

DECISION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE ETF

The Governing Board of the European Training Foundation,

Having regards to the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1339/2008 establishing a European Training Foundation, and in particular article 9 thereof;

By written procedure which took place from 6 to 29 May 2020

Has adopted:

1. Minutes of the Governing Board meeting of 22 November 2019 -
GB/20/DEC/004



Joost KORTE

Chair of the Governing Board

Date: 08 June 2020

MINUTES

GOVERNING BOARD

MEETING

22 NOVEMBER 2019



The ETF Governing Board (GB) meeting took place in Brussels on 22 November 2019, and was chaired by Mr Joost Korte, Director-General of DG EMPL, European Commission (EC). At the outset, the Chair congratulated the ETF on the occasion of its 25th anniversary.

1. Adoption of the agenda

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

2. Introductory remarks from the Chair

The Chair welcomed the new GB members: Mr Josef HOCHWALD, the new member for Austria; Mr James CALLEJA, the new member for Malta; Elisabeth AUGUSTIN, the Austrian alternate; and Ms Kristin HESS, the new alternate for Germany. He also welcomed the new partner country observer from Georgia, Mr Irina TSERODZE and Mr Enrico PAVONE who represented Italy.

There were a number of members of the board who have recently appointed but were not present: the Estonian member Ms Terje HAIDAK (absent due to illness); Mr Teet TIKO, the new alternate from Estonia; and Mr Francis FABRI, the new alternate for Malta,

The partner country observers from Serbia could not be present.

The following Member States were not represented at the meeting: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia and United Kingdom.

The European Commission was also represented by Ms Myriam FERRAN, Director; Mr Javier MENENDEZ BONILLA; Mr Christophe MASSON (DG NEAR), Mr Francesco LUCIANI, Head of Unit (DG DEVCO); Mr Lluís PRATS, Head of Unit; Mr Aristotelis MARGOS and Mr Alberto FUNES BETANCOR (DG EMPL).

Ms Doriana MONTELEONE represented the ETF Staff Committee.

3. Follow-up to previous meetings

The Board unanimously adopted the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 June 2019.

The Chair presented the follow up to the action points since the last GB meeting and informed about the written procedure that was successfully concluded in August.

4. Programming Document 2020-22 – Annual Work Programme 2020

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) outlined the ETF's 2020 work programme, highlighting that it will be a transition year for the ETF work as 2020 is the last year of the current programming period and it will be the year in which ETF prepares the implementation of the new ETF Strategy 2027 that was adopted in June 2019.

He outlined that the activities for 2020 will be grouped under three broad objectives: (i) supporting EU assistance in the context of the external policies; (ii) ensuring intelligence and evidence gathering

analysis and diagnosis to support evidence-based policy-making; and, (iii) methodological development to support skills policies and system change in partner countries.

He informed the members about the three new, multi-annual, multi-thematic, initiatives which assist countries in managing reforms in key areas: i) Skills Lab – to address skills needs in transition economies; ii) Creating New Learning – in terms of innovation in pedagogy, curricula and qualifications; iii) Centres of Vocational Excellence – in close cooperation with the Commission, identifying and sharing provider excellence through networks.

He also highlighted that in 2020 the ETF will conclude the 5th round of the Torino Process: results for all regions will be presented in 2021. There will be more focus on the area of human capital development and innovation.

He invited the members to join the recently launched ETF Open Space, the expert community for learning and skills professionals to share, co-create and collaborate online.

In line with ETF Strategy 2027, he stressed that ETF work will be done leveraging partnerships. The ETF wants to deliver, working with partners systematically with the EU, member states, international organisations, regional actors and agencies. Partnership arrangements are currently being reviewed to identify the most strategically important partners for ETF delivery.

Mr ONESTINI (ETF) highlighted that cooperation with other agencies is also a priority in 2020 as a follow-up of the external evaluation that the Commission concluded for the four agencies (Cedefop, Eurofound, ETF and OSHA) under the remit of DG Employment. The external evaluation found a number of areas of potential synergies between the agencies. The ETF action plan which was submitted to the Commission as a follow-up to the external evaluation is included in annex to the SPD.

The Chair thanked Mr ONESTINI for his presentation.

Mika SAARINEN (Finland), representing the Presidency, in the name of all the other GB members, congratulated the ETF on the very good work and the clear work programme, noting that 2020 was a transition year to the ETF Strategy 2027. He informed that the GB members made two observations. Firstly, on the balance between the focus on innovation and basic developments needed in the partner countries. He noted there was risk of going too far in either direction, but the members of the Governing Board noticed a change in the balance and that there was a more balanced approach in the document, which should be maintained in the future. The other observation made by the GB members made at the informal meeting was growing tension, between increasing expectations towards the ETF and a stagnant or, even to some degree, diminishing budget and resource structure. He informed that the members are open for debate around these issues in the future.

