



ETF GOVERNING BOARD MEETING

15 JUNE 2009

MINUTES

1. Introduction

The summer 2009 meeting of the ETF Governing Board was held in Turin on 15 June and chaired by Odile Quintin, Director General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. New members of the Board for Finland (Tarja Rihimäki) and the European Commission's DG RELEX (Rutger Wissels), and the alternate member for Germany (Juliane Reimers) were welcomed. Furthermore, the European Parliament representative members were also present for the first time in a regular Governing Board meeting (Jean François Mezières, Stamatís Paleocrasas and Sara Parkin). The European Commission's DG Enlargement representative was Judith Novak. An observer from Turkey (Halil Rahman Açar) was in attendance. Commission officials Annamaria Molnar from EuropeAid, Agata Sobiech from DG Justice, Freedom and Security, as well as Belén Bernaldo De Quirós, Elena Pascual Jiménez and Jordi Curell from DG Education and Culture were also present. Furthermore, the incoming ETF Director, Madlen Serban also attended the meeting.

Poland and the Slovak Republic were not represented at the meeting. Furthermore neither Croatia nor the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia sent observers.

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 2008 were amended at the written request of **Mr Honorat (FR)** and adopted with modifications to the section on cooperation with EU Member States in order to include more details about French Presidency activities and to the section on the French intervention related to the ETF 2009 Work Programme to strengthen the point on career guidance.

ii. Follow up on action points and written procedures

The following actions were carried out as a follow up to the November 2008 meeting:

- Details about the new ETF Editorial Board, figures from the European Commission on the contribution received by the ETF in the wider context of EU external relations activities, information on the ETF's participation in Czech EU presidency events, an update on the proposed International Advisory Panel, the inclusion of additional information in the Annual Activity Report as well as how requests for ETF services in its wider geographical mandate will be managed were all topics included on the agenda of this meeting.
- The minutes from the meeting of June 2008 were amended, distributed via written procedure in December 2008 and made available on the ETF's website.

- The audit plan for the period 2009-11 was distributed via written procedure in December 2008.
- A clear reference to lifelong guidance was added to the ETF's 2009 Work Programme in line with the comments made by the French Governing Board member (see p.4 of the 2009 Work Programme).

A written procedure was carried out in December on the implementing rules for the staff regulations, the ETF financial regulation, the revised 2009 Work Programme, the revised minutes of the June 2008 meeting, the Internal Audit Service report on human resources management at the ETF along with the 2009-11 Strategic Audit Plan, and the Court of Auditors report on the annual accounts for 2007.

In January a written procedure on the revised internal control standards framework and the budget execution summary for 2008 was launched, and in March, the multi-annual staff policy plan for 2010-12 was approved via written procedure.

4. 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.

New Skills for New Jobs

The European Commission presented a communication on '*New skills for new jobs anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs*' on 16 December 2008. A series of actions include: maintaining European competitiveness by investing in people, assessing different sectors in terms of skills and job requirements until 2020, developing tools and services to address skills mismatches, improving international cooperation, and mobilising existing Community policies and European funds to help Member States and regions to forecast their skills needs.

A recent Cedefop study 'Future skill supply in Europe: medium-term forecast up to 2020', indicates that the level of qualifications and skills is rising across Europe. The next step will be to identify the mismatches between the skills people have and the skills that are needed, so that this information can be used in the formulation of future education and employment policy. The study and the results of a recent conference on this topic can be found on the Cedefop website.

European Qualifications Framework – Linking to a globalised world conference

The Commission expressed its gratitude to the ETF for the organisation of this conference in Brussels in January. Two hundred people from over 60 different countries from across the globe discussed how lessons learned from the European Qualifications Framework could be of benefit in their national or regional contexts.

University-business cooperation

The University-Business Forum was launched in 2008 as a European platform for dialogue between universities and enterprises.

In the Communication 'A new partnership for the modernisation of universities: the EU forum for university-business dialogue' adopted on 2 April 2009, the Commission proposes taking the work of the forum further and looking at issues that aim to improve the university-business partnership on employability particularly in the context of the economic downturn.

