

MINUTES

GOVERNING BOARD

MEETING

17 NOVEMBER 2017¹

¹ Version 15 June 2018

The ETF Governing Board (GB) meeting took place in Turin on 17 November 2017, chaired by Lluis PRATS, Head of Unit for International Affairs in DG EMPL, European Commission (EC).

1. Adoption of the agenda

On proposal of the Chair, the Board adopted the agenda for the meeting. No AOB points were suggested.

2. Introductory remarks from the Chair

The Chair welcomed the new Governing Board members: Rudzica JURCEVIC for Croatia, Mika SAARINEN for Finland, Carmen CLAPAN for Romania and Herman PANNEELS representing Belgium. He also welcomed two new members that could not be present: Fernando CATERINO and Paulo FELICIANO, the new member and alternate for Portugal.

Two non-voting experts representing the European Parliament were also absent: Jan ANDERSSON and Jean-François MEZIERES. The partner country observer from Serbia, Dragana SAVIC, was also not present.

Six Member States were not represented at the meeting: Denmark, France, Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Slovakia.

The European Commission was also represented by Bernard BRUNET, Head of Unit (DG NEAR), Kiril KIRYAKOV (DG EMPL), Christophe MASSON (DG NEAR) and Jean-Paul HEERSCHAP (DG DEVCO).

Franca CRESTANI represented the ETF Staff Committee.

3. Follow-up to previous meetings

The Board adopted the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2017.

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

The Chair, as in previous meetings, recalled the importance of Board members acting in the public interest and independently of external influence as a pre-condition for membership of the Board. To this end, members and alternates are required to provide a CV, and make a written Declaration of Commitment and Interests each year. This is a mandatory requirement in the ETF legal basis (Article 11) and the importance of submitting this document has been repeatedly emphasised by the European Parliament. Governing Board members who have not yet provided this information were once again urged to provide it.

4. Programming Document 2017-20 – Annual Work Programme 2018

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) introduced the ETF's 2018 Work Programme, that was prepared as a result of previous interactions with different stakeholders, mainly the Commission members of the structured dialogue meeting and the Governing Board working group meeting of October 2017. He also stressed the continuity with the past, and said that there were no major changes compared to previous documents, but an effort had been made to ensure a more readable and attractive presentation.

Four areas will receive particular attention in 2018: 1) skills anticipation, because of the critical employment challenges in the ETF partner countries; 2) the human capital dimension of legal migration, by highlighting what has already been achieved by the ETF and how the ETF can contribute to future EU debates; 3) digital and on-line learning as an opening of opportunities for the ETF partner

countries; and 4) an analysis of financing systems in partner countries, with Montenegro identified by the Commission for a pilot project to test the methodology.

On the geographic focus of the ETF, there is also no departure from the past: in Libya and Syria, no activities are foreseen on the ground because of the difficult working conditions, but ETF continues monitoring at a distance.

The Torino Process will remain open to all partner countries, and 2018 will be a year for reflection on the next phase of the Torino Process in 2019-20. Consultation opportunities will be organised with Board members on this.

As a next step, the 2018 Work Programme will be provided to the budgetary authorities by 30 November, subject to and as a contribution to the decision on the EU budget by the budgetary authority, expected in December.

Lluís PRATS (DG EMPL) thanked the Director for his clear and concise presentation.

Külli ALL (Estonia), representing the Presidency, reported on the excellent meeting with Board members the previous day, and congratulated the ETF for its efficient and effective work, and for the much clearer document provided.

Three minor comments were collected during the meeting:

- The involvement of the partner countries in the ETF's work is not always clear: in what way they are involved, which country takes part in what, and how countries are selected. The same remark was also made for the participation of EU countries/Governing Board members in the ETF's activities;
- Serbia and Montenegro as candidate countries will receive more support from the ETF in 2018, but how exactly and in which domains could be reflected better in the document;
- Member States should be more involved in the planning and programming of ETF activities. Külli ALL referred to the participation of Cyprus, Luxemburg and Estonia in the working group meeting in October as a good example of involvement, but suggested that this type of cooperation could be expanded through the setting up of a kind of formal bureau.