He raised a number of members' questions:

1. There is a mention in the SPD that the ETF will maintain a degree of flexibility towards new priorities. This is very generally phrased and it opens up to any kind of possibilities for changes really to the Work Programme, which of course is a concern for the GB. He asked how will this issue would be managed.
2. Under delivering in partnership, the members questioned what kind of stakeholders will the ETF work with? How many? And what kind of relationships is ETF building? He noted that this has a direct relation both on the resources and the workload of the ETF.
3. The three new integrated cross thematic initiatives, which seem to be well in line with the policy work done so far, however the members were keen to know more.

4. Libya is mentioned as a potential cooperation area if conditions allow. What is the ETF's interpretation of the present conditions? And will they allow cooperation or not?
5. Concerning the "greening" of the ETF's activities, are there any policies within the ETF on sustainability issues of making greener agency and what are the efforts planned in that area?
6. Finally, it is understood that the ETF will work in the area of Centres of Vocational Excellence and that is an interest both within the EU member states and in the partner countries. Since the Work Programme refers to developing criteria in this area, there is interest in knowing more about these criteria and when these criteria will be available.

Irina TSERODZE (Partner Country Observer from Georgia) referred to the fact that the European Commission promotes the smart specialisation concept among countries. She inquired on the probability of ETF's engagement in this area in the partner countries. She also informed that Georgia is planning to launch a Centre of Excellence by 2023 in the areas of construction and logistics. She stated that any kind of related expertise that the ETF could provide to Georgia would be very valuable.

Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) thanked the Members for the comments. In response to the questions, he responded:

- On the flexibility towards new priorities, he clarified that this was in view of any new priorities in the area of skills and external relations stemming from the start of the mandate of the new Commission and the new Parliament. Skills are becoming even more of a priority in the discourse of the new Commission as one of the core areas on which the future Commission wants to deliver. And indeed, this is something the Parliament is also echoing. He expects that this priority will continue also in the external relations context as the ETF will contribute to accelerate initiatives towards the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals. He confirmed that ETF's work and resources have been assigned in the SPD.
- Under delivering in partnership, he stressed that ETF is assessing current partnerships and aims to focus on a smaller number of key strategic partners who can contribute to improving the delivery of ETF's work.
- On Libya, he informed Members that last year Libya had confirmed its interest in the Torino Process. Due to events in the country, this work was carried out with a group of representatives via meetings in Tunis. The present conditions have forced the work to be suspended, although it is hoped that should conditions change that it can be resumed. He welcomed any Members active with Libya to engage with the ETF to look at opportunities for joining together.
- Concerning the "greening" of the ETF's activities, he informed Members that the ETF has begun a process of EMAS certification to audit the environmental performance of the Agency.
- On ETF's work in the area of Centres of Vocational Excellence, Mr ONESTINI referred to ETF's work with DG EMPL on the matter and the mapping of Centres of Vocational Excellence in some ETF partner countries, in parallel to the Commission's mapping exercise. The ETF held a workshop on the subject in the European Vocational Skills Week in Helsinki in October 2019. A reflection paper is now being prepared, following also discussions with DG EMPL, UNEVOC and some development agencies. He proposed to share the paper with Members.
- On smart specialisation, he referred to the work of the ETF with the EC's Joint Research Centre focussing on how to bring in the skills component. Ms Anastasia FETSI (ETF) added that the ETF has developed a methodology to assess skill requirements for the implementation of smart specialisation strategies. The methodology is being applied in Montenegro. The ETF now plans to apply the methodology in Moldova and two regions in Ukraine. For the countries which have smart

specialisation strategies already, the ETF can provide these instruments. If not, the ETF can see skills demand as part of the shaping of the smart specialisation strategy and discussion can be held with JRC on how to go about it. The ETF is available to discuss with Georgia or other countries involved in this process on how to work together.

On the new integrated cross-thematic initiatives, Ms FETSI informed Members that they are part of the logic of the new strategy of ETF to become a global Knowledge Hub. They correspond to two of the three thematic areas that the strategy wants to bring forward. One thematic area is the identification of skill needs as they are shaped by the introduction of digital technologies, the requirement of greener economies, economic sector development requirements, local development, smart specialisation strategies and of course the needs of individual, in particular the most vulnerable ones to adapt to change. This is the first thematic area in which the ETF intends to invest and the initiative on Skills Lab will correspond to this requirement. The second thematic area of the strategy is to promote innovation in teaching and learning methods and in methods of making skills visible. The two initiatives, on creating new learning and on Centres of Vocational Excellence, are designed in order to promote this innovation in this area of work of change in the partner countries. This is not new work for ETF but the differences that the three initiatives bring into the Work Programme of ETF now are two: the first one is the intention to work in networks, as to work bilaterally with each country is demanding on resources and secondly, because nurturing, co-working of new knowledge and approaches is extremely important. The ETF wants to create networks of professionals or researchers or providers, and work together with them on methodologies, on approaches and on how to bring innovation from practice to policy. This represents a very important change in the work of ETF. And this does not involve only ETF partner countries but also member states as well as international organisations. The second element which makes these initiatives particularly important is their multiannual character designed for a period of 3-4 years while also ensuring intermediate results. Ms FETSI announced the proposal discussed yesterday in the preparatory meetings about the possibility of presenting the initiatives in June before the next GB meeting.

