

# **MINUTES**

# **GOVERNING BOARD**

# **MEETING**

# **22 NOVEMBER 2013**



## 1. Introduction

The ETF Governing Board meeting was held in Turin on 22 November 2013 and chaired by António SILVA MENDES, Director at the Directorate General for Education and Culture, European Commission (EC) designated to act as a Chair by the ETF Governing Board Chairperson Jan TRUSZCZYŃSKI, Director General for Education and Culture in his absence.

New members of the Board were welcomed: Karin EDHOLM (Sweden), Gema CAVADA (Spain), Andreas DRECHSLER (Germany), and Ioannis VOUTSINAS (Greece), Sabina GLASOVAC (Croatia) alternate members: Constantinos GEORGIU (Cyprus) and Jelena LETICA (Croatia). From the EC, Gerhard SCHUMANN-HITZLER (Director, DG Enlargement), Françoise MILLECAM (DG DEVCO), Maria TODOROVA (DG Education and Culture), and Christiane WESTPHAL (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) were present. The ETF staff committee was represented by Mircea COPOT.

Furthermore, representatives from Estonia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Malta, Slovakia and UK did not attend. Jan ANDERSSON, independent expert nominated by the European Parliament and Abdalla MUSTAFA, observer from Jordan were not present either.

## 2. Adoption of the agenda

New points were requested for inclusion in the agenda. The EC asked for a point on the extension of the Director's term of office to be included, while the ETF requested that a point for information on the annual travel allowance to non-EU nationals originating from outside the EU be included under any other business.

The agenda was adopted by the Board with the two changes proposed.

## 3. Follow-up to previous meeting

### i. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 June 2013 were adopted.

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

**Xavier MATHEU**, ETF, presented the actions carried out as a follow up to the June 2013 meeting:

- the draft ETF mid-term perspective and the 2014 draft Work Programme were revised in line with the observations and recommendations put forward;
- the issue of conflict of interest (part of the European Commission roadmap for the implementation of the common approach to EU agencies) was been presented and discussed under point 11 of the agenda;
- The framework for actions on stakeholder cooperation was updated in terms of the title used for stakeholders from the EU Member states. The document was published on the ETF website in the Governing Board restricted area.
- No written procedures were carried out.

## 4. Extension of the term of office of the ETF Director

The term of office of the ETF director, Madlen SERBAN comes to an end on 30 June 2014. According to Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 1339/2008 of 16 December 2008 establishing a European Training Foundation, the Governing Board on the basis of a proposal from the Commission can decide whether to extend the Director's term of office for a period of no more than three years.

DG EAC commissioned an independent expert to carry out an evaluation according to article 10 of the Regulation. The assessment of the performance of the Director and of the ETF's duties concluded very positively on the ability of the Director to manage the ETF. The evaluation provided sufficient evidence that she successfully manages the organisation and has the capacity to sustain, improve and further develop its current activities, in compliance with the systems, methods and procedures in place. The interviews with internal and external stakeholders confirmed that the Director had proved to be a strong and visionary leader.

Based on the outcomes of the independent evaluation and the annual appraisal procedures, in which the reporting officers consistently expressed their satisfaction with the work carried out by the Director, the Commission considered that the results obtained during her first mandate meet its expectations. On this basis, the Commission proposed the extension of her term of office.

Members of the Board were requested to vote on this proposal and the decision was taken with the unanimity of the votes of the members present.

The Chair informed that DG EAC will ensure the follow-up of the procedure according to the ETF Regulation.

## 4. ETF Draft Mid-term Perspective 2014-17

**Madlen SERBAN** and **Xavier MATHEU** presented the draft ETF Mid-term Perspective

The ETF's mid-term perspective for the period 2014-17 is defined within the resource allocation of the Commission's proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework. The document focuses on same principles and objectives and retains its multi-dimensional planning like the version presented in the June meeting of the Board. However, the document structure is different and follows the recommendations made by DG EAC through the letter of 23 July 2013.

Part one of the document has two sections: i) the European policy context including information on the EU VET policies, external relations policies and instruments and other relevant policies; and ii) the partner country policy context. The latter includes information from the Torino Process exercises in terms of the vision, external efficiency - responding to economic demand, external efficiency - responding to social demand, internal efficiency and governance.