The Czech Presidency has prepared conclusions on '*Enhancing partnerships between education and training institutions and social partners, including employers, in the context of lifelong learning*' which were adopted by the Council on 18 and 19 June 2009.

E&T2020

Conclusions on the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (E&T2020) were adopted on 12 May, including a set of four long-term strategic objectives including a true lifelong learning approach with increased learner mobility, improving the quality and efficiency of education and training particularly in terms of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship, promoting innovation and creativity, widely recognised as the basis for Europe's success in the future, as well as updated benchmarks and short term priorities.

Learning mobility of young people

The Commission is about to finalise a green paper on the Learning mobility of young people, which refers to cross-border mobility for higher education students, school pupils, apprentices, researchers, young volunteers as well as other groups. A public consultation process on the green paper will be launched in July and Governing Board members are encouraged to participate.

Mr Mezel (F) asked that the activities outlined also become a source of reference for cooperation with third or partner countries to greater extent than at present, adding that there could be a role for the ETF in this. Many countries outside the EU are interested in becoming involved in EU education and development policies and the European Qualifications Framework is an example of this. The issue of how to further develop regional initiatives and frameworks needs to be tackled and France is very interested in pursuing this actively along with any other countries that are interested.

Odile Quintin confirmed that the external dimension is becoming ever more important, and work is ongoing with partner country ministries in a high level group in areas such as benchmarking, new skills for new jobs and the European Qualifications Framework. China, for example, has expressed an interest in cooperating in such areas. External cooperation through EU programmes such as Tempus and Erasmus Mundus has been ongoing for a long time, and include activities such as student mobility.

Ms Scheys (B) congratulated the ETF on the organisation of the European Qualifications Framework conference, which benefitted from the participation of many countries from across the globe. Many countries are interested in and highly appreciative of the work done on education related issues inside the EU.

Rutger Wissels presented the latest developments with regard to the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Development Cooperation Instrument for Central Asia.

Eastern partnership

While the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean, which replaces the Barcelona process, covers the countries to the south of the EU, the recent war in Georgia highlighted the need to strengthen links with the countries in the neighbourhood to the east of the EU to ensure stability, better governance and economic development. To date most cooperation with countries to the east has been in the form of bilateral agreements and this is set to continue, although there are some areas that will benefit from a multilateral approach. A number of new technical working groups have been established in this regard in the areas of democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU policies; energy security as well as contacts between people, where there will probably be a role for the ETF. Bilateral relations continue to be the focus however, although these are likely to be more ambitious and wide ranging than in the past and will go a long way towards economic and political integration, but are without an EU membership perspective. One aspect of this includes comprehensive institution building programmes to help the six countries in question to align themselves to the EU in terms of legislation and the institutions that implement it.

Review of neighbourhood countries

The review of the countries of the neighbourhood is an idea copied from the 2004 enlargement of the EU. Progress reports are published every spring on each country detailing which activities are working well and which are not. Overall the reports published this April indicated a slowdown in political reforms and a regression in the spread of democracy and improved human rights. This was against a background of a difficult international context including the war in Georgia, a deterioration in relations between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the global financial crisis. The reports, which have been presented to Member States and the European Parliament, are available for download from the Europa website.

Mid-term review of the seven year financial framework

All country strategy papers are being examined in the context of the mid-term review of the 2007-2013 financial framework. Action plans established under this framework are now well underway in terms of implementation in 12 countries (out of a total of 16 in the ENPI region). The review process is still ongoing and people are invited to comment on papers available on the Europa website.

Many education and training related activities are best done in a multilateral context, but the overall political situation can sometimes cause regional activities to run into difficulties. Perseverance in this field is nevertheless worthwhile, and working together on issues such as education and training and other forms of technical cooperation should be encouraged.