Following this discussion, the GB unanimously adopted the ETF 2020–2022 SPD/ Annual WP 2020.

5. ETF Budget 2020

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) presented the ETF budget 2020.

Mika SAARINEN (Finland), representing the Presidency, and following the informal meeting of the day before, expressed his satisfaction with the 2020 budget. One question from the GB members concerned the increases in certain budget posts: post and telecommunication, socio-medical costs, movable property and staff recruitment.

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) replied:

- On post and telecommunication costs, he confirmed that the initial budget proposal is the same as last year, however it is an increase compared to the amended budget.
- On socio-medical costs, he informed that now the mission costs related to learning and development are covered by this budget line so as to have the full amount for training expenses under one budget line.
- On movable property, he confirmed that again the initial budget proposal is the same as last year, however it is an increase compared to the amended budget. It is envisaged that there may be a need to replace some furniture in 2020.

- On staff recruitment, the increase is that it is known that some staff members are leaving next year. Recruitment costs are due to the need to have interviews on-site and also for any managerial position we are now obliged to engage an assessment centre.

Mr FAUDEL added that the GB should be aware that for the future every year the ETF will have an increase of approximately 2% in staff costs. If the current draft Multiannual Financial Framework remains as it is, after next year, as ETF has a *nominally stable* budget, increases in Title 1 (staff costs) can only be covered by reducing Title 3 (operational budget).

Given that there were no further questions nor observations, the GB members unanimously adopted the 2020 ETF Budget.

6. ETF 2019 amending budget

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) presented the second amending budget for 2019.

No comments nor questions were received.

The GB members unanimously adopted the 2019 ETF Amending Budget.

Mr ONESTINI (ETF) informed Members that this was the last GB meeting for Mr FAUDEL as in Spring 2020 he will be leaving the ETF. He expressed his appreciation for the work of Mr FAUDEL during his many years of service at the Agency in different roles and he thanked him for his support in recent years as Head of the Resources and Services Department.

7. ETF Strategy 2027 – Implementation

Mr ONESTINI (ETF) informed the Members on the work of the ETF in implementing the ETF Strategy 2027. He agreed with Mr SAARINEN that the WP2020 just adopted was a transition towards the new strategy. He confirmed the proposal discussed in Troika meeting on the previous day to hold a more in-depth discussion with Members on the day before the next GB meeting on the implementation of the ETF Strategy and the initiatives.

He reported that the ETF has drawn up an internal paper on to define what is meant by human capital development and lifelong learning. Human capital development for the ETF is focused on education and training, it is lifelong learning, it is comprehensive and it is inclusive. The ETF uses the Cedefop definition of lifelong learning.

Mr ONESTINI (ETF) provided an overview of other four areas on which the ETF is working:

- On partnerships, he confirmed that the ETF has started an internal assessment of which partnerships are best supporting ETF actions and which partnerships are more resource-demanding without adding sufficient value, so that ETF can focus on the former.
- An internal discussion is taking place on the ETF's human resource strategy. As the ETF turns 25, there is a significant number of colleagues who are approaching retirement. This requires some reflection on knowledge management issues, how it is ensured that new colleagues coming in fit in or how it is ensured that knowledge we have developed over the past twenty-five years is furthered. Hence a strategy is required. It will not be a revolution (the ETF remains in the framework of the Staff Regulations), however a reflection is needed on ETF as centre of expertise in the context of a generational change. He indicated Nadège PERRINE,

ETF's Head of Human Resources is leading this process together with all ETF managers. The reflection will involve all the ETF staff and the ETF staff committee, who is represented here at the meeting.

- He added that for the new strategy, a new intervention logic is to be defined. An internal discussion led by the colleagues in operations is taking place, also with input from the partner countries, to see what this intervention logic should prioritise. In order to implement it two complementary reflections are needed. Firstly, on what kind of access to further resources is possible. An internal assessment has been done of what is possible under ETF Financial Regulation and the ETF regulation. There are various options and these reflections will be shared with the Commission. This area can be seen in the pre-meeting in June. There are also decisions to be taken on individual actions, including the possibility that the ETF could, as in the past, also co-operate more with trust funds of member states.
- Mr ONESTINI (ETF) then highlighted the issue of differentiation, referring to the related document tabled. The ETF wants to ensure that differentiation will allow the ETF to identify where the Agency can be more value added. One of the feedbacks in the preparation of the strategy was that the ETF should move away from horizontal approaches where all countries were treated similarly and try to respond better to the different needs and different stages of development of vocational education systems within the countries. The drivers are the diversity that is present in the 29 partner countries. From war-torn situations to economies in full transition, to more mature economies and also the demography that underpins that which is very different across the partner countries. There is also the diversity of the EU instruments; the intention is that the ETF tailors its work further, according to the type of instruments that the Commission will put in place and the type of relationships that will be defined at regional and country level.
- Mr ONESTINI (ETF) stated that guiding the ETF's approach to differentiation are the principles of i) transparency; ii) effectiveness, targeting actions which have the greatest policy and systemic impact; and, iii) complementarity, linking to EU and EU Member State goals. Ultimately, the goal is to optimise the use of ETF's resources.

