



# ETF GOVERNING BOARD MEETING

## 10 JUNE 2008

### MINUTES

#### 1. Introduction

The June 2008 meeting of the ETF Governing Board was held in Turin and chaired by **Odile Quintin**, Director General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. New members of the Board for Greece, Italy, and Luxembourg were welcomed, as were new participants from Greece, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania. The European Commission's DG Enlargement was represented by Giannantonio Ballette, while the DG External Relations representative was David Lipman. Observers from Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Cedefop and EuropeAid attended. Commission officials Elvira Angulo Rodríguez from DG Enlargement, Elena Pascual Jiménez and Belén Bernaldo De Quirós from DG Education and Culture, Bernhard Magenhann from the Internal Audit Service and Göran Winqvist from DG Relex were also present.

The Netherlands was not represented at the meeting.

#### 2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with no changes.

#### 3. Follow-up to previous meeting

##### i. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held in November 2007 were amended at the request of **Ms von Hopffgarten (DE)** and adopted with a modification to point 5 (i) on the ETF's recast regulation (see revised document ETF-GB-08-003).

##### ii. Follow up on action points and written procedures

The following actions were carried out as a follow up to the June 2007 meeting:

- The revision of the document on the International Advisory Panel was postponed until the recast regulation has been approved.
- The minutes of the meeting of June 2007 were amended according to the comments from **Mr Perugini (I)**.
- The update on the Internal Control Standards is given under point 8 of the agenda.

- Additional implementing rules for the staff regulations are to be presented under point 10 of the agenda.
- The ETF will continue to provide technical assistance for the Tempus Programme until 30 June 2008 and is providing support to the Executive Agency for Education and Culture during the handover of this function to them (further details are given under point 4 of the agenda).
- The ETF has been following developments with Libya although to date no concrete activities have taken place.
- The ETF participated in a number of relevant Slovenian presidency events and is planning to be involved in several events under the upcoming French presidency.

Two written procedures were carried out in January and March. The first led to the adoption of the automatic carry forward of payment appropriations from 2007 to 2008 and the endorsement of the Internal Audit Service's 'Strategic Audit Plan 2008-2010'. The second saw the adoption of the ETF's 2009 preliminary draft budget and the staff strategy plan for 2008-2011.

### 3. Oral reports

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

**Odile Quintin** reported on the latest developments in the area of education and culture.

##### **The external dimension of the European Qualifications Framework**

A conference will be organised in the coming months on the external dimension of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) with the support of the ETF. The EQF is very important for supporting mobility and the transparency of qualifications based on results and competence within the EU, and there has been a lot of interest from third countries which would like to link their systems to the European one.

##### **Recast regulation**

In terms of the recast regulation, over the years the ETF's current regulation has had to be amended on a number of occasions to extend its geographical scope and bring it into line with the EU financial regulation. A further amendment is now necessary in order to keep the regulation up to date with the important developments that are taking place in overall EU policy not only in the field of education and training, but also in the EU's external relations policy. This is necessary to update the ETF's role and give it a sound basis for its work. The proposed recast enlarges the thematic remit of the ETF to human capital development, which covers education and training in a lifelong learning perspective in particular. This is highlighted by the conclusions of the last European Council, relates the work of the ETF more closely to the Lisbon strategy and highlights the importance of education and training for equipping people with the knowledge, skills and wider competences to work and live as active citizens in a globalised world.

The recast regulation will also bring the geographical mandate of the ETF in line with the EU external relations programmes, maintaining the focus of the ETF's work on the Neighbourhood and Accession regions, while at the same time opening the possibility for the ETF to work further afield in duly justifiable cases and in line with the external relations priorities. This flexibility is highlighted in article 1C of the recast regulation. Overall, the recast regulation will adapt the ETF to being a policy-driven rather than programme-driven agency working within a sector-wide perspective, providing the Commission with information and analysis in the policy development and assistance programming phase in its field of work.

The legal basis of the original ETF regulation was article 235 of the treaty (now article 308). This has to be replaced by the specific provision of the treaty which constitutes the legal basis for the policy concerned by the ETF's activity, which is still primarily vocational education and training. As a result article 150 has been selected as the appropriate basis. This limits the ETF's scope to vocational

education and training, but in the wider lifelong learning sense in which it links to other types of education, labour markets, civil society, social inclusion etc.