Part two describes the ETF's strategy and strategic objectives. The strategic objectives for 2014-17 are the following: i) Reinforce evidence-based VET policy analysis; ii) Modernise VET systems in a lifelong learning perspective and iii) Increase the relevance of VET provision in respect of labour market, economic and social cohesion.

A differentiated intervention through country prioritisation is proposed, with the following criteria: i) the strategic importance of human capital development in EU assistance; ii) the country's readiness and willingness to cooperate with the EU/ETF; and the expected impact/added-value of ETF intervention. The ETF's mandate under the new mid-term perspective does not change, but there are new core themes: i) evidence-based VET policy analysis; ii) modernisation of the VET system; and iii) innovative approaches for increased relevance of VET provision in respect of labour market, economic and social cohesion.

The Part three presents the ETF's main interventions in 2014-17, as follows:

- In the area of evidence-based policy making, the ETF proposes to continue with the Torino Process as well as the analysis of specific policy areas. The Torino Process will have two more rounds in 2014 and 2016. The country policy analysis are expected to be prepared in 2014 and in 2016 and policy learning and dissemination activities at regional and cross-country levels in 2015

and 2017. The expected results are related to: i) a robust policy analysis informing the development and implementation of VET reforms, applying four principles (ownership, participation, holistic approach and evidence based); ii) a sound policy analysis based on the short-term deliverables of the Bruges Communiqué for the candidate countries as part of the report on the EU prepared by Cedefop; and iii) capacity building policy analysis through Torinet and the Policy Leaders' Forums. The analysis of specific policy areas includes: Small Business Act assessments focusing on the skills-related dimension, employment and employability, national qualifications frameworks.

- In terms of thematic developments, the areas in focus are: qualifications and qualifications systems; VET governance; learning and teaching in VET; VET quality assurance; employment and employability; the skills dimension of migration and mobility; entrepreneurial learning and enterprise skills. The ETF will develop methodological instruments and approaches taking into account (i) country policy developments and needs, (ii) EU policies in the fields of VET, employment, social inclusion and entrepreneurship, and (iii) international developments. It will also monitor policy developments in the partner countries and facilitate knowledge dissemination and knowledge sharing on policy developments.
- Geographic operations.
  - In **South Eastern Europe and Turkey**, the objectives for 2014-17 are: (i) improve the capacity of key stakeholders to strengthen human resources development policy planning, implementation and monitoring through evidence-based policy analysis; (ii) modernise VET systems through improved multi-level governance and quality assurance mechanisms; and (iii) improve the relevance of VET provision through qualification frameworks and teacher training. The ETF will fine-tune the 2020 visions, roadmaps and monitoring; perform the SBA assessment; contribute to the development of a multi-functional centre in Albania; support the development of quality assurance and the qualifications frameworks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; and invest in teacher training development in Montenegro.
  - In the **Southern and Eastern Mediterranean** the objectives for 2014-17 are to improve the governance and quality of VET to increase youth employability and social inclusion and to promote the skills dimension of migration and mobility, with an emphasis on transparency, recognition and portability of skills and qualifications. As regards the activities, the main areas of intervention are qualifications and mobility; youth and women's employability; and entrepreneurial learning and skills for micro and SMEs.
  - In **Eastern Europe** during the mid-term perspective the ETF will work to establish closer links between socio-economic strategies and skills strategies, support the design and continuous monitoring of EU interventions and the skills dimension of migration and mobility. The following activities will be carried out: i) social dialogue and skills development through sector and regional approaches; ii) support to national qualifications frameworks; and iii) policies and practices of skills for small and medium sized enterprises.
  - The ETF's objectives in **Central Asia** are to support national VET policy reforms and provide support to the European Commission with a focus on policy implementation, education and business cooperation, social dialogue in VET councils, cooperation between the different levels of VET, quality assurance mechanisms and teacher training. In this context, the ETF will support the Central Asia Education Platform in VET policy analysis (Torino Process), national qualifications frameworks, quality assurance and teacher training; governance and school development.

