

MEMO

TO Mr Silva Mendes, Director, DG Education and Culture (DG EAC)

COPY Ms Bachmann, Head of Unit B2; Mr Santos, Dep. Head of Unit B2; Ms Mazingant, Unit B2; Ms Todorova, Unit B2; Ms Voordeckers, ETF

FROM Madlen Serban, director ETF

REFERENCE 2014-2416

DATE 21 November 2014

SUBJECT Extend the validity of the cooperation agreement between the ETF and the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat with three years (2015-17)



The cooperation agreement between the ETF and the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat (RCC)

Background information

Following the positive Opinion of the European Commission and the approval of the Governing Board in its meeting of 20 November 2012, the cooperation agreement between the ETF and the RCC Secretariat was signed in Brussels on 24 January 2013.

The document ensures the framework for cooperation between the two institutions and covers the period 2013-2014. The objectives of cooperation as listed in the document are the following:

- To enhance of awareness with key regional stakeholders on the importance of human capital for the development of the South Eastern Europe;
- To ensure the structured knowledge sharing between the two institutions and other RCC initiatives in the field of building and fostering human capital or economic and social development.

Specific thematic areas of cooperation have been established, the two institutions looking to develop joint actions and knowledge sharing activities in areas like social inclusion, sustainable development, adult education, evidence based policy making, governance, labour market need and employability, entrepreneurial learning.

In accordance with art.9.3, "this cooperation agreement shall remain in effect for two years following which it may be extended." The cooperation agreement will expire on 25 January 2015. This is the reason the ETF, after analysing and assessing the cooperation is proposing to launch the procedure for extending the validity of the cooperation agreement with three years (2015-17).

Analysis and assessment of the cooperation between the ETF and the RCC Secretariat

I. The South East Europe (SEE) 2020 Strategy

Actions in 2013-2014

The RCC's SEE 2020 strategy was adopted in Sarajevo on the 21 November 2013 at the Ministerial Conference of the South East Europe Investment Committee.

The strategy was developed by the RCC Secretariat in consultations with governments from SEE, European Commission, ETF and relevant regional and international institutions.

The ETF provided inputs for pillar II "Smart Growth", dimension "Education and Competences", pillar III "Sustainable growth", dimension "Competitiveness" and pillar IV "Inclusive Growth" dimension "Employment". In the process of finalising the strategy, the ETF offered opportunities for the RCC representatives to share and debate with policy makers and experts from education, training and employment from the region the elements of the strategy related to human capital development (HRD). The ETF also joined the Ministerial Conference on the occasion of the adoption of the strategy.

Mutual benefits

The ETF experience and expertise has been put at the disposal of both the RCC and the regional structures as support in finalising the strategy. The ETF refocused its activities according to the newly agreed actions by the countries of the region, as reflected in the South Eastern Europe Strategy 2020.

Follow-up in 2015-17

The ETF will continue its co-operation with the RCC and the regional structures ERI SEE¹ and SEECEL² and will provide support in the implementation of the strategy as well as to monitoring of some sub dimensions related to vocational education and training.

II. Development of comprehensive HRD strategic vision in the Enlargement countries

Actions in 2013-2014

The ETF FRAME³ project has been developed in response to a number of key policy drives at European and regional level. A common challenge is a call for more forward-looking, innovative and evidence-based approaches to policy development in the area of skills and human resources development.

The RCC Secretariat is involved in several activities implemented within the project like:

- 17-18 September 2013, Kick off regional event, Danilovgrad, Montenegro;
- 9-10 October 2013, ETF Policy Leaders' Forum regional event, Salzburg, Austria;

¹ ERI SEE- Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe

² SEECEL- South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning

³ FRAME project is implemented by the ETF at the request of the European Commission services, being financed under 2013 IPA multi beneficiary envelope, under the contract no. 2013/316-651

- 25 November 2013, the RCC-EC-ETF-OECD meeting on monitoring aspects of the SEE 2020 Strategy, Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina;
- 26 November 2013, the 1st regional monitoring technical meeting, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- 21-23 May 2014, Foresight peer learning activity, Malta;
- 25 June 2014, the 2nd regional monitoring technical meeting, Turin, Italy;
- 6 October 2014, Final validation event, Tirana, Albania.

Mutual benefits

The RCC contribution and support have been crucial for the FRAME project considering the importance of creating synergy and collaboration between all running activities in the region in the field of HRD.

The RCC participation in the ETF regional activities has been proved as being valuable since the policy makers and experts from the region had the opportunity to better understand the key strategic objectives and targets of the SEE 2020 Strategy. In this respect, the ETF has been capable to better target its regional activities and also to shape its support to ERI SEE. The ETF interventions are also planned in complementarity with other on-going regional activities.

Follow-up in 2015-17

The ETF will also continue its cooperation with the RCC and the other regional and international partners to ensure knowledge continuity of the FRAME main results and achievements.

III. Thematic level

1. Entrepreneurial learning

Actions in 2013-2014

The ETF's Entrepreneurial Communities Initiative is about building on the success of progressive communities to breed more success. It is about learning from good practices, big or small, to shape the economic, social and territorial future of communities of tomorrow. The good practices will provide insight on the real connections between communities' actions and central policies and, as a result, yield policy guidance on how to better support job creation and entrepreneurship at the local level.

The RCC Secretariat is member of the Advisory Board on Entrepreneurial Communities and has helped shape the initiative. Cooperation under the ETF Entrepreneurial Communities Initiative aims to strengthen the RCC coordination in the field of HRD and to ensure RCC participation in drawing key policy lessons on the benefits of efficient vertical and horizontal interaction within a multilevel governance approach to human capital development.

Mutual benefits

The RCC contribution and support has been important for the ETF initiative since it allows taking up the debates at transnational political level.

Follow-up in 2015-17

The ETF will continue its cooperation with the RCC on the Entrepreneurial Communities Initiative through the dedicated Advisory Board. As of 2015 the project is foreseen to provide a platform for national policy debates including a wider consultation with citizens so as to enable and foster horizontal and vertical cooperation from a local perspective in the ETF partner countries and guarantee the sustainability of the approach.

2. Social Inclusion

Actions in 2013-2014

The ETF has invited to participate and informed the RCC Secretariat and their networks in the Western Balkans and Turkey about the regional debates in view of finalising the country reports - "Enhancing VET policies and practices for social inclusion- ensuring that all young people get a fair chance!"

The RCC has joined the Social Inclusion Platform run by the ETF, platform which provides an opportunity to stakeholders from the Western Balkans and Turkey region as well as other ETF partner countries to pool and expand strategic knowledge, and to improve research and policy decisions on VET for social inclusion.

Mutual benefits

The ETF experience and expertise were shared with the RCC and also through their involvement to other regional structures and networks. Based on the analysis and recommendations of the reports, the ETF provided inputs for the pillar "Inclusive growth" of the Strategy.

Follow-up in 2015-17

The ETF will continue its cooperation with the RCC and the other regional and international partners to ensure knowledge sharing on social inclusion issues on VET.

Proposal

Based on the analysis of the cooperation as well as the objectives set in the ETF Mid Term Perspective 2014-17, the ETF proposes to extend the validity of the cooperation agreement between the ETF and the RCC Secretariat with 3 years (2015-17) through an exchange of letters, as stipulated in the current cooperation agreement.