The proposed governance structure in the recast regulation is a Governing Board made up of one representative per Member State, three members from the Commission, three non-voting experts nominated by the European Parliament and three non-voting partner country representatives. Each member would have a five-year term. The Parliament failed to reach a common position on this issue during the first reading and it is for this reason that the text will have to go to a second reading. This could happen in the autumn of 2008, but it could be delayed even further to a time when the governance structures of other EU agencies can be discussed in parallel.

Despite these difficulties the ETF should continue along the path that it has already started and work on human capital development in anticipation of the approval of the recast regulation. Some improvements that are outlined in the recast that depend on legal grounds however, will have to wait until such time as the regulation is formally approved.

#### **ETF budget**

In terms of the ETF budget for 2009, the Commission's draft budget proposes to reinstate the ETF budget to its 2007 level of €19.873 million. However, problems could arise if the recast regulation is not approved this year.

#### **Tempus**

From 1 July 2008, the Tempus programme will be managed by the Executive Agency for Education and Culture in line with the overall EU policy for the management of education and training schemes. The Tempus programme has been well-managed by the ETF over the past 13.5 years and the programme's success is due to the high quality of support given by the dedicated staff of the ETF's Tempus Department even throughout the difficult circumstances of the past few years. The fact that the ETF will no longer have to provide technical assistance for the programme, will give the agency the possibility to strengthen and concentrate on its core business of providing expertise on vocational education and training to the Commission and the partner countries.

**Ms Scheys (B)** requested that information on the 2009 budget be given at the next meeting along with clarifications as to how the work programme and next mid-term perspective can be prepared without the legal basis of the recast regulation.

**David Lipman** presented the latest developments with regard to the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The Lisbon Treaty will radically change the way in which the EU conducts its foreign policy if it is ratified. The treaty proposes a High Representative with the job of chairing the Foreign Affairs Council, conducting the common foreign and security policy of the EU, and acting as vice-president of the European Commission, responsible in particular for ensuring the consistency of the EU's external relations policy. The High Representative will be assisted by a new European External Action Service with members from the European Commission, the Council secretariat and diplomats seconded from EU Member States.

The European Neighbourhood Policy is a central external relations priority and is designed to bring stability, security and prosperity to the group of countries neighbouring the European Union. It is built around common commitments and shared values. The Commission Communication 'A strong European Neighbourhood Policy' of 5 December 2007 set out the main objectives for 2008. These include fostering economic integration, greater market access, developing migration management policies, helping the 'frozen' conflicts in the Middle East, Transnistria, Georgia etc., as well as intensifying support for sectoral reforms in energy, the environment, education, employment and social policy. The Neighbourhood Investment Policy was launched in May 2008 to provide grant support from the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development along with other financial institutions. It will provide support for small and medium sized enterprises, and the development of the social sector, among others. The EU has pledged an allocation of €700 million between now and 2013. Nine EU Member States will also contribute.

Countries having made most progress in governance reforms have received additional funding (Morocco, Moldova and Ukraine) and special agreements are being prepared to strengthen and deepen relations Morocco, Ukraine, Moldova and Israel. Individual country progress reports have also been prepared for all countries covered by the policy, and include vocational education and training in the overall context of human capital development. Discussions with Libya on the terms of a draft negotiating mandate are ongoing.

**Giannantonio Ballette** (representing Dirk Meganck) of DG Enlargement gave an update on EU activities in the Western Balkans in terms of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). A number of developments have taken place in the region over the last six months including Kosovo's declaration of independence, the initialisation of a stability and association agreement with Serbia, and general elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.

The IPA has a financial allocation of around €1.1 billion for 2008. Multiannual indicative planning documents are currently being updated for each of the countries with a particular focus on political criteria such as state building, good governance and civil society. The financial allocation for these criteria is expected to reach 30% of the total IPA allocation.