The Chair emphasised the importance of next year for all the preparations for the actual implementation of the strategy and he confirmed the support of the Commission. He welcomed the opportunity for a more in-depth discussion in June 2020.

Mika SAARINEN (Finland), representing the Presidency, welcomed the involvement of Members in the discussion and confirmed the Board's interest in a dedicated session in June 2020. He informed that the Members would like to understand better the criteria of complementarity to other actions that was mentioned and also how the potential level of implementation of actions comes into deciding when the ETF is present or not. He informed that there was also some interest in the informal meeting on the fact that ETF might accept requests from non-partner countries, e.g. from Latin America or other parts of the world. He invited the ETF Director to provide some clarification in relation to this possibility.

Gema CAVADA (Spain) expressed appreciation of the presentation and welcomed the potential of ETF's work. She emphasised Spain's area of collaboration with Latin America and she welcomed the prospect of ETF widening its thematic and geographical scope to countries that are not currently partner countries.

Mr ONESTINI (ETF) provided two examples in response to the question on complementarity. Firstly, is the question of what ETF does with International Financial Institutions (IFIs), which are becoming more and more active in the area of education beyond primary education. There is a potential for cooperation as IFIs have limited expertise especially on secondary education in types of interventions

and actions and how these connect to qualification frameworks. The ETF has been discussing with the European Investment Bank for example on how ETF can support the EIB in Ukraine on educational system decentralisation programmes, given ETF experience in the country. Similarly, with the Asian Development Bank in the countries where both ETF and the ADB are active in in the Caucasus and Central Asian countries, there is discussion on applying a common methodology when each organisation carries out sector studies.

Secondly, in the Western Balkans, in line with the Commission and the member states aim to develop more regional cooperation, the role of the Regional Cooperation Council is growing and now covers education and training. Therefore, the ETF can support RCC to do certain things that the ETF was doing in the past. On the implementation of actions, he explained that this is again an issue of complementarity. The ETF is not an implementing agency, but it can support the design and monitoring of programmes that others implement.

On the question of partner countries, he emphasised that they are where the ETF focus the majority of resources. A flexibility that was added after agreement by the Board was to co-operate with the African Union on the development of an African qualification system. He explained that the principle of ETF response to a request outside the partner countries is that it should be reasonable and proportional. When the ETF is requested to transfer knowledge of methodologies by countries outside of our geography, this is fine if limited e.g. half-a-day work. Anything which requires significant resources could only be seen if additional ones are made available. When the ETF is requested to take part in events of international organisations for example such as UNESCO in Sub-Saharan Africa or ADB in South East Asia, the ETF can participate if the mission costs are offered covered by the organisers. Mr ONESTINI stated future discussions may be opened on the geography but that the issues of additional resources and complementarity must be included in the debate.

8. Oral reports

See Annex

9. Any other business

MR ONESTINI (ETF) informed the GB members of some sad news that the Irish member of the board Michael Kelleher recently passed away. He had been an active member of the GB since 2015. The ETF will send a letter of condolences on behalf of the board.

The Chair reiterated the requirement to submit the annual declaration of commitment and interest. He invited the GB members to complete the form immediately after the meeting. He also asked members to fill in the online meeting evaluation form.

10. Date of next meeting

The next regular meeting of the GB will take place in Turin on 12 June 2020. Peter ISSJELMUIDEN (The Netherlands) mentioned that an ACVT meeting is planned in Brussels for 10-11 June involving some GB members. Mr ONESTINI suggested that the ETF review the options for the date and make a proposal to the GB Members.

The Chair thanked the GB members for their active and efficient contribution and the interpreters for their work.

He then closed the meeting.

Follow up actions:

- To provide the WP 2020 to the budgetary authorities by 30 November 2019.
- To confirm the date of the next meeting in June 2020.
- To organise a dedicated presentation and discussion on the new modalities of the ETF Strategy 2027 at the next GB meeting in June 2020.