Judith Novak of DG Enlargement gave an update on EU activities in the Western Balkans in terms of the Enlargement process and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The financial and economic crisis is in focus at the moment and the major beneficiaries are Turkey and Serbia. Regional

cooperation is an important political priority and the multi beneficiary programme exists for this. The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance has five components, two of which apply to all the countries: transition assistance and institution building, and cross border cooperation, while the other three apply only to the candidate countries: regional, human resources and rural development. These three address the preparations for the structural funds that the countries will receive upon accession to the EU. For the potential candidate countries, assistance for human resources comes from the first component (transition assistance and institution building). Planning is done through three-year strategic plans for each country and one regional plan. A total of €193 million has been allocated to education, training and employment creation for the period 2007-09. Competitiveness was introduced for the first time in multi-beneficiary strategy document for the period 2009-11. The key strategic objectives of the programme are human capital development, access to markets and access to finance. Human capital development projects at regional level include the regional competitiveness initiative that is receiving €3.8 million in 2009, while the South Eastern Europe entrepreneurial learning centre based in Zagreb, Croatia is receiving €1.7 million. The ETF has played a major part in the establishment of the centre which began its operations in February 2009. The Croatian government is also contributing financially although it is expected that the centre will be self-sustaining in three years time.

The ETF's support to EU policy in the region includes: contributing to the annual progress reports (the next ones will be available mid-October), supporting the Commission, the EC delegations and the beneficiary countries in the programming of EU financial assistance and providing direct advice and support to the beneficiary countries in the area of education and training.

Mr Paleocrasis (European Parliament representative) received confirmation that all planning related to the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance includes cost benefit and cost effectiveness analyses. The example given was of the Entrepreneurial learning centre in Croatia, where several studies and reviews of this type are included in the project plan.

Annamaria Molnar of EuropeAid presented the figures showing the expenditure on education and training in the wider context of EU external relations policies.

The EU, combined with individual Member States is the largest donor in the world, providing 60% of the aid for developing countries. The EU alone is the third largest in the world after the United States and Germany. The DGs for External Relations and Development along with EuropeAid manage EU funds and have an interservice agreement between them. The EC Delegations in partner countries steer work at local level involving national governments and other donors. EuropeAid works with the ETF as well as international and Member State organisations.

Ms Parkin (European Parliament representative) asked whether sustainable development was being tackled as part of EU external relations policy as it is mentioned in the Lisbon Treaty and the ecological crisis and low carbon issues are receiving increasing everywhere. In response **Mr Wissels** (DG External Relations) explained that although these issues were definitely on the agenda, they were not always easy to deal with.

Odile Quintin closed this agenda point with some additional information about agency budgets. DG Budget will reduce the amount foreseen in the multi-annual programme by 4% for all agencies which have an under-execution of the budget of over 5% in the previous years. This was the case for the ETF in 2006, 2007 and 2008. This means that the ETF's budget in 2009 will be more or less €19.460 million.

The ETF was therefore encouraged in the future to make sure that it spends as much of its credit appropriations as possible within the limits of sound financial management.

ii. Trends and developments at the ETF

Muriel Dunbar welcomed the new members of the Board including those representing the European Parliament and went on to present the ETF's latest developments.

The ETF is increasingly forging links with similar organisations including a new cooperation agreement with UNICEF on the social inclusion project in Bosnia and Herzegovina, participating in a regional cooperation task force in the Western Balkans, providing support for the Union for the Mediterranean's University on elearning, working on qualification frameworks and entrepreneurship learning in Lebanon with the Italian Trust Fund, participating in the interagency consultative group with UNESCO, the ILO and the OECD, continuing to work closely with the World Bank including a staff exchange with a World Bank representative from their Ukraine office coming to the ETF for a year, and a member of ETF staff going to the World Bank's office in Marseille to work on projects in the Middle East and North Africa. Furthermore, an ETF colleague will spend a year in DG Education and Culture working on their external relations policy.

The approval of the recast regulation on 18 December includes a widening of the geographical and thematic mandates, which has been reflected in the upcoming mid-term perspective and will be evident in the 2010 Work Programme presented to the Board at the November meeting. Any requests for the ETF to operate in a wider geographical area than at present will have to be agreed by the European Commission and presented to the Board for approval too.