The Western Balkans Communication was published in March 2008 and focuses in particular on education and culture in the region. One of the complementary activities of this communication is a new facility for civil society. DG Enlargement expressed its appreciation of the support that it receives from the ETF, pointing out that 60% of ETF activities result from DG Enlargement requests. Particularly noteworthy are the ETF's analyses of the countries of the region that are used in the updating of the multi-annual indicative programmes. The ETF's support will be particularly useful in the phasing out of the European Agency for Reconstruction and the phasing in of EC Delegations. The ETF has also provided valuable support in the cooperation with international financial institutions (IFI) and other donors. In this regard, DG Enlargement has asked the ETF to help in the IFI advisory group meeting involving the World Bank that will be held in June. The meeting will have a particular focus on education and vocational training.

A steering group made up of geographical representatives from DG Enlargement and ETF staff has been established to coordinate activities. In the future, meetings of the group will take place in tandem with the structured dialogue meetings between the Commission and the ETF.

## ii. Trends and developments at the ETF

**Muriel Dunbar** presented the ETF's activities in terms of the proposed recast regulation which is likely to be the basis of the 2009 work programme and the next mid-term perspective; in fact the provisions of the recast regulation confirm the direction in which the ETF has been going over the past few years.

There are six main changes that are likely to be confirmed by the regulation. The most contentious of these has proved to be the governance structure of the ETF and specifically the size and composition of the Governing Board and the voting rights of its members.

In terms of thematic work, the remit will be extended on approval of the recast from vocational education and training to human capital development in a lifelong learning perspective. In fact the range of requests that the ETF has received in recent years already reflects this extension, and the work the ETF has carried out covers education and training to support socio-economic development in fields including social inclusion, migration, entrepreneurship and poverty reduction. Specific examples include work with DG Enterprise on entrepreneurship in the Western Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa; work for DG Justice in relation to mobility partnerships in Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia; involvement in sector-based approaches across the education system in Kosovo at the request of DG Enlargement and the Commission's office in Pristina; as well as work on the recognition of qualifications for DG Justice.

The term human capital development has undergone changes in its definition over recent years, but is widely used by international organisations. The OECD defines the term as 'a combination of an individual's own innate talents and abilities and the skills and learning they acquire through education and training'. Although the ETF will of course keep vocational education and training at the core of what it does, the extended mandate will allow ETF activities to support partner countries better by linking its work to other sub-sectors of education.

Article 3 of the draft recast regulation encourages the ETF to cooperate with other relevant Community bodies, in particular with Cedefop, and puts new emphasis on collaboration with international organisations active in the field of human capital development. Cooperation with Cedefop is already well-established and includes joint missions to candidate countries, collaboration on the design of the questionnaire on progress of the Copenhagen process and the policy report for the Ministers' meeting in Bordeaux, regular knowledge-sharing meetings between experts, participation in the editorial boards of our respective publications, and regular participation of ETF experts in Cedefop's Agoras. The ETF has also recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Eurofound to collaborate with them on areas such as employment reviews, flexibility and security in labour markets and migration. Furthermore, the

ETF also shares administrative knowledge and information with other agencies, including providing experts for selection panels for senior staff. The ETF is also working with GTZ, the British Council, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the World Bank, the OECD, UNESCO, and the ILO Training Centre in Turin. Work with the Council of Europe should start in the near future. Potential new areas for collaboration with international organisations include work with the European Fund for the Balkans (with support from **Mr Cavalchini**, the alternate governing board member for Italy), the UNDP centre in Bratislava as well as the Agence Française de Développement. Furthermore, in terms of recruitment, staff from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and INWENT in Germany have recently joined the ETF.

Greater flexibility in geographical terms beyond the IPA and Neighbourhood regions is another of the revisions in the proposed regulation. According to the regulation, any such deployment of ETF resources can only take place with the agreement of two thirds of the Governing Board. If the recast regulation is passed in the next few months, a proposal on how to manage requests for the ETF's wider deployment will be presented to the Board at the November meeting.