ANNEX

10. Oral reports

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

Ms Myriam FERRAN (DG NEAR) provided an overview of DG NEAR policies. She confirmed that DG NEAR continues to be in charge of both the Enlargement and the Neighbourhood policies. The new commissioner-designate, Olivier Várhelyi and next Commission President Elect Ursula von der Leyen have put the key priority on greening and on the digital agenda, which is particularly relevant for the ETF actions in terms of skills of the future and in line with the ETF Strategy 2027.

Concerning the enlargement policy there was a missed opportunity at the last European Council to open negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania. A new General Affairs Council was held last Wednesday, where the key message for member states was striving for unity and presenting a united front to the Western Balkans in particular. The Commission will reflect upon the enlargement methodology as requested by several member states. But more importantly DG NEAR will work with the new Commission to try to clarify what will be the vision for the region during their mandate. A policy document should be presented by the new college early next year. It is clear that the European perspective of the Western Balkans is not in question, nor is the enlargement process, as clearly reflected also in the mission letter of the new commissioner-elect for Enlargement, where it is very clear that the objective is to sustain and accelerate the progress made by the Western Balkan region during the new mandate.

Concerning the next multiannual financial framework, Ms FERRAN (DG NEAR) informed on the two instruments of clear interest to the work of the ETF: the Neighbourhood Development International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) which is covering the whole world except the enlargement region and the Instrument for Pre-Accession 3, covering the Western Balkans and Turkey. Now there will direct meetings between Council and Parliament to agree on the key features. But Parliament and the Council do not yet have a position and agreement is still needed on the budget nor on the governance. She hoped that all these discussions may be closed early in 2020.

Ms FERRAN (DG NEAR) informed that as the new instruments enter into force on 1st of January 2021 and the countries need to be prepared to engage into devising operational programmes already in 2021. So, DG NEAR has already started working on the key priorities and has developed concept nods, per country and per thematic priorities. The aim is to assess to which extent the policy framework first needs to be updated, particularly in the neighbourhood. There are many association agreements, some of which are only valid until 2020. A process of reflection has started internally to see whether they can be prolonged or whether some changes are needed also to integrate the new priorities of the new college and then based on discussions in the working Council groups. This reflection will be followed by consultation with the International Financial Institutions and the countries themselves.

Ms FERRAN (DG NEAR) stated that IPA will have a different structure. DG NEAR is working on preparing one single programming framework to spell out the key priorities of the Enlargement process. There is nothing new in this document, rather a codification of the well-known priorities of the Enlargement process, starting with the fundamentals of rule of law and fundamental rights, economical governance and reforms, public administration reforms.

She highlighted one important novelty - that may also have a bearing on the way the ETF is working - is the increased wish of cooperating more with International Financial Institutions. She welcomed the ETF's increased cooperation with IFIs in this respect. She emphasised that the Commission is cooperating more with the International Financial Institutions which share the same policy objectives

as Commission by going together with the countries to deliver a consistent and, if possible, joint message. This was started already with the commissioner Hahn, who had several joint missions to the countries (e.g. Ukraine) with the CEOs of the IMF, of the EIB, of the EBRD, the strength of the message is stronger and better received. The aim is to have increased cooperation including blending where the EU can provide grants in support to the loans provided by the International Financial Institutions. In the new architecture, a new tool, the External Action Guarantee, is being created (building on the lending activity of the EIB), particularly for the private sector. It is hoped will help also attract private capital in support of public policies.

Ms FERRAN (DG NEAR) added that the Commission is strengthening its policy approach in the economic field and through a reinforcement of the economic reform programmes with all Western Balkans and Turkey. The economic reform programmes are mirroring the European semester and these are joint exercises with DG EMPL and DG ECFIN. She emphasised the importance as it is based on ownership by the countries of their reform track and the Commission provides an annual assessment of those economic reform programmes. The programmes include medium-term macroeconomic projections, budgetary plans for the next three years and clear structure reforms agenda. The Commission services provide recommendations which are endorsed by the Council in the ECOFIN, normally in May and those recommendations are then sent to the countries. What we are modifying in our assessment of the ERP is the concentration of our support and political push on the key structure reform challenges. There will now be a greater focus to push the countries to address the fundamental weaknesses of their systems.

DG NEAR will implement in the Neighbourhood and Enlargement countries diagnostics of the education systems that will identify the main obstacles and challenges related to the governance and financing. The objective is to make the Economic Reform Programmes more linked to our financial assistance so that this is more focused on sectors and reforms which should help the country reach a higher level of convergence with the European Union. For education and human capital development, in the ETF work programme for 2020 the provision of overall diagnosis has included it is very important to address those sectors as a whole and not only limited to one or another element. She stressed that DG NEAR very much relies on the expertise of ETF and is very keen to engage in this respect.