The ETF will continue to cooperate with Cedefop and Eurofound. The joint ETF-Cedefop work programme and joint ETF-Eurofound action plan are annexed to the draft annual work programme. At the same time the ETF and Cedefop are working to prepare a multi-annual framework for cooperation under the guidance and support of the European Commission. The ETF will continue to develop its cooperation with various stakeholders such as international organisations, development banks, regional international structures and member state development institutions.

The organisational context for the 2014-17 period will be characterised by static financial resources (in real terms), and reduced human resources. At the same time, expectations as to what the ETF can deliver in terms of results and compliance with standards of accountability and control are estimated to rise. In this context, the ETF must become more effective and efficient as an organisation and enhance its reputation and recognition among stakeholders as a leading centre of expertise on human capital development and a soundly run organisation using public funds in a transparent way to achieve measurable results.

The Chair informed the Board that the draft document had been subject to an inter-service consultation at the European Commission and the observations made during various discussions are considered and included in the draft presented.

On behalf of the Board members **Aleksandra SOKOLOVA (Lithuania)** presented the main recommendations from the discussions during the informal meeting. She stressed that the observations also referred to the draft 2014 work programme. The Board appreciated the draft document and especially the fact that it reflected the discussions of the last Board meeting and the Governing Board working group meeting of 2 October. The Board also appreciated the executive summary which clearly presented the priorities, principles and added value of the ETF's work. Further clarifications are requested as regards the budgets for 2014 and 2015. For the future, the Board recommended a shorter version of the document, (max. 30 pages plus annexes). As the Commission is working on a new template for the planning documents, the recommendations on the length of the document should be kept in mind.

**Micheline SCHEYS (Belgium)** thanked the ETF for including all the comments made during the June Board meeting in the draft document. She stressed the importance of complementarity between the ETF and Cedefop.

**Ingrid MÜLLER-ROOSEN (Germany)** asked why the establishment plan for 2014 and 2015 indicates the same number of staff (94) despite the fact that the EC had requested a 5% cut over the next five years. She also requested clarifications about the budget appropriations for 2014 which may not be in line with the recent decisions taken by the Council on 11 November.

**Gerhard SCHUMANN-HITZLER (DG ELARG)** appreciated the fact that the document was well-written and provided a framework for ETF activities in line with the resources available. It allows partner countries to define a shared vision, involving the private sector, social partners, and civil society, while at the same time helping them to frame vocational education and training in a broader context. He also appreciated the focus on impact as well as the clear objectives. He offered his full support for the document.

The **Chair** also stressed the possibilities offered by vocational education and training to make a real difference to economic recovery.

**Tarja RIIHIMAKI (Finland)** supported the proposal of Belgium as regards closer cooperation with Cedefop. She advised the ETF to prepare a plan B in the event that the 2015 budget allocation was lower than expected. She also pointed out some overlaps with the 2014 work programme, which could be cut in order to reduce the overall length of the document.

**Michel LEFRANC (France)** stressed that the ETF should become more effective and more efficient and also more visible. He recommended shortening planning documents to a maximum of 30 pages plus annexes and a very clear executive summary of 3-4 pages. Policy makers from the EU member states would be better informed about the ETF's work and achievements as a result. Since the work of Cedefop is better known in the EU, he recommended the creation of web links between the ETF and Cedefop websites as well as other actions to increase the ETF's visibility.

**Micheline SCHEYS (Belgium)** added that in order to achieve a significant reduction in translation costs, the Board might contemplate the translation of only the executive summary, leaving the rest of the document plus annexes in English only.

**Torben Kornbech RASMUSSEN (Denmark)** appreciated the quality of the document and stressed that all the aspects taken up at the last Board meeting and during the working group meeting had been addressed in the draft submitted for approval, as had the alignment with EU policies and cooperation with other stakeholders. He also supported the proposal made by the French Board member to ensure links between the ETF and Cedefop webpages. He asked for an update on the status of the two agencies.

**György SZENT-LÉLEKY (Hungary)** also encouraged the strengthening of cooperation between the ETF and Cedefop, particularly in view of sharing developments including ETF initiatives to export Cedefop tools like ECVET and EQRF to neighbouring countries.