Ingrid MÜLLER-ROOSEN (Germany) thanked the ETF for the document and the presentation, and admitted that it was not easy to work so efficiently with reduced resources. She raised a minor question on the three points related to human resources management. On points 2 and 3 concerning the design of policies and the compliance with the regulatory framework (Strand 2.2 p. 36), she wondered whether these points could not be combined into one.

Karl WIECZOREK (Austria) questioned the link between revenue (p.64) and staffing (p.66). Whilst the total revenue will slightly increase until 2020, the full-time equivalents (FTE) will decrease slightly, and he questioned the correlation between these two figures.

Peter VAN IJSSELMUIDEN (Netherlands), on the commitment of the Board, said that installing a bureau would probably be too much, but that, as a matter of principle, the members of the Troika should take part as much as possible in the Board meetings, including those organised in Brussels.

On the involvement of partner countries, Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) replied that their involvement is the starting point for all ETF activities, and, although obvious for ETF, their role and position will be highlighted more in future and reporting back will be done in terms that are more explicit. For the engagement of Member States in the ETF's activities, he is convinced that it is still possible to

increase the benefits for the EU, and welcomed all suggestions on how to stimulate the engagement of Member States in future.

The speech of President Juncker on the State of the Union provided renewed momentum to the enlargement process by making it a political priority and pointing to Serbia and Montenegro in particular. The enlargement process is a give-and-take negotiation and the Commission will produce policy proposals in spring 2018. At that point therefore, Cesare ONESTINI was reluctant to put specific countries as priorities in the work programme but the ETF will work closely with candidate countries in line with priorities agreed by the Commission and the Member States.

He thanked Germany for the compliments on efficiency, and paid tribute to his predecessor for this and for the overall strengthening of operational staff. He also thanked the ETF staff for the content and presentation of the work programme. On human resources, he said that the ETF policy reflects the general orientation and the way in which the human resources policy of the EU institutions is designed. As far as budget and FTEs are concerned, whilst the increase of the budget is simply the nominal increase related to inflation, the FTEs reflect the cut of 5-10% on temporary agents as imposed by the Commission. In parallel, the number of contract agents has increased slightly.

After this discussion, the Governing Board adopted the 2017–20 Programming Document and the 2018 Work Programme.

5. 2018 ETF Budget

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) presented the 2018 ETF draft budget, which is in line with the EC financial programming and follows the evolution of the EU external relations activities. According to a communication from 2013, the budget should increase for 2019 and 2020. For 2018, however, the draft budget is based on an overall contribution of €20,144,000 as in the previous year.

On the overall expenditure, the ETF relies primarily on its staff to fulfil its core business, and title I is by far the largest part of the budget with 68% of the total costs. Title II presents a slight increase on infrastructure costs, related to phase II of the implementation of the separation and modernisation of the utilities system. The Piedmont Region will reimburse half of the costs of phase II later on. Title III is the operational budget as direct support to the implementation of the ETF's core business. Substantial savings have been made in the translation budget.

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) also reported that the division of staff between AD and AST has slightly changed due to departures, and an increase to the number of AD staff is proposed, as it is one of the only options the ETF has at its disposal to recruit more specialist staff.

Külli ALL (Estonia), representing the Presidency, appreciated the stable budget, but asked what would happen if the ETF were to receive additional special requests from the Commission: would extra budget be provided or would the ETF have to become even more efficient? She also asked whether a structural reorganisation was in the pipeline.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) confirmed the tight budget and the need for rearranging priorities should EC requests increase considerably. The issue was also raised in the October 2017 Structured Dialogue meeting and with colleagues from DG BUDG. The possibility of project funding was investigated as a source of additional income. For the moment, given that the EC is at the end of the current programming cycle and that reflection on the next financial perspective has just started, no such funding is actually foreseen. This discussion must also be seen in the context of the ongoing reflection on agencies, and the actual differentiation between cruising speed agencies with a stable budget versus agencies with new activities for which extra budget was earmarked - a differentiation that might or might not be taken further in the next financial perspective.