The successful global conference on the European Qualifications Framework organised by the ETF in January 2009 was the first event involving a number of countries outside the ETF's normal scope of work. It indicated a potential for the ETF to provide advice in other regions such as those that already have meta-frameworks of their own including the Gulf region and southern Africa. A conference report and a virtual online community accessible through the ETF's website have already been prepared. A follow-up conference is planned for 2011.

The evaluation of the EU agencies presented at the last Governing Board meeting is ongoing and a meeting to look at the data collected so far will take place in Brussels on 24 June. A final report is expected by mid-November.

Thanks to the excellent support that the ETF has received from the Italian authorities, particularly the ETF's Italian Governing Board representatives, the revised ETF site agreement is almost ready. **Mr Cutillo (I)** added that he expected the agreement to be signed soon.

A consultation process with the partner countries, international organisations and the EC Delegations and stakeholders will take place in the coming months on the ETF's mid-term perspective and 2010 Work Programme. This will to some extent replace the work that was previously carried out by the Advisory Forum.

The ETF has had a good media presence both within the EU and outside. Activities include reports on Euronews, articles in the Italian press about activities for 9 May (Europe Day), media interviews with ETF staff in a number of partner countries, and a group of EU journalists was taken to Armenia to follow the launch of an ETF project on social partnerships in the country.

Olivier Ramsayer has left his post as the ETF's Head of Administration to take over a similar role at the European Food Safety Authority in Parma. He had been at the ETF for almost 15 years. Alastair Macphail, formerly of DG Education and Culture and currently Head of Human Resources at the European Chemicals Agency will take over from 1 September.

iii. Cooperation with Member States and institutional partners

A number of Governing Board members have been involved in hosting and supporting ETF activities in the second half of 2008:

Mr Østerlund (DK) on the social partnership project in Armenia;

Ms All (EE) with the national qualifications framework project in Belarus;

Mr Bandelj (SLO) with the partnership on the Euro-Mediterranean University;

Ms Sika (LV) for peer reviewing the labour market review in Georgia;

Mr Szent-Léleky (H) for the schools development project in Central Asia; and,

Mr Mezel (F) for support in the Mediterranean region.

Mariavittoria Garlappi presented the ETF's contribution to the Czech presidency of the EU in the period January to June 2009. The ETF participated in a number of Czech presidency events including three on migration issues, one on flexicurity, one on lifelong learning and one on new tools for vocational training. The ETF was also represented at the DGVt meeting in May and the Czech Minister of Education gave a keynote presentation at the ETF's European Qualifications Framework conference in January.

Mr Henriks (SW) presented the upcoming activities that will take place during the Swedish presidency of the EU from July to December 2009. He explained the special circumstances around this presidency – new European Parliament, new European Commission about to be appointed, uncertainty about the Lisbon Treaty and the worst economic crisis since the 1930s. Tackling the unemployment that has been caused by the financial crisis will be a major priority for the Swedish presidency. Other priority areas include sustainable growth, a new Lisbon Strategy, climate change, cooperation in justice and home affairs as well as an EU strategy for the Baltic Sea.

In terms of education and training, professional development for teachers and school leaders, integrating migrants into education systems, social inclusion and the role of universities are all topics on the agenda. Conferences are planned as follows:

- An informal ministerial conference in Gothenberg in September on the role of teachers and school heads;
- A meeting of research ministers in Umeå in October focussing on the role of education and research;
- A meeting on the role of vocational education and training in Stockholm in November examining training for adults at upper and post-secondary levels;

Gender differences and labour market inclusion are topics for other conferences, along with the usual conferences for the directors general for higher education and vocational training.

5. Draft mid-term perspective 2010-13

Xavier Matheu presented the ETF's draft mid-term perspective for the period 2010-13 for information and discussion. This will be the first mid-term perspective in which the changes introduced in the recast will be fully implemented although they had already existed as underlying principles in the previous mid-term perspective for 2007-10. The new mid-term perspective takes advantage of the recast regulation by including activities to support the external dimension of internal EU policies as well as preparing the ETF for possible work in countries outside its current partner regions. Resources are distributed according to functions.

The document will be presented for approval to the Board in November. In the meantime, Governing Board members are asked to comment in writing and a consultation process will be opened with all stakeholders, and to which the European Parliament, the Commission as well as the Member States, partner countries and international organisations will be invited to contribute.