The **Chair** explained that for the next years budgets will be very tight as a result of the reduction in the new multi-annual financial framework. The Commission has committed itself to reducing staff at EU level by 5% in the period 2013-17. This also applies to DG EAC despite the increase in activities as a result of the 40% increase in budget for the new programmes. The staff reduction will also apply to both the ETF and Cedefop. So-called non-core activities should be reduced and the agencies are asked to do more with fewer resources and less budget. ETF cooperation with Cedefop and with Eurofound is essential. In January 2014, the ETF and Cedefop will start working under a new framework and in this regard he fully supported the proposal to strengthen the links between the two websites. He also commented on the fact that while Cedefop is well-known in the EU, the ETF is well-known in its partner countries. In terms of the staffing situation, he reassured the Board that the ETF would not have to fire staff and that consultations would take place with the specialised Commission services. The ETF's experience from the transfer of the Tempus Programme to the Executive Agency in 2007 could also be useful in this regard.

**Madlen SERBAN (ETF)** reiterated the ETF's commitment to cutting the ETF staff by 5%. In July 2013, the ETF like the other agencies was informed by DG Budget that an additional 1% cut should be applied to the staff of the agencies. In 2013, the ETF had the possibility to make a 2% cut, so in 2015 it will not cut staff, but will reach the 5% target by 2017. She reminded the Board members about the on-going court cases the ETF is facing regarding staff members not reassigned to other posts when the Tempus programme was transferred to Brussels. The options that have been identified so far are retirement and voluntary resignation. As regards retirement, only two staff members are likely to retire in the near future. At the same time, the ETF is seeking efficiency gains and will launch a new functional analysis to investigate ways of achieving the same results in a less labour intensive way and possibly with a new organisational model.

As regards the 2015 budget, if the figures put forward by the ETF change, the Board will be informed. The ETF will also look at country priorities and the necessary cuts will be made according to criteria such as the willingness of a country to participate in the Torino Process as well as its willingness to work with the EU.

The ETF is also seeking complementarity with the EU member state activities in the partner countries and in January 2014 Board members will be asked to fill in an ETF questionnaire on this.

The ETF works with Cedefop at a methodological level because in terms of implementation the situation is very different in the partner countries. For example in the case of the European Qualifications Framework, many partner countries are willing to develop their own qualifications systems and the ETF helps them to implement and monitor the EU instrument to accurately evaluate the situation in each partner country. The ETF is also working with Cedefop to mobilise EU expertise to share good EU practice and experience with the partner countries. With anticipation and matching for example, the methodology developed by Cedefop for the EU member states is not applicable to the partner country context, so the ETF is working together with ILO and Cedefop to prepare guidelines for the countries outside the EU. The Bruges reviews are done by the Cedefop and the ETF supports the application of the reviews in the candidate countries. ETF-Cedefop projects for cooperation in 2014 have already been prepared. Therefore is impossible to speak about exporting the EU tools and instruments.

The ETF is waiting for templates for planning documents from the Commission along with instructions on their implementation. This should help to cut down lengthy documents in the future. She reminded that the current layouts are following DG EAC's advices sent in the letter of 23 of July.

**Françoise MILLECAM (DG DEVCO)** expressed her appreciation for the document and stressed the need to ensure synergy with donors active in vocational education and training. She explained that there are many member state-financed actions in this field and the ETF should reinforce its cooperation with organisations operating within it.

**Aleksandra SOKOLOVA (Lithuania)** also stressed the importance of increasing the visibility of the ETF and suggested that the Board to have a broader discussion on ETF Communication strategies, focusing on target groups and different ways to reach them to ensure better visibility of ETF work.

The **Chair** asked the Italian Board member to clarify the situation on the Villa Gualino contract after 2015. The ETF premises situation was assessed as high risk by both EAC and IAS in 2012 respectively in 2013.

**Maria Letizia SANTANGELO (Italy)** was asked to provide clarification on the situation of the contract for Villa Gualino as this was an area described as high risk by both DG EAC and the internal audit service. She informed the Board that the City of Turin was committed to providing a suitable solution in the event that Villa Gualino would not be available after 2015. A letter signed by the mayor of the City has been sent to the ETF in this respect. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports this approach.