On the structural reorganisation of the ETF, Cesare ONESTINI said that he was not planning to immediately reopen the debate, but rather to opt for consolidation to assess the performance of the actual structure. However, some adjustments might be necessary given recent retirements. He plans to launch a discussion with the management team and all staff in early January on a possible redistribution of tasks. This will happen in parallel with a forward-looking reflection and a more open discussion towards the middle of 2018, for which one extra day will be added to the planned June GB meeting. He proposed to extend invitations to this day of reflection on the ETF's future perspectives to GB members plus a second representative per member state to ensure participation from education/VET departments as well as from external relations departments.

Lluis PRATS (DG EMPL) echoed and endorsed the proposal made by Cesare ONESTINI. He also asked his EC colleagues for prudence with extra requests given the ETF's tight budget. He welcomed the suggestion of longer-term thinking as a contribution to ongoing reflections on future budgetary decisions that will be taken in the wider context of the next financial perspective.

The GB members adopted the 2018 ETF Budget.

6. ETF 2017 amending budget

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) presented the second amending budget for 2017, with, on the revenue side, the €89 interest earned, and on the expenditure side the final payments made for the GEMM project – the remainder of which was returned to the EC.

Very few movements between titles took place, apart from a reallocation of €38,000 from Title I to Titles II and III, and more redistribution within the titles following the internal budget reviews after Q2 and Q3, allowing for better budget execution. The main change within Title I concerns the reduction of administrative missions, and a considerable reduction of representation expenses. Within Title II, funds were moved from ICT to the utilities system, following savings in telecommunication costs and Governing Board expenses, and the postponement of a stakeholder relations management system. On Title III, more funds were earmarked for website development, following savings on evaluations. Some further transfers might be necessary within the flexibility allowed to the director to optimise budget execution.

No comments were raised.

The Governing Board adopted the ETF 2017 amending budget.

7. Performance Management

i. Update of the ETF Internal Control Principles

Peter GREENWOOD (ETF) introduced the third update of the Internal Control Principles, which echo the principles from the EU institutions, now allowing for an integrated, systematic approach on issues concerning working environment, risk management, control mechanisms, information sharing and monitoring of performance of the organisation. The new principles will be rolled out from beginning 2018 onwards.

Külli ALL (Estonia), representing the Presidency, supported the adoption of the principles.

Lluis PRATS (DG EMPL) agreed to their importance and the need to optimise the use of taxpayers' money.

The Governing Board adopted the ETF Internal Control Principles.

ii. Revised Mission Charter of the Internal Audit Service of the EC

Peter GREENWOOD (ETF) introduced the third update of the Mission Charter of the IAS, the auditor of ETF and of all the other agencies, introducing updated audit methodologies.

No comments nor questions were raised.

The Governing Board adopted the Revised Mission Charter of the IAS.

8. Update on the External Evaluation of the four agencies

Kiril KIRYAKOV (DG EMPL) reminded the audience of the broad context of this mega-evaluation covering the four agencies under the remit of DG EMPL (Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA and ETF), which started one year ago and with a draft final report by the end of November. The draft was discussed on 8 December at a validation workshop with Governing Board members, representatives of the management and staff of the agencies and selected external stakeholders. The EC will attend as an observer. For the ETF Governing Board, three members agreed to attend: Ingrid MÜLLER-ROOSEN for Germany, the former Governing Board member for Belgium, Micheline SCHEYNS, and for the Bulgarian Presidency, Maria TODOROVA.

The findings of the meeting will feed into a final report following which a Communication will be prepared for the European Parliament on how the EC sees the future of the four agencies and any proposed changes to their mandates. As soon as the EC approves the final report, it will be distributed to all Governing Board members.

In the meantime, the stakeholder analysis and public consultation has been completed, with modest return. The three most preferred scenarios for the future as seen by the EU citizens are: 1) development of mechanisms for joint delivery; 2) expansion of the agencies' mandate through additional funding; and 3) sharing of support services. Closing or merging agencies are not among the preferred scenarios.