Mr Francesco Luciani (DG DEVCO) stated DG DEVCO was looking forward to exploring new avenues of cooperation with the new MFF, country strategies of cooperation and the new guarantee fund. Changes in DEVCO are being experienced, with a new Commissioner and a new Director General. It is not just about development assistance but building partnerships with countries to do business at all levels, going beyond donor assistance with a new set of ideas with new Commission guidance. The incoming Commissioner was previously a teacher and therefore education and training will be of particular importance during her mandate. DG DEVCO is striving to give employment all the attention it deserves. One of most important challenges is especially in Africa where the number of young persons entering the labour market outstrips the jobs available. 450 million young people will enter into the labour market by 2035 whereas, with unchanged policy, only 100 million jobs would be created. This is extremely worrying for the countries concerned but is also a call of duty for us to think in a different manner on how to support these countries and reflect on the kind of messages we have to give to them.

Employment issues will therefore become ever more prominent in DG DEVCO programming that is underway. As training alone does not create jobs, the Commission launched in September 2018 the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs. A comprehensive approach, bringing the demand and supply side of the market together. The core of this alliance is the Strategic Investment for Job Creation via the European External Investment Plan, which aims at investing in people through

education and skills, strengthening business investment and climate, fostering economic investment and trade. DG DEVCO's aspiration is that the Alliance will be further expanded both geographically and in resource terms, both in terms of guarantee funds and the mobilisation of private funds. This will be one of the pillars of work in the next MFF and it is clearly addressed in the proposal for the NDICI regulation. Within the Alliance the VET pillar will be designed based on the labour market needs and opportunities of the beneficiary countries. For that purpose, the collaboration with the VET institutions in the countries concerned and the private sector needs to be strengthened. For a solid foundation it is necessary to invest in quality basic education. Otherwise investments will not be able to be supported by adequate level of human resources at local level to implement them. In order to address this kind of challenge, last week the College adopted a 15 million EUR action which foresees the delivery of targeted VET in support of investment programmes. It intends to address skills issues which may jeopardise investment both for investors and local companies that are a key part of the supply chain. It is foreseen to implement this action through specialised Member State agencies who are already active in strengthening the link between VET and the private sector, by providing advisory services under the VET Toolbox, bringing the total investment to 30 million euro. The VET Toolbox will accompany the implementation of the European External Investment Plan in Africa.

Another important programme is financed under the Pan-African programme where DG DEVCO operates jointly with the German Skills Initiative, with a contribution of 27 million euro. DG DEVCO also contributes to advisory services delivered by GIZ, while there is discussion with KfW to support innovative VET programmes in several African countries. A further initiative is the VET mobility pilot which seeks to test the exchange between Africa and Europe of VET staff and some learners. These actions are complementary and both are financed by the EU Trust Fund which, under the current MFF, enables more than 1 million people to benefit from VET training globally.

In light of the focus on Africa DG DEVCO would like to express our satisfaction with the work of the ETF help the African Union Commission develop an AU framework. And DG DEVCO trusts that the ETF will be able to mobilise in addition to the current part-time expert, specific short-time expertise should the need arise in the course of the exercise. This should be possible under the work programme that was approved earlier. DG DEVCO would also welcome that the ETF extends its support to the EU Delegation to the African Union, also in view of the Africa Union-EU Summit that is due to take place by the end of next year. He recalled the previous summit in November 2017. It is an important challenge to define a strategy that will cover the next 2-3 years. He hoped that the ETF will be instrumental in helping DEVCO and the African Union to design and strategise support for the AU Commission. The current assignment of advice could hopefully be concluded successfully and form the basis of a further collaboration to the EU Delegation to Addis Ababa and the to the AU Commission beyond 2020. This is an important area of collaboration that does not imply going beyond the mandate, building on the important work that is already taking place. He hoped that this initial step will be strengthened and continued and expanded in due course with the right tempo, giving the right signal for action beyond 2020. He concluded underlining that which was mentioned concerning the ETF Strategy 2027 on the necessity to reduce the initiatives to the most strategic. This is certainly one of them and one of the priorities of the European Union. Improving human capital development is a strategic priority for DEVCO in relation with the Africa Union. It contributes to human development itself, contributing to the SDGs and the economic growth of the countries concerned and assists their management of migration flows, not necessarily towards Europe but between African countries, such flows are far more significant than the migration outside the continent.

The Chair informed he was confident that the new Commission would indeed start on the 1 December. There will be a vote in the Parliament on 27 November and then European Council should give its formal approval. He referred to the speech at the European Parliament of the President-elect, her political guidelines and the mission letters and that all the major initiatives announced will be rolled out rapidly. He highlighted that already in December there will be the new Green Deal.

He emphasised that the two big main priorities are the transition of European economies towards carbon neutral in 2050 and the similar process for the digital revolution, highlighting that the President-Elect had appointed an executive vice-President to lead the work on these two priorities. The areas of Vocational Education Training and Skills play an important role in this transition and they have been given priority. Commissioner-designate Nicolas Schmit has been tasked very specifically to modernise and update the skills agenda. It is clear that without further investments in skills, without further investments in education, this transition will simply not be possible.