In the light of the above discussions and in unanimity **the Governing Board adopted the ETF Draft Mid Term Perspective 2014-17.**

## 5. Draft 2014 ETF Work Programme

**Madlen SERBAN** and **Xavier MATHEU** presented the draft 2014 ETF Work Programme, highlighting the following:

- This Work Programme is the first of the 2014-17 Mid-term Perspective.
- The objectives for 2014 are: i) to reinforce partner country policy analysis capacity in the field of human capital development through the Torino Process and in other policy analyses (SBA, employability, NQF); ii) to support partner countries in modernising their VET systems in a lifelong learning perspective; and iii) to increase the relevance of VET provision through innovative approaches.

- The 2014 interventions are multiannual and have been selected following the principles of focus, differentiation and impact-orientation. The intervention logic in each country is different according to specific policy needs and internal criteria for prioritisation in the distribution of resources - both financial and human;
- In terms of resources, ETF staff will increase their work time, from 37.5 to 40 hours per week. However, statistics show that staff are already working to this increase. There will be 94 staff members in 2014. The ETF budget has included under the Global Europe budget line. The additional 1% staff cut has been announced as a contribution to the establishment of new agencies or to give additional staff to agencies charged with new tasks.

The **Chair** stressed that the reduction of 1% is applicable to all agencies, new or old.

**The Governing Board adopted the ETF Work Programme 2014.**

## 5. ETF Draft Budget 2014

**Alastair MACPHAIL (ETF)** presented the ETF 2014 draft budget.

The 2014 draft budget is based on the 2014 provisional draft estimate of revenue and expenditure approved by the Governing Board on 22 November 2012. It is consistent with the amount of the subvention proposed by the European Commission to the Council and Parliament in the context of the 2014 budgetary procedure. The ETF's 2014 draft budget will enter into force once the Budget Authority adopts the General Budget of the European Union.

This 2014 draft budget is based on an overall subvention of €20 143 500 for both commitment and payment appropriations, composed of €20 018 500 contribution from Budget Authority and €125,000 in assigned revenue corresponding to the amount reimbursed by the ETF to the Commission following the execution of the 2012 budget.

The ETF's budget for 2014 is at the same level in nominal terms as its budgets for 2011, 2012 and 2013. This represents a decrease of approximately 6% in real terms with respect to the 2011 budget. For Titles 1 and 2 (staff costs and administrative expenditure), the 2014 budget represents a survival budget, while Title 3 (operational expenditure) is maintained at similar levels to previous years.

The ETF proposes the following breakdown of its core subvention:

- Title 1 for expenditure relating to staff working for the ETF: This represents 66.8% (€13 448 000) of the subvention and a decrease of 0.6% compared to the 2013 first amending budget. In terms of human resources, the ETF has been asked to align itself with the Commission in reducing staffing by 5% as outlined in the Commission Communication on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) over the period 2013-17.
- While the ETF can commit itself to reducing its statutory staff by 5% over the 2013-17 period, its ability to reduce its establishment plan without compromising the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation and without terminating contracts is dependent on the voluntary departure of non-core administrative and support staff occupying temporary agent posts. No temporary agents in this category will reach retirement age in the next five years, and turnover in this staff category is historically low. For 2014, the ETF will therefore reduce its statutory staff by 2 from 96 temporary agents to 94. Any further staff cuts decided by the budget authority will mean a corresponding reduction in the ETF's expertise capacity.
- Title 2 for expenditure relating to infrastructure and general administration: Title 2 represents 8.5% of the subvention (€1 713 000), reflecting an increase of 10% compared to the first amending



budget of 2013. The ETF should be able to carry out the improvements that have been postponed over recent years due to the continuing uncertainty about Villa Gualino (upgrades to training and meeting rooms, computer equipment, building restructuring, office space, central IT infrastructure) and also to face the increased costs linked to the new contract with Regione Piemonte. Following the experience of 2013, a bigger margin is needed for Villa Gualino expenses, owing to difficulties in estimating the yearly expenditure and the fact that the ETF has had to take over some activities previously managed by Regione Piemonte.