Mr Paleocrassas (European Parliament), asked for details on the inclusion of training planning models, which is a difficult issue in such a diverse range of partner countries in which minimal attention is paid to the issue at present.

Ms Ulovcová (CZ) reporting from the informal meeting of the Governing Board held earlier in the day, urged the ETF to provide the Board with more tailored information on ETF activities in the partner countries. She asked that the Board be more involved in the preparation of future work programmes and suggested the establishment of a working group of Governing Board members for this purpose. **Ms Scheys (B)** added that as the Board would be expected in the future to approve any geographical extension (by a two-thirds majority), they should become more strongly involved in ETF activities.

Mr Cutillo (I) lent his support to the creation of a working group and asked the ETF to prioritise its work both geographically and sectorally. For obvious reasons, Italy supports the work done in the southern Mediterranean and is very much in favour of the ETF continuing its work on migration issues related to this region. He took the opportunity to thank the ETF Director for her work over the past five years and to welcome Madlen Serban as the incoming director.

Mr Mezel (F) agreed that the Mediterranean region is important for a number of EU Member States (including France) and encouraged the ETF to build on and further develop the work that it has already done in areas involving a number of countries including qualification frameworks, and new skills for new jobs. He also referred to the importance of regional activities, in the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

Xavier Matheu explained that the ETF works both regionally and bilaterally with a lot of countries. Individual country plans are established with the involvement of the EC Delegation, the European Commission's country desk as well as local stakeholders. Priorities are agreed between all actors involved and depend very much on the individual circumstances of the country in question. The ETF is also working regionally in the contexts of the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean for example.

6. Annual activity report 2008

i. Draft annual activity report 2008

Xavier Matheu presented the ETF's draft annual activity report for 2008. This was a transitional year before the approval of the recast regulation. The report is structured around the three pillars of ETF work: (1) contribution to the external assistance instruments; (2) corporate communication; and (3) management and internal control.

ii. Analysis and assessment of draft annual activity report 2008

Ms Ulovcová (CZ), representing the current presidency of the EU, presented the analysis and assessment of the annual activity report drafted by the ETF, adopted by the chair and shared with the Governing Board for consultation. The four comments previously submitted by Governing Board members on the document were included in it. A small working group made up of Governing Board members, partner countries and Commission staff could be established to prepare the analysis and assessment in a more participatory way, possibly through face-to-face communication.

Mr Mezel (F) requested that more details on trends and obstacles be included in the annual activity report and signaled his support for the creation of an ad hoc working group to work on the evaluation and analysis of the annual activity report.

Ms Scheys (B) requested more details on outcome indicators, which were produced as a separate annex to the report. The evaluations carried out on different ETF projects also contribute to providing information on their results and impact.

Ms Reimers (D) supported the suggestion of including obstacles faced by the ETF in the report as well as the proposal to establish a working group.

The two documents were adopted by the Governing Board and will be forwarded to the Council and the European Parliament.

7. ETF financial statements and budgetary reserve

i. Draft ETF financial statements 2008

Martine Smit, the ETF's accounting officer appointed by the Board in 1999, presented the financial statements for 2008. The format of the financial statements is determined by the financial regulation and is the same for the European Commission and other EU bodies. A positive formal overall opinion from the Court of Auditors has been given, and this forms the basis of the budget discharge, along with an opinion of the Governing Board. The European Parliament discharged the ETF's 2007 financial statements on 23 April 2009.

The main features of the 2008 financial statements include a €9 million difference in the balance sheet due to the repatriation of Tempus technical assistance to Brussels during the year, which is also reflected in the cash flow, as well as a commitment level on the ETF subvention of 98.56%, a significant improvement on the 2007 level.

A formal Governing Board opinion on the 2008 financial statements must be forwarded to the budgetary authority by 1 July 2009.

Muriel Dunbar added that although the Court of Auditors' opinion on the financial statements was favourable, they did make three remarks on a number of human resources related issues. The ETF is in the process of preparing a response.