The Chair referred to the European Vocational Skills Week in Helsinki that took place on 14 to 18 October and praised the great support from the Finnish Presidency. He stressed that with the help of EU and the various presidencies, skills and VET have been put on the map through these events, generating support and many ideas. He looked forward to the 2020 edition in Germany.

The Chair then referred to the European Labour Authority, highlighting the fast legislative procedure for its establishment. In October there was an inaugural session of the ELA with President Juncker and the Slovak prime minister, followed by the first meeting of the management board. He drew the GB members attention to the adoption of the vacancy notice for the Director of the ELA, as well as the budget and the first priorities for 2020. The aim is to have 66 staff recruited before the end of 2019 and 155 by 2024. Many of which will be seconded by the member states. He stressed that the ELA has a different role than many other agencies, allowing the member states authorities to work better together and particularly among Labour and Social Security inspectorates. Also, it will have an important role in informing workers and business about the rules that need to be respected when moving to another member state, be it as a cross-border worker or a mobile worker or a frontier worker or on posting. He underlined the importance of the agency in the area of free movement mentioning, in particular, the new legislation on posting of workers and the coordination of the social security.

The Chair concluded on the remarkable mandate of the Juncker Commission, especially in the area for which the ETF works. There have never been so many proposals, initiatives and legislation in the area of skills in VET and more broadly on social Europe.

Trends and developments at the ETF

Mr Cesare ONESTINI (ETF) provided an update on the recent work of the ETF. Firstly, he highlighted that at the European Vocational Skills Week again this year, the ETF has been fully involved, not just in the actual week but also in an award of entrepreneurship for the ETF partner countries that this year went to the University of Alexandria, Egypt. The ETF has also been involved in promoting events in all the partner countries of ETF. The EVSW is reaching well beyond the EU with the support of ETF. In terms of the European Labour Authority, the ETF is an observer on the board. The ETF provided it support to the discussions on the definition of the work and priorities of the ELA. He pointed out that while there no is immediate overlap of activities of the mandates of the ETF with the ELA but the position on the board also allows ETF to be complementary or supportive of actions wherever possible.

He referred to what Ms FERRAN (DG NEAR) had said in terms of diagnostics and the work that will be done. It would indeed be a first, in the sense that ETF will be looking at the full education and training system in the spirit of the new strategy, going beyond that and embedding the reflections that have been had, on an understanding more broadly of skills developed throughout the education and training, the lifelong learning approach. That will require to also look at the methodology. There are many other actors which have information, data and cooperation is needed with interlocutors which are not necessarily currently ETF interlocutors. The ETF has therefore been in conversation with DG NEAR to make sure that the ETF can offer what is needed. It has been agreed to start with one

country because it is a question of methodology, understanding what is needed and understanding how best the ETF can serve the purposes of DG NEAR.

On the VET Toolbox as mentioned by the colleague from DG DEVCO, he confirmed that this was indeed one of the partnerships dimensions of the ETF's work. The ETF is very much associated to the work of the VET Toolbox and it is quite complementary. Indeed, the ETF welcomes the work that has been done on the qualification frameworks with the African Union. It is not that it is expected to have a fully-fledged continental qualification framework for Africa, in a matter of months or years. The idea is to focus the discussion on what is the kind of architecture that this continent might want to look at and the ETF's role there is one of bringing the experience and expertise and fostering a discussion which ultimately is really much owned by the African Union and the countries. He confirmed that the ETF is very happy to support the delegation in Addis Ababa for the EU-AU summit that will take place next year. He reiterated that anything that might happen in terms of more concrete support beyond 2020 will be linked to a discussion on resources and how ETF can have a role based on what resources might be needed.

Concerning trends and developments, Mr ONESTINI (ETF) confirmed that the ETF was on target with the main indicators. At present there was only one issue on lower rate of payments which is partly linked to this freeze at the beginning of the year on the part of the budget which was linked to Brexit.

On the key indicators in education and employment (KIESE), he highlighted the positive trends, especially the question of upskilling in some of the partner countries. He stressed that the indicators show that focus on lifelong learning and education is still one of the most relevant areas of intervention, especially linked to the mandate of the ETF.

In relation to the Torino Process he informed that the ETF had made good progress in the Western Balkans and Eastern partnership. Draft reports are available for members interested (or Member States agencies and partners), especially for the Western Balkans. Eastern partnership is more advanced, and the ETF will present the results in March at the Minsk Eastern Partnership Platform IV meeting. The ETF is now entering into the more operational phase for the countries of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia.

Mr ONESTINI (ETF) recalled that some GB members attended the in the qualifications conference in Torino earlier in November which reached quite well beyond the usual circles. He drew attention to the qualifications Toolkit which has been thoroughly updated and it helps guiding discussions about a reflection process on how to constantly update qualifications in the phase of such big changes in terms of job market. In order to also give substance to the conference, the ETF had a call for good practice, good ideas from the countries about examples in terms of how qualifications were used to benefit individuals, students, jobseekers, business. 450 cases were submitted, which demonstrates the level of interest. Some have been featured in inspiring short videos. The ETF will see to capture also what are the lessons one can draw from the success stories. The ETF launched the ETF Open Space and invited all members to join.

