerning key performance indicators, he showed very good results and committed to maintain them until end 2022.

He focused on the EC requests received and pointed out the ETF flexibility to reprioritise resources to better respond and deliver on such requests. He indicated that the most important number of requests are related to the project cycle of the Commission from feasibility studies, identification of needs, design of project and then support implementation and monitoring.

He mentioned the EF effort to go for joint communications together with other actors and thereby reaching out to more people and follow a logic of co-creation of knowledge. He made reference to Learning Connect Newsletters, Green skills award, Innovative teaching and learning, podcasts and open space portal, a platform to work with networks, the new portal for Ukrainian refugees.

With the aim to go for a greener ETF, he recalled the ETF being certified EMAS and presented the plan to follow EMAS methodology to make ETF more and more sustainable. The 2022 energy crisis forced even more in that direction and the ETF looked into reducing energy consumption and similar initiatives.

On digital, the ETF is planning to digitalise some of its processes, increase cyber security, and we have re-design part of ETF rooms for hybrid working.

About ETF premises, the ETF has been looking into what would be the possible scenarios for the period after 2027, when the current contract will expire, and analysed possibilities of remaining in Villa Gualino, moving to the UN campus in Turin or going for a commercial solution through normal renting in the city. Now the ETF's attention is on identifying the best solution and on its financing.

As for the evaluations, there will be two evaluations in 2023: one being on the mid-term review of the ETF Strategy and the evaluation of the centres of vocational excellence, a new way of working worth analysing. In 2022, evaluations focussed on skills demand analysis and anticipatory function for which reports are expected soon, end 2022.

He informed that, as per the ETF regulation where it is foreseen a periodical external evaluation commissioned by the DG EMPL, the external evaluation had been launched for the four EMPL Agencies under its remit (ETF, CEDEFOP, EUROFOUND and EU-OSHA). DG EMPL had selected the evaluation company to assess possible deficiencies of the organisation, mandate and possible changes. Results will be expected in 2024-25.

As a last point he made reference to a light revision on the names of two units with respect to the organigramme approved in 2020, in other words no changes in the actual distribution of responsibilities among the different units: PMU standing now for Project Management Unit and SPA for System Performance and Monitoring Assessment Unit, SPA seems we are in a SPA and that's not the case so we now put System Performance Monitoring.

He then informed the members of the Board on the human resources, indicating the need to make use of short-term contract staff to cover for long term absences.

Update on the Czech Presidency

Ms Marta STARÁ (Czech Republic) gave an update of the Czech Presidency focusing on digital learning and the pathway to schools' success initiative, intergenerational dialogue and solidarity, and assistance to Ukraine.

She indicated the Czech perspective took stock of the COVID19 pandemic period and of the forced changes in distance learning, while aiming at identifying challenges associated with online learning environments.

They focused on three pillars: skills, pedagogical approaches and interpersonal relationships. They also went for new theme, an innovative approach to digital learning.

She informed that by 28 November 2022 the Presidency would have adopted a Council recommendation on pathway to schools' success, Council conclusions on promoting the

intergenerational dimension in the field of youth with a view to strengthening dialogue and social cohesion.

She pointed out that thanks to their proactive approach they succeeded in establishing strong cooperation between the EU and Ukraine, in the field of youth.

Finally she thanked the ETF for their active participation and support and wished good luck to the Swedish presidency.

Priorities of the Swedish Presidency

Ms Malin MENDES (Sweden) introduced the third Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the previous ones being held in 2001 and 2009.

She indicated that the new government had been in place only since mid-October and therefore the programme was not fully finalised. However, she called for more attention on priority number 3 and 4 on speeding up the green transition and strengthening the EUs competitiveness for jobs of the future as the most relevant in the education and training policy area.

She then drew the members' attention on the main events being: in January the meeting of the High Level Group and then in March the meeting of the Director General for schools, the DGVT meeting together with the back-to-back presidency conference on higher vocational education and also planning in March. Two Council meetings in March and May.

She then welcomed everybody to come and visit Sweden on the presidency occasion.