The Board adopted the Financial Statements for 2008.

ii. Transfer between 2009 budget titles

In line with the financial regulation, which states that any transfer of more than 10% of a budgetary title requires the approval of the Governing Board, the ETF sought approval for the transfer of €200,606 to cover operational and communications projects under Title 3 (expenses relating to the performance of specific missions). This amount was identified through a critical assessment of budgetary needs carried out at the beginning of 2009. Until the approval of the recast, the ETF had based its budgetary calculations on the assumption that the European Parliament would place a reserve of €2 million on the ETF's 2009 budget pending its approval. As the recast was approved in December 2008, this reserve was never actually applied in practice.

The Governing Board adopted budget transfer.

8. Human resources issues

Alessia Vecchio, head of the ETF's Human Resources Unit, presented the new rules on the secondment of national experts to the ETF. These have been redrafted so as to align them with European Commission practice. Governing Board members may be contacted in future to help to find possible experts for secondment.

The Governing Board adopted the new rules on the secondment of national experts.

9. ETF Editorial Board

Bent Sørensen, head of the ETF Communication Unit, provided details about the ETF's new editorial board. The ETF ran a call for expression of interest for new Editorial Board members at the end of 2008. The first meeting with the new group comprising nine externals from around the world was held in Turin on 25 and 26 May 2009. The Board's expertise and geographical composition now reflects the ETF's new mandate. Its job is to ensure the high quality and relevance of all ETF publications.

A recent ETF film production illustrating the Skills for poverty reduction in Central Asia project was also shown, and the ETF's first policy briefing on the same project was presented.

10. Governing Board rules for procedure adapted to the recast regulation

Xavier Matheu presented the new Governing Board rules for procedure which have had to be updated to take into account the provisions of the recast regulation. The introduction of the new financial regulation has also led to the need for changes.

Ms Ulovcová (CZ), **Mr Mezel (F)** and **Mr Mezières** (European Parliament) all asked that the annexes be made clearer or removed pointing to a lack of coherence in the levels of detail (e.g. no mention of the role of the members of the European Parliament, very detailed information on the roles of each ETF Department or Unit in the processes).

Ms Scheys (B) pointed out that the Governing Board members cannot act independently of any influence as mentioned in chapter 6, point 1 as they are required to act on behalf of their national governments.

The Board approved the rules of procedure with a modification to the level of detail in the annexes in terms of the involvement of the different units of the ETF.

11. Any other business

Odile Quintin took the opportunity to thank Muriel Dunbar for her five years at the ETF, for managing the organisation well through a difficult transition period, and for increasing the organisation's visibility.

Ms Scheys (B), the longest serving Governing Board member, thanked Muriel on behalf of the whole Board referring to the difficult institutional environment, the lengthy process for the approval of the recast regulation, the repatriation of Tempus technical assistance to Brussels as well as budget cuts that the ETF has undergone since 2004. Despite all of this, the ETF is well-prepared to take up its new challenges.

Muriel Dunbar thanked all the ETF management and staff for their support and wished Madlen Serban all the best for the future.

The formal handover documents from one director to the next were signed.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Governing Board will be held in Turin on 19, 20 or 23 November 2009.

Action points

- The minutes of the meeting of November 2008 to be amended in line with the comments from the French representative.

- Governing Board rules of procedure to be amended in line with the comments of the Governing Board members (see above).
- Cooperation agreements with other organisations (e.g. UNICEF) to be approved by written procedure.
- The widened thematic remit from recast regulation to be reflected in the 2010 work programme and the mid-term perspective which will be presented at the next meeting in November 2009.
- Governing Board to be informed of the ETF's response to the Court of Auditors on their observations regarding human resources issues at the ETF.
- Annual activity report and the Governing Board's analysis and assessment of it to be sent to the Council and the Parliament.
- Governing Board members to form a working group to contribute to the preparations of the next annual activity report. The ETF will circulate a proposal.
- Clearer output indicators and more details on trends, problems encountered and obstacles tackled to be included in the next annual activity report, which should also be framed in the mid-term perspective.
- The ETF will prepare a proposal for the composition of a working group on the mid-term perspective document 2010-2013.