During the preparatory meeting, the Troika members asked for an update on the European Labour Authority (ELA), and the link with the evaluation. In President Juncker's State of the Union speech in September, the establishment of this new regulatory body and enforcement authority was mentioned as a key priority. The evaluation report will therefore also outline some tasks that can be incorporated into the ELA, such as working conditions, elements of social rights, etc. The aim is principally: 1) a strengthened administrative cooperation for fair mobility in the labour market (e.g. posting of workers directive); 2) an entrusted authority to solve disputes between member states on cross-border issues; 3) a pooling of existing tools for cross-border mobility (EURES, EU health insurance card, blue card, social security number); 4) to fight against abuse of labour and encourage social legislation; 5) cross-border control of labour activities. The ELA will work jointly with the labour inspectorates of all the member states, and focus only on cross-border issues. In spring 2018, a proposal will be presented to set out the details of this major political initiative.

Külli ALL (Estonia) confirmed the importance of the ELA and noticed the links with education issues such as EURES and ESCO, the blue card initiative and the recognition of professional qualifications. She advised the EC and the Governing Board members to remain vigilant on these issues.

Dimitris PSILLOS (Greece) asked whether the regulations developed would be compulsory for the member states, because all the points raised are politically very sensitive.

Lluis PRATS (DG EMPL) confirmed that the new body would be an authority and therefore have a policy mandate. Kiril KIRYAKOV (DG EMPL) added that co-legislators would take the final decision, not only on budget but also on the tasks of the authority. At this stage, no concrete answers can be

given to the questions raised. The Communication will be presented to the Governing Board at its next meeting in June.

Peter VAN IJSSELMUIDEN (Netherlands) asked whether issues related to labour inspections and employment are discussed in the EPSCO Council, and how far these issues would effect on the mandate of the ETF and Cedefop.

Lluis PRATS (DG EMPL) repeated that the ongoing evaluation would provide some input for reflection on this. His guess is however, that the ETF and Cedefop would not be affected, whereas the two other DG EMPL agencies might. Everything depends on the exact tasks of the new authority and on the decisions that will be taken by the legislator and the Council. Kiril KIRYAKOV (DG EMPL) confirmed that the new authority would be discussed in the EPSCO Council. Some elements in the area of education, mentioned already by Külli ALL, and mainly entrusted to Cedefop, will also be considered in the framework of the new authority.

Reinhard NÖBAUER (Austria) questioned how an agency could have regulatory authority and how this would relate to the division of powers between institutions and member states. Lluis PRATS (DG EMPL) agreed that this was a valid point that would give rise to many internal and political discussions.

Edit BAUER (non-voting expert representing the European Parliament) asked what could be the legal basis for such an authority. As a former rapporteur on the free movement for workers regulation, for which cooperation among labour inspectorates was proposed, she remembers the strong opposition from all interest groups, and is afraid that fierce resistance or even blocks from minorities might undermine the proposal.

Lluis PRATS (DG EMPL) underlined the need for ELA which, in parallel to the pillar for social rights, will lead to improvements in employment in the EU, while facilitating communication between the different national administrations on cross-border employment issues.

9. The Cooperation Framework: ETF - Cedefop

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) introduced the next Cooperation Framework for the period 2018-2020. The current framework expires at the end of 2017. He explained the clear demarcation of activities between both agencies, while admitting a large scope for cooperation as laid down in the framework and in the annual action plans.

Loukas ZAHILAS (Cedefop) confirmed the long-standing cooperation between the ETF and Cedefop. The Cooperation Framework was presented for adoption to the Cedefop Bureau at its next meeting of 5 December.

On behalf of the Member States, Külli ALL (Estonia) gave her full support to the Cooperation Framework, as a sound basis for more synergy between the two agencies and hoped for the adoption of the Framework by the Cedefop Bureau.

Dimitris PSILLOS (Greece) also looks forward to synergies, but stressed that the evidence of the added value of these synergies should be made more visible, also for previous years, for all citizens and for all partner countries, not only for the staff of the EC and the agencies.

Loukas ZAHILAS (Cedefop) explained that this type of information already exists in the annual reporting to the European Parliament and to the Governing Board of both agencies.