Tempus technical assistance is no longer mentioned in the recast regulation and thanks to excellent cooperation with the Executive Agency for Education and Culture and DG Education and Culture, the relocation of the programme systems from Turin to Brussels has progressed very smoothly. From 1 July 2008 all technical assistance for the programme will be provided by DG EAC. Of the 21 temporary agents working on technical assistance for the programme in 2005, more than 80% have found alternative work – nine people in other EU institutions, seven were successful in the ETF's own internal mobility scheme and two have found positions with UN agencies or in public administration. Furthermore, of the contract agents who have worked at the ETF for between six and 18 months, nine have found work in other EU institutions, one at a university and three have been offered alternative positions at the ETF. However, three temporary agents have not found other work and legal action is a possibility in these cases. Throughout this difficult period all Tempus staff have continued to produce high quality work and according to a recent job satisfaction survey among all ETF staff, the impact of this situation seems to have had little effect on the rest of the ETF. The results of the survey actually show an improvement in many areas when compared to the results of the 2007 survey.

The second revision that omits a function previously carried out by the ETF, is the de-regulation of the Advisory Forum. Recommendations from the external evaluation report suggested replacing the Advisory Forum with an alternative strategy for networking in the regions and the creation of an International Advisory Panel, which has been discussed with the Board in previous meetings. The revised proposal for the International Advisory Panel, including the Board's comments, will be presented at the November meeting provided the recast has been approved by then. Meanwhile, the ETF will continue to use its existing Advisory Forum for advice on the work programme.

In November last year, the ETF submitted a draft proposal for the revision of the Site Agreement to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main issues to be revised were the extension of the Agreement's provisions to contract staff, financial facilities, social security and immunities. Mr Perugini, former Governing Board member for Italy has helped the ETF to negotiate with more than 10 different ministries and related agencies competent in the different fields which are dealt with in the Agreement. The revised text is now ready to be submitted for formal approval to the Italian authorities.

**Ms Soares (PT)** asked for developments on the International Advisory Panel to be discussed at the next meeting in November 2008.

### iii. Cooperation with Member States and institutional partners

Four Governing Board members presented their involvement in hosting and supporting ETF activities since the last meeting in November 2007.

**Ms Soares (PT)** participated in a seminar held at the ETF in November 2007 involving Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. The topic was the progress made on the development of a national qualification framework in the tourism sector in these countries as well as the objectives for the project in 2008. Ms Soares presented Portuguese experience in implementing a national qualification framework in Portugal for the benefit of the participants.

**Ms Ali (EE)** took part in a seminar on social partners in Yerevan, Armenia in May 2008. The participants included representatives from Armenian ministries, trade unions, employers organisations and schools.

Ms All presented the Estonian experience of building up social partnership in her country from an administrative point of view, while a representative from an Estonian employers organisation provided more practical details about the process. At the seminar the participants agreed on how they would take the process forward in Armenia.

**Ms von Hopffgarten (DE)** organised a four-day study visit to Germany in May for a Jordanian delegation of eight participants from the ministries of education and labour as well as the chambers of commerce. They had meetings with various German ministries and the vocational training department in Bonn to learn in detail about the German system of training, particularly the dual system, the financing of vocational training and the involvement of social partners. Ms von Hopffgarten encouraged other Member States to get involved with ETF work in a similar way in future.

The ETF encouraged Governing Board members to get more involved in its work to present both positive experience that they may have in this field and also challenges they have faced and how they have dealt with them.

**Mr Simonic** returned to the Governing Board to present the activities that had taken place in the education and training field as part of the Slovenian Presidency. He referred in particular to the work done on lifelong learning, increasing the visibility of education and training in the overall Lisbon strategy, reforming schools to support creativity and innovation and integrated guidelines for jobs and growth. ETF staff participated in some of the events organised.

**Mr Mezel (FR)** presented the planned activities related to education and training, employment and cooperation during the upcoming French presidency of the EU.

The French presidency will pick up from where the Slovenians left off at the end of June. A number of conferences/meetings on education-related topics will be held on topics relating to the French presidency in the field of education (mobility, guidance and quality in particular), and, among other things:

- a conference on student mobility in Nancy on 4 and 5 November;
- a conference on lifelong guidance (managing transitions) in Lyon on 17 and 18 September;
- a conference on science education in a Europe of knowledge in Grenoble on 8 and 9 October;
- a meeting on governance and performance in educational establishments in Poitiers on 6 and 7 November;
- a conference on the international comparison of education systems in Paris on 13 and 14 November;
- a meeting of directors-general of higher education on the vocationalisation of programmes from the perspective of lifelong learning, in Strasbourg on 8 September;
- meeting of the Directors General for Vocational Training in Amiens on 20-21 October, looking closely at the Copenhagen process and better links between education and enterprises;
- an informal meeting of ministers responsible for VET in Bordeaux on 26 November (adoption of a Bordeaux declaration reporting on the Copenhagen process).