Mrs Erja KAIKKONEN (ETF) provided an update on ETF support to EU requests. Overall there is a 20% increase. The majority of the requests come from the EU delegations and then DG NEAR. The ETF is currently cooperating with 20 delegations among the 26 partner countries that are eligible. She gave some examples of larger-scale ongoing requests such as the EU budget support related sector policy dialogue to the EU Delegations in Armenia, Georgia, Serbia and Jordan; ETF has been formulating new EU interventions in Tajikistan as well as a new regional programme for Central Asia and the pre-identification study in East Jerusalem; the support to the operationalisation of EU interventions in Kosovo and in Ukraine; there are other examples as the support to content monitoring in Azerbaijan, Egypt and Algeria.

Mrs KAIKKONEN (ETF) referred to the external evaluation of four agencies under the remit of DG employment for which the report was published in April 2019. The ETF submitted its action plan in October 2019 to DG EMPL. The key conclusions of the external evaluation were that the agencies have provided high value for money and their work has been relevant and useful for their stakeholders. In terms of evaluations commissioned by the ETF, for the first time one was done on Work-based learning in VET and the main findings are that the ETF strengths are the ability to connect with international stakeholders and initiatives at EU level, as well as the quality of materials, the toolkits, methodologies and guides, in particular appreciated and used by development partners. Also, that the ETF is able more than other organisations to combine in-depth understanding of the national context, the national needs and the EU priorities and developments. In terms of weaknesses, the report stated the ETF should differentiate more and cluster countries for peer learning and exchange of experience, not necessarily by region or neighbouring countries but more on the level of experience; to continue to cooperate with other international organisations and link to EU member states work better and to link with other ETF projects on another areas of work that ETF is working on. Next year the ETF will report on the next evaluation on qualifications and communities of practice and that work.

Update on the Finnish Presidency

Mr SAARINEN (FINLAND) provided a presentation on the ongoing Finnish presidency, He highlighted:

- the Erasmus + negotiations are now into the trialogue phase and the negotiations are ongoing and will hopefully could be finalised before the end of the presidency.
- The conclusions of the key role of lifelong learning policies. This is an update on the previous lifelong learning policies, and it covers the type of topics that will also be high on the agenda in the new Commission.
- A Council resolution on the further developing of the European education area with a focus on future oriented education policies. This is one of the priorities of the presidency and it reflects well in the Council resolution provides the basis for the future work.
- One of the big achievements of the presidency was to achieve a joint meeting of the Ministers of Economic and Financial Affairs and Education and Training, Youth and Culture. A welcome step for a future dialogue on investment in human capital.
- The Council also debated the topic of artificial intelligence in education and training. One of the key issues also for the future of vocational education and training. This is important and every citizen of Europe should have better understanding of what artificial intelligence is and how it affects our lives and what the rights and responsibilities of every individual in European relationship to artificial intelligence. But even more so in vocational education and training how artificial intelligence can be used to better match supply and demand of training, better match the future skills needs with the labour market needs and better match individuals interests with their own path way forward. And so, the artificial intelligence work in these areas is extensive already now and will certainly increase in the future.
- In relation to the European Vocational Skills Week, he underlined that it was the first time there was the internationalisation and global dimension addressed. A major part of the event was also the *VET in and for the world* conference on top of the *VET for all skills for life* conference. This addressed among other things the sustainable development goals, the development and inclusion topics, the mobility of learners and staff, global or international mobility and qualifications and standards and cooperation in VET research.

Update on the upcoming Croatian Presidency

Ms Marina ŽIVKOVIĆ (CROATIA) provided a presentation on the upcoming Croatian presidency which will take account of the mismatch of the skills in the labour market, social dimension and education, quality and excellence of education, mobility, European values and inclusive education and training. The priorities in education and training are:

- First is teachers and trainers of the future. This topic will be addressed in all parts of the education system, in all levels of education system, identifying those skills, knowledge and competences of future teachers at all levels of education.
- Second is mobility and brain circulation. There is a great need to promote mobility but also geographical balancing. To balance brain inflow and outflow in EU countries, especially through programmes such as Erasmus + but also through the European University platform.
- Third is education and training 2030. It is a new strategic framework for cooperation for education and training.
- Fourth is education reforms and the European semester, as the Finnish presidency emphasised investments in education and brought together Finance Ministers and Education ministers at one table. In 2020 Croatia will continue with this theme, to give a better-quality approach to education and European semester with the message that investing in education is investing in the future and investing in the overall well-being.

There will be a conference on teachers of the future and the DGVT in March 2020.