Monia RAIES MGHIRBI (partner country observer) as a beneficiary of ETF's work, confirmed that through the ETF she received information on the activities of Cedefop, and wished to see more of the cooperation that she felt as very enriching for all partner countries.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) drew attention to the knowledge-sharing seminar of the ETF and Cedefop that would take place shortly as a good and practical example of cooperation, joining forces, learning from each other and avoiding overlap.

Lluis PRATS confirmed that DG EMPL very much welcomed the Cooperation Framework and was personally in favour of including work-based learning as part of the Cooperation Framework.

The Governing Board adopted the ETF - Cedefop Cooperation Framework.

10. Oral reports

See annex

11. Any other business

The Chair reminded the Board members who had not yet done so to provide their CV and Declaration of interest as soon as possible. The European Parliament requires the publication of these documents on the website.

Reinhard NÖBAUER (Austria) mentioned that as a member of his Ministry he represents Austria and therefore questioned the logic of the Declaration. If his Ministry had no interest in the ETF's work, Austria would not be represented. Dimitris PSILLOS (Greece) agreed.

Lluis PRATS (DG EMPL) replied that the form is a standard one and that members are allowed to put a remark on their Declaration. The Chair also invited the Board members to complete the evaluation form of the meeting.

Reinhard NÖBAUER (Austria) requested information on state of play with the ETF premises, while Mrs Külli ALL (Estonia) proposed considering Governing Board meeting participation via Skype or other online technology, as suggested by the Danish member in writing.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) explained that the Piedmont Region had just put up the main part of the building for a new concession, published in October. On the idea of virtual Governing Board meetings, he said that if members were all in favour, he would investigate the possibilities, mainly on certification issues related to voting given the confidentiality of proceedings. He also reminded the audience of the extended meeting in June, with the participation of colleagues from the external relations area for a more wide ranging and forward looking discussion.

Finally, both the Chair and the Director said a warm thank you to Peter GREENWOOD (ETF), who, after 23 years service, was to retire.

12. Date of next meeting

The next regular meeting of the Governing Board will take place in Torino on 15 June 2018, back to back with a reflection day on 14 June on the future mid-term perspectives, also involving representatives from other ministries.

Follow up actions:

- To provide the WP 2018 to the budgetary authorities by 30 November 2017.

- To take stock of the follow up to the external evaluation findings at the next GB meeting.
- To provide a presentation and update on the ELA in the June 2018 meeting.
- To check the possibilities on technological support for online Governing Board participation.
- To check the Declaration of Intent and see whether a better form can be provided.
- Governing Board members to provide their Declarations of Commitment and Interests immediately.

ANNEX

10. Oral reports

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

For DG EMPL, Kiril KIRYAKOV (DG EMPL) informed the GB members about the Council Recommendation of 5 October on the ***European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships***, a major milestone in DG EMPL's work, because work based learning receives more and more emphasis, not only in ETF Partner Countries but also in MS. Funding will be provided through the ESF, E+ and EASI..

The ***Erasmus PRO programme*** now includes long duration VET mobility, with an increased duration of work placements abroad from 3 to 12 months. It has become a key action funded under the E+ VET Facility, and offers a new window of opportunity for VET learners, apprentices and recent VET graduates. On October 25, the EC published the call for E+ / Erasmus PRO, with a deadline of February 2018. By June 2018, these long-term apprenticeships are expected to be in place.

The second ***VET Skills week*** starts next week on the theme "Discover Your Talent", with two days of events in Brussels, and a noticed increase of events in MS and PC. The ETF is the connection between Partner Countries, Member States and DG EMPL. Around one million people will be involved, spread over some 1500 events.

The ***EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals*** was launched in June and upgraded in November. It is a practical, multilingual tool for mapping the experiences of third country nationals coming to the MS and can serve as a basis for referrals to other services in private, non-governmental or public organisations.