In the area of labour and employment, the priorities will be the directive on working hours, equality of access to goods and services and the life-work balance. Emphasis will be put on the social dimension through the European social agenda. In terms of meetings and conferences the following are planned:

- an informal EPSCO meeting: employment and social policy, in Chantilly on 10 and 11 July;
- a conference on worker mobility in Paris on 11 and 12 September;
- a summit on equal opportunity in Paris on 29 and 30 September;
- a conference on the fight against illegal practices in employment, in Marseille on 13 and 14 October;

- an EESC conference on the social responsibility of undertakings, in Paris on 30 October;
- a ministerial conference on equal opportunities for men and women at work, in Lille on 13 and 14 November.

The general policy of the French presidency on cooperation is to improve donor cooperation in order to make the entire system more effective. The ETF is invited to play an active role and contribute to this process. The priorities for cooperation will be in the health and local governance fields and a conference on this topic will be held in Strasbourg in November.

Cooperation with the Mediterranean region is a high priority for the presidency and a number of meetings and activities will be held in this regard. The ETF has an important role to play in this, and it has already provided very professional and useful support in the preparatory activities at the first euromed conference on employment and labour in Marrakech on 9-10 November. Jordan, Egypt and Morocco will host three of the six Euro-Mediterranean events. A Euro-Mediterranean event on technical education and vocational training will take place in Marseille on 18 December 2008, in which the ETF has been invited to play an active role.

The Board was asked to support the ETF in its efforts to strengthen its links with the international community working in the field of education and training. Any suggestions for possible links and/or cooperation would be welcome. A report on activities that are currently in the pipeline will be given at the next meeting in November.

**Ms Scheyns (B)** expressed her appreciation for the organisation of information seminars in conjunction with Governing Board meetings and asked that this practice be continued.

#### 4. Annual activity report

##### i. Draft annual activity report 2007 and related analysis and assessment

**Peter Greenwood** presented the draft 2007 Annual Activity Report, which provides an overview of progress in terms of the implementation of the work programme and the related budget. It is structured in a similar way to the work programme. Article 5.9 of the Council regulation requires that the Board adopt the annual activity report by 15 June.

The main messages of the report are the number of Commission requests (115 in 2007), the success of country intervention strategies which are moving towards the sector approach as well as regional activities. There is also reference to the ETF's innovation and learning projects, which are projects that address international approaches to areas such as transition, key competences and skills linked to migration. The report also lists the director's reservations.

**Mr Bandelj (SLO)** on behalf of the troika congratulated the ETF on thoroughness of the report and requested that the country breakdown be accompanied by a financial breakdown in absolute figures. He also requested that points 4 and 8 of the draft analysis and assessment be amended (see revised document GB/08/DEC/03).

**Ms von Hopffgarten (D)** congratulated the ETF on its results and its increasing recognition as a centre of expertise, and the use the European Commission is making of its services. However, she pointed out that cooperation with other agencies although mentioned as a key point by Muriel Dunbar in her presentation, is not mentioned in the report. This should be highlighted in future editions of the report. **Mr Quierolo Palmas (I)** supported this suggestion.

**Xavier Matheu de Cortada**, Head of the ETF's Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation unit, explained that comments had already been received on the report from Italy and Portugal. The Italian request was dealt with in the form of the addition of an annex on the distribution by country of the budget, while a tabled document showed the specific results of activities in response to the request from the Portuguese. This will be integrated in the final version of the document.

**Odile Quintin** asked that the word 'reservation' be replaced with 'observation'.

The Annual Activity Report and the analysis and assessment were approved by the Board.

## 5. ETF Financial Statements 2007

**Martine Smit**, the ETF's accounting officer appointed by the Governing Board in 1999, presented the ETF's 2007 Financial Statements. This document is prepared annually in accordance with title 7 of the financial regulation. The Court of Auditors audits the statements, and the opinion they give is the basis for the budget discharge from the European Parliament. The budget discharge for the 2006 financial year was given by the Parliament on 23 April 2008. The ETF's general accounts follow the principles of accrual accounting, which is based on the recognition of transactions and events when they occur (as opposed to cash accounting when cash or its equivalent is received or paid).

