

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2008 – ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

The Governing Board has assessed the Director's report on the results for the 2008 financial year. Overall, the Board appreciates the results achieved by the ETF, and notes that the following:

Analysis

Pillar 1: Support to the European Commission under its external assistance instruments

Enlargement

In the candidate countries (Croatia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), the ETF produced country analyses and contributed to the use of IPA projects in support of top national strategies in the human capital development area. Focused support was also given in the potential candidate countries according to identified priorities. In working with these countries, the ETF assisted in the identification and deployment of external assistance to human resources development through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. It also supported education and training reform and employment policy by increasing partner country capacity through analyses, dissemination, stakeholder capacity building and the sharing of experiences and knowledge from Member States and countries of the region.

The ETF also successfully implemented multi-country projects in relevant areas for the region such as social inclusion through education and training, entrepreneurial learning, peer learning to support vocational training reform processes, vocational teacher training and as well as activities related to governance and administrative capacity in employment.

European Neighbourhood

In the European Neighbourhood region, the ETF's objectives in 2008 were to contribute to strengthening EU services in the definition and implementation of its external policies by providing input to the project cycle, in particular the preparation and design of sector interventions as requested; and to support the capacities of partner countries to design, implement and monitor the reform of human resources development systems.

Regional initiatives in the region included: the production of policy notes on the transparency of qualifications, migration and employment issues in Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine; the entrepreneurial learning project in all the MEDA countries; the completion of activities in the different components of the MEDA ETE project; a number of activities in the field of qualifications in the MEDA region, as well as in the Caucasus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The regional project on the observatory function in Jordan, Syria and Egypt came to an end in 2008 and the first phase of the Black Sea labour market reviews project, which concentrated on country level analysis, was successfully completed.

The ETF worked closely with the EU Slovenian and French Presidencies, in particular in the preparations for the Union for the Mediterranean VET Forum that took place in Marseille in December.

An issue paper on VET and employment was prepared for the occasion and three expert contributions were delivered.

Close cooperation was undertaken with the EC Delegations in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine on a number of issues related to education and training reform, and in Moldova, the ETF was asked to provide input on issues linked to the portability of skills and transparency of qualifications.

The ETF prepared baseline analyses on the situation of VET in Georgia and Armenia and input to the identification phase of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument 2010 VET sector policy support programme.

In Jordan, the ETF provided input to the EC Delegation in the identification phase of the ENPI 2009 sector policy support programme in employment and technical vocational education and training (TVET) as well as activities supporting the role of social partners in VET. In Egypt, career guidance and work on sector skills needs and labour mobility should also be highlighted.

In Tunisia preparatory work for a sector policy support programme in education was given to the EC Delegation, in Morocco the ETF organised a regional seminar on quality in VET and in Syria support for entrepreneurship learning was provided.

The ETF has sustained its contribution to national institutional capacities in the Mediterranean countries to collect, process and analyse relevant information on education, training and employment issues.

Central Asia

In 2008, in Central Asia the ETF's objectives included contributing to strengthening EU services in the definition and implementation of its external policies by providing input to the project cycle at the request of the Commission; and supporting the capacities of partner countries to design, implement and monitor the reform of human resources development systems. An important achievement in 2008 was the establishment of a working relationship with education and training stakeholders in Turkmenistan and a preliminary agreement on activities for 2009. The ETF also continued working in **Kazakhstan**, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The two main regional projects in Central Asia included the third year of the qualifications and skills development for poverty reduction projects.

In the region the ETF has consolidated its efforts for the republics of Central Asia as part of the ETF's support to the Development Cooperation Instrument by ensuring that:

- the policy impact of reform interventions were reviewed and lessons shared; and
- policy stakeholders in **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan** and **Uzbekistan** were followed closely on the development of qualification frameworks and clearer links between education and training, and strategies for poverty reduction³.

Innovation and Learning

Innovation and learning projects in 2008 included relevant themes for the broadened thematic remit of the ETF such as competitiveness, flexicurity, women and work; policy learning in partner countries; and knowledge management in policy strategy development. Also during the year, the ETF finalised the first cycle of its innovation and learning programme and began to disseminate the lessons learned in:

- teaching key competences in South Eastern Europe;
- implications of migration for the development of vocational education; and
- development of a model framework for tracking partner country performance on the transition from education to work.

Tempus

2008 was the last year that the ETF provided technical assistance to Tempus. The repatriation of the provision of technical assistance to DG EAC was effectively concluded on 30 June, and in 2008 most efforts were related to winding down, transferring and archiving activities.

Pillar 2: Corporate communication

In 2008, the ETF Communication Unit launched and distributed some 25 expertise publications, reports, brochures and leaflets. Furthermore a number of working papers were published on the web on topics such as the transition from education to work, key competences for lifelong learning, the contribution of human resources development to migration policy and social dialogue in vocational education and training and employment.

The ETF also extended its publications programme to reflect a stronger orientation towards vocational education in the context of lifelong learning and related labour market issue and updated the dynamic part of its website with more regular content and a broader spread of languages. The ETF also took steps to maximise the advantages of the site through the launch of new project areas for communities of practice.

As part of its corporate communication function, an investment in expertise development was maintained through scientific contributions to conferences, flagship publications, and knowledge sharing. In this context the Board encourages the ETF to reinforce its investment in internal training initiatives to help it to adjust to the challenges in the new financial perspectives.

As of 1 September 2008, the ETF has based a liaison officer in Brussels to coordinate relations between the EU institutions and the ETF. The new Brussels Liaison Office is based at the Directorate General for Education and Culture in Brussels, which is the ETF's lead DG at the European Commission.

Pillar 3: Strengthening knowledge and systems

The organisation continued to invest significant efforts in ensuring that staff expertise and skills are developed and maintained in accordance with the current and future business and operational requirements. In 2008, the ETF adopted a staff development policy and reviewed its competence inventory exercise, which was deployed in the last quarter of 2008.

The ETF also reinforced its control system and mitigating internal and external risks arising from its operating environment, e.g., through measures to identify and manage risks and to strengthen both the organisation's operations and its ability to manage the complexities of its environment.

Assessment

In 2008, the ETF

- again increased its policy advice support to the Commission in 2008 compared to 2007 and 2006 as well as the number of requests from the Commission for the formulation and, monitoring support.
- received 111 on-going requests from the European Commission, 53% of which were for assistance in countries covered by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, 32% in countries covered by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, and 15% in those covered by the Development Cooperation Instrument.
- executed its activities within the resource framework adopted by the Board. In particular, the ETF committed over 98.6% and disbursed over 90.7% of its annual subsidy of €17,984,000, with the remaining funds being disbursed in 2009. In this context, the Board commends the ETF for continuing to respect the benchmark of cost-effectiveness set in 2005 whereby over 80% of its

executed budget of about €22 million is invested directly in operational activities and less than 20% in administrative overhead costs

The Board acknowledges that the ETF has no reservation or critical issues to report for 2008.

In the light of the above remarks, the Governing Board adopts the ETF Annual Activity Report 2008, and requests that it be forwarded, together with this analysis, to the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Court of Auditors.

Odiège Quintin
Chair of the Governing Board
15 June 2009