Bernard BRUNET (DG NEAR) informed about:

- ***The enlargement policy.*** The State of the Union speech by President Juncker in September 2017 opened new avenues and the beginning of a renewed commitment for an enlarged EU beyond the actual 27 MS. DG NEAR will therefore propose a new strategy for enlargement in early 2018, especially for the Western Balkans, while Turkey has other perspectives given recent political developments. In February, a Communication will be released targeting six countries of the Western Balkan region. Negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro continue through the opening of new chapters while the negotiations with Turkey have stopped de facto.

More focus is also put on the development and strengthening of regional cooperation, mainly in economic development, as confirmed in the agreed action plan during the July meeting in Trieste, with a significant mobility component to improve the mobility of workers among the six Western Balkan countries and a mutual recognition agreement for a number of selected professional qualifications. Furthermore, a continued engagement in the light European Semester through the ERP process stimulates the countries to come up with structural reform measures in employment, social inclusion, business development, infrastructure investment, etc., thus preparing the countries towards their future EU obligations.

- ***In the neighbourhood countries,*** less significant developments have occurred. Both the East and the South have been confronted with policy challenges in their geopolitical environment, but fewer turbulence was noted. Some heterogeneity persists, with very engaged DCFTA countries (UA, MD, GE), countries in the process of negotiating a DCFTA (TN and MA), and JO and LB with a more intense upcoming cooperation, despite an imminent refugee crisis.

The two regional platforms, in a summit between the EU and the six Eastern Partnership countries next week, will adopt 20 deliverables for 2020, a very concrete set of actions envisaged to foster economic and social development.

In the South, the engagement through the UfM continues with regular ministerial meetings, as the one scheduled for end November on women in employment.

- Furthermore, the EU will create an **external investment plan for the neighbourhood south and sub-Saharan Africa**, to tackle more efficiently and effectively the job challenges with the support of a € 4.4 billion fund for the period 2018-2020, hoping to leverage private investment by a factor 10. Project proposals from financial institutions are awaited with high job content and high investment impact.
- Focus is still also on dealing with the migration crisis in the Western Balkans and in SEMED, despite the reduction of illegal migration by 95%.

Lluis PRATS (DG EMPL) confirmed that VET is more and more at the heart of finding solutions for many problems. Enlargement is about reforms in the countries, about creating a society and an economic system compatible with the EU, but also about the need for a smoothly working education system of which VET is an important component. The work done by the ETF must also be seen in this context.

Jean-Paul HEERSCHAP (DG DEVCO) completed the presentation by focusing on the **5th EU-Africa summit** to take place **in Abidjan** on investment in youth for a sustainable future. The summit will focus on youth in three axes: investment in people - with a link to skills and education - , governance and peace. The European External Investment Plan stimulates investment for employment and consists of three pillars: a financial pillar offering guarantees and blending and two pillars for capacity building, one for developing proposals and building capacity, including of social partners and one for a more conducive business climate. The summit has been preceded by some preparatory meetings, such as the one in Addis Abeba on "Africa talks jobs" where also the ETF was present. Subjects touched upon covered investment in people, VET audit, support for capacity building, intra African skills portability, making VET more attractive and an Erasmus-style pilot project on VET mobility between Africa and the EU.

He also referred to the annual seminar for EU DEL staff the week following the Governing Board, with the active participation of ETF speakers.

Trends and developments at the ETF

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) gave a short update on the Torino Process and its next steps, but promised that the slides covering the other items would soon be available in the restricted area of the GB.

A little brochure on the Torino Process was prepared and distributed, capturing the essence of what the Torino Process has given. A short reference was made to the 2016-2017 June Torino Process meeting as a very inspiring event.

Through the Torino Process more awareness has been raised for VET in the Partner Countries although the results on the ground and for the citizens were somehow difficult to capture. VET needs to deliver, and delivery is an area where the ETF will focus on, by calibrating strategies if needed and improving its monitoring systems. Furthermore, cooperation for delivery needs to be stressed, not only among Partner Countries but also with social partners, private providers, trade unions, NGO's, etc. A need for diversification was noticed to cover a lifelong learning perspective. Finally yet importantly, a proliferation of pilot projects exists of which very few translate into reforms and are not assessed for a move into reality. Therefore, mechanisms and assumptions need to be analysed to translate the pilots into reality.