The ETF subvention indicates that the level of commitments compared to 2006 is lower by about €1.8 million. This is due to the repatriation of Tempus being postponed to 2008. The amount budgeted for the repatriation was estimated at €1.5 million. The other influencing factors on title 3 of the budget in 2007 were the funds paid back by the Translation Centre and the reserve that the European Parliament put on the 2007 budget. As the latter was not released until June, some projects could not be fully carried out.

Earmarked funds (from the Italian Trust Fund, the MEDA-ETE Programme and the Tempus conventions) are by definition multiannual. As a result the commitment level of these funds is not an indicator of efficiency over the course of one year. The domestic Euro account mentioned on page 14 of the document is the bank account used for transfers within Italy, while the ETF Euro account is used for all transfers outside Italy.

**Mr Bandelj (SLO)**, speaking on behalf of the troika, requested that the term Italian Trust Fund be changed to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Trust Fund on page 8.

## 6. Internal audit

**Bernard Magenhann** from the European Commission's Internal Audit Service (IAS) presented their activities in relation to the ETF. Internal audit is designed to improve an organisation's operations by bringing a systematic approach to improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. The internal audit service began its work in 2003 and has a mandate to audit the agencies. It is different from the European Court of Auditors, which focusses on accounts and OLAF, which focusses on fraud. The Internal Audit Service has visited all the EU agencies and has a target of covering each agency at least once a year. The primary focus is the risks faced by each organisation, rather than its problems.

The IAS has just completed an audit of the ETF's human resources and they have planned future visits to look at ICT systems, communication and quality management, management assurance, and financial management. In 2005 the IAS made 19 recommendations to the ETF, of which only three are still open. The documentation of procedures is 90% complete, while the financial circuits review is underway but requires further simplification. As a result of the recent audit of human resources, the IAS recommended that the ETF strive to link work programme objectives better with resources, link up the tools used in the organisation to improve efficiency and align individual staff objectives with corporate objectives. An update will be given to the Governing Board at the November meeting, along with the full report of the 2008 human resources audit.

## 7. ETF communication activities

**Bent Sørensen**, Head of the ETF Communication Unit, presented the ETF's communication policy which is built around the four main pillars of publications and periodicals, press and media, events and visits, and internet and audiovisual. The ETF targets its communication activities at its key publics and, in line with the overall policy of the European Commission, also at EU citizens.

The ETF regularly produces corporate and expertise publications, including a magazine with a print-run of over 4,000 copies, four times a year. It publishes in up to 30 different languages, with an emphasis on

English, French, Russian and Arabic. The website is updated on a daily basis and information can be found either from a country or a thematic point of view. Most material on the site is available in six languages.

The ETF is constantly trying to improve its contacts with the written press and audiovisual media and a number of short films have recently been produced and articles published in a number of national EU newspapers.

Dialogue-generating communication in the form of events and meetings, exhibitions and fairs is another cornerstone of the ETF's communication policy. Many events are organised by the ETF each year, both in the partner countries and in Turin and the ETF is constantly trying to make such activities as innovative and interesting to participants as possible.

In the future, more emphasis is likely to be put on social media and work is currently ongoing to introduce new forms of more interactive communication such as blogs and discussion fora.

**Odile Quintin** and **David Lipman** warned about the workload involved in blogging as a result of their experience in the Commission.

## 8. Evaluation progress report

**Outi Kärkkäinen** presented the progress that ETF is making on the action points from the 2006 external evaluation of the ETF by November 2007. The final report on the implementation of the action plan will be presented to the Governing Board in November 2008. Over the last six months the ETF has continued to prioritise its partner countries and to cooperate with other agencies, EU Member States and other donors. Country implementation plans have been further developed as have tools for policy learning. The ETF continues to gather feedback on the quality of the services that it provides to the European Commission and to develop indicators of achievement in planning documents. In terms of communication and dissemination, the ETF has increased its linguistic coverage and has recently published a general information leaflet in all official EU languages, candidate and pre-accession country languages as well as Russian and Arabic.

The ETF has recently completed an evaluation of activities that it carried out in Egypt between 2000 and 2007. This external evaluation was carried out by a team of two international and two local experts between November 2007 and April 2008. It involved desk research, visits to the ETF and a field visit to Egypt with interviews with local stakeholders. To conclude, a feedback and dissemination meeting was held at the ETF.

The evaluation findings showed that ETF support was relevant and responded to the needs of the main stakeholders, the Commission and the EC Delegation. The ETF managed to bring together relevant stakeholders and supported donor coordination. Furthermore, its activities had a wide impact including national ownership of the Observatory function and the introduction of guidance and counselling in technical schools among others. Recommendations from the report include more support to facilitating policy learning, the production of more reports and documents in the local language, analytical rather than descriptive reports including recommendations for action, targeting a broader range of relevant institutions and NGOs as well as focussing on a few cross-cutting themes targeted at the real needs of the government and its economic agenda.

The ETF also evaluated its own monitoring and evaluation practices between April and December 2007 with a team of three international experts. They carried out desk research, visits and interviews at the ETF, benchmarking against a similar agency and a feedback meeting at the ETF followed by a final report.

The main findings were that quality has improved along with the standardisation of project documentation, the methodology is in line with European Commission standards but that it is very difficult to benchmark against other agencies or institutions due to the ETF's very specific role and types of activities. As recommendations, the evaluation team proposed continuing with two or three evaluations a year, establishing an internally managed monitoring system, monitoring projects in line with the Commission's 'Results Oriented Monitoring' system, using results based monitoring not only for project management, but also for external communication as well as rationalising the numerous strategic and planning documents currently in use.

## 7. Human resources issues

### i. Implementing rules for staff regulations

The new staff regulations for officials and other staff of the European institutions entered into force in 2004. The European Commission adopted its own implementing rules in 2004 and subsequent years. Most of these are applied by analogy to the agencies although some minimal changes in some of the rules are allowed in consultation with the staff committee, with the approval of DG Admin and the Governing Board.

Twenty implementing rules have already been approved by the Board. Two are submitted for approval on the classification of temporary agents and on the reimbursement of medical expenses. Around 16 more implementing rules are still to be submitted to the Board for approval in the future.

A number of Governing Board members expressed concern regarding the value-added of their approval of these documents as they are presented to them with no room for manoeuvre.

**Mr Bandelj (SLO)** requested an amendment to Article 2, point 1 of the rules on the classification of temporary agents (see revised document ETF/GB/08/017)

**Mr Bandelj (SLO) and Mr Lindqvist (FIN)** expressed their reservations about article 2.3 which would seem to discriminate against citizens from countries that have compulsory military service. However, this is standard across all EU institutions and it cannot be changed in this context.

### Any other business

**Odile Quintin** informed the Board that the second reading of the ETF's recast regulation is likely to be presented to the European Parliament in the week beginning 17 November.

Next meeting: 27 November 2008

### Action points

- **Mr Queirolo Palmas (I)** was asked to extend the Board's appreciation to **Mr Perugini** for his work as the ETF Governing Board member for Italy from 2004 to 2008. Mr Perugini is now the Italian ambassador to Vietnam.
- Update on 2009 budget and the recast regulation to be provided at the November meeting.
- Questionnaire on Member State involvement in ETF activities to be circulated at the next meeting in November
- ETF to participate in relevant French presidency events.
- A proposal on how to manage requests for the deployment of ETF services in a wider geographical context to be presented at the November 2008 meeting provided the recast regulation has been approved by then.
- A revised International Advisory Panel proposal to be presented at the November 2008 meeting provided the recast regulation has been approved by then.
- The final report on the implementation of the external evaluation action plan will be presented to the Governing Board in November 2008
- Annual activity report to include details about cooperation with donor and international organisations in future.

- An update on the involvement of Governing Board members in ETF activities will be given at the meeting in November.
- ETF to amend the Annual Activity Report and the draft analysis in line with the requests from the Board members and the Commission.
- ETF to amend the implementing rules on the criteria for the classification of temporary agents in line with the comments from the member from Slovenia.
- A presentation of IAS 2008 human resources audit will be given at the November 2008 meeting