Sixteen strategic dimensions and key indicators have been defined to measure the progress made in each country and in each area, showing the different stages of development in reform processes per country. The majority of the countries is in the piloting stage, others in the conceptual stage, but far less in the implementation stage.

For the future, this means that delivery and implementation will need special attention and extra resources, while still supporting the EC with the design, piloting and implementation of projects.

Four cycles of the Torino Process have now been finalised, and through a steady progression in the number of participating countries, it has become an established process. With the next phase covering 2019-2020, some reflection will take place previously to define the approach and line of action: on the need to find a balance between policy learning, analysis and ownership in the countries; the varying quality of indicators; the need for constructive and longer term feedback mechanisms; the support to implementation.

The Torino Process also needs to be framed into the post 2020 discussions, possibly already next year when, based on the results of the Torino Process, a collective and interactive reflection could take place with some or all members of the GB or other interlocutors.

A short video was shown giving a visual impression of the last Torino Process conference.

Dimitris PSILLOS (Greece) thanked for the inspiring presentation, and asked why the histograms gave the impression of homogeneity while they are not adding up equal issues. Furthermore, in the history of education, there is a gap between pilot studies and implementation or dissemination, the last category implying a strategy on what is possible and what not. He suggested that the ETF should only consider selected case studies of implementation, dissemination and evaluation, given its stressed resources.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) replied that no value judgement was implied. This was confirmed by Manuela PRINA (ETF) who said that the different stages were not a ranking nor a value judgement, but are just helping to understand the intervention modalities that can then bring countries forward that are at different levels of policy stage and in need of different support. The final and regional reports on the Torino Process 2016-2017 will be ready by the end of the year.

Lluis PRATS (DG EMPL) concluded by pointing at the importance of 2018 for both the future of the agency and the future of VET for the neighbouring countries.

Update on the Estonian Presidency

Külli ALL (Estonia) confirmed that quite some progress was made in EU Presidency matters, mainly in taking forward the EU Skills Agenda, labelled as a priority since the start of the Presidency. In addition, the specific initiatives on education and youth, such as the Council Conclusions and the Recommendation on the Tracking of Graduates and the revision of the Europass framework were successfully taken forward. All the DG meetings were held as planned. A big conference on new approaches to learning and teaching, a big educational conference on career counselling and a high level Presidency conference on the future of work and skills took place, all putting the future and modernisation of education at the centre of the attention. The conclusions of the conferences served as input to the Conclusions of the Council on the development of schools and on the development of higher education. All information and documents of the conferences are available on the Presidency's website. The contribution of ETF to the conferences was appreciated.

Next week, the Ministerial Council of Education, Research, Youth and Sports plans to adopt the Recommendation on the Tracking of Graduates, the Conclusions on the new higher education action plan and on school development. A discussion on VET, and more specifically on the future of skills and the balance between employment and labour market needs, will be launched.

In two weeks' time, in the field of science and research, the Ministers will endorse in the Competitiveness Council the Conclusions of the mid-term review of Horizon 2020 and the forthcoming ninth Framework Programme. The Bulgarian Presidency will take these forward.

Update on the upcoming Bulgarian Presidency

Mimi DANEVA (Bulgaria) introduced Bulgaria and the first Bulgarian Presidency ever, which, under its motto "United We Stand Strong" will do its utmost to push forward a number of education files. Four headline priorities related to the future of Europe and young people were mentioned: economic growth and social inclusion; security and stability in a strong and united Europe; the EU perspective and connectivity of the Western Balkans; the digital economy and skills.

For education, the overarching priority is the future of the Erasmus+ programme, with a mid-term evaluation expected mid-January. A first discussion on the future of education after 2020 is scheduled in the February meeting of the Council of MoEs. The forthcoming meeting of the High-Level Group in education and training in Sofia will start the discussions on the new mandate of the six existing working groups within the education and training 2020 framework. A Council Recommendation on social inclusion and common EU values through education is expected, as is a revision of the Council Recommendation on the key competences for life-long learning.

A detailed agenda with dates and events was provided to the audience.