- Title 3 for expenditure related to operational activities: This corresponds to 24.7% (€4 982 500) of the subvention, reflecting a slight decrease of 1.6%. The operational activities under Title 3, Chapter 31 will follow the trend described in the ETF's Mid-Term Perspective (MTP): 25% for the South Eastern Europe and Turkey, 23% for the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, 21% for Eastern Europe, 11% for Central Asia, 14% for thematic expertise development and 6% for evidence-based policy making and knowledge management<sup>1</sup>.
- Title 3 includes expenses related to operational activities (expertise, events, operational missions), communications, planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- Title 4 for cooperation with other organisations. At the end of 2009, the ETF finalised a new agreement with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the development of two projects in Lebanon, which will be finalised in 2014, with a remaining budget for 2014 estimated at around €10 000.
- In 2013, the ETF finalised two funding agreements which will continue in 2014:
  - *"Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean"*. The project will last three years and the ETF's contribution in human resources and infrastructure is expected to be €1.3 million. In addition to the €594 721.60 received in 2013, ETF expects to receive a second instalment of about €750,000 in 2014.
  - *"Foresight and Regional Assessment Methods for Employment"*. In 2013, DG Enlargement delegated an additional budget of €1.4 million to allow the ETF to implement the project *"Foresight and Regional Assessment Methods for Employment (FRAME)"* to provide input to country strategies for human resources development. After the first instalment of €1 249 800 received in 2013, the ETF expects to receive the last instalment of €150 200 in 2014.
- Up to four contract agent staff can be financed from earmarked revenue corresponding to these additional activities undertaken by the ETF.
- Earmarked expenditure will be introduced in the budget at a later stage to integrate all other funds managed by the ETF (such as the Italian Trust Fund, and other projects implemented by the ETF on behalf of the EC or Member States).

**The Governing Board adopted the ETF 2014 Draft Budget.**

## 6. Provisional draft estimate of revenue and expenditure and underlying general guidelines 2015

**Alastair MACPHAIL** presented the provisional draft estimate of revenue and expenditure and underlying general guidelines 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> Assuming the 2013 availability of additional funds from DG DEVCO earmarked for the southern and eastern Mediterranean region and DG ELARG for the enlargement countries.

The provisional draft estimate of revenue and expenditure sets out the financial framework for ETF activities in 2015. It has been drawn up with reference to the human and financial resources foreseen in the ETF's Mid-Term Perspective (MTP) 2014-17. Once approved by the Governing Board, this provisional draft estimate of revenue and expenditure will be submitted to the EC with no additional written procedure by 31 January 2014. It will then be used as a starting point for the 2015 budgetary procedure. The final draft estimate will be forwarded to the EC by 31 March 2014 in accordance with Article 16.1 of the ETF's founding regulation.

The provisional draft estimate of revenue and expenditure for 2015 builds on the experience of budgetary execution in 2013 and on the 2014 budget assumptions and is in line with the ETF's proposal for 2015 in the context of the MTP.

This provisional draft estimate is based on the following assumptions:

- The proposed staffing for 2015 is in line with the MTP. Additional ancillary staff (contract agents) may be financed from earmarked revenue corresponding to new activities undertaken by the ETF.
- The budget for staffing and infrastructure (Titles 1 and 2) is at strict survival levels and accommodates expected increases in staff expenditure owing to backdated salary adjustments, promotions, step increases and a higher post-occupancy rate. Any budgetary decrease will be made at the expense of Title 3. Any reduction in Title 3 will be effected via efficiency gains on operational expenditure (in particular more effective use of missions and events) and should not affect the impact of ETF's activities.
- As regards direct support to operational activities under Title 3, Chapter 31, the ETF will follow the trend outlined in the MTP 2014-17. This means an investment of some 25% for the Enlargement region (candidate countries and potential candidates), a slight increase in Neighbourhood regions (23% Neighbourhood-South and 21% for Neighbourhood-East), and 11% for activities in Central Asia. As in previous years, 14% of Chapter 31 will be invested in Thematic Expertise Development and 6% in evidence-based policy making.

Any earmarked expenditure will be added to the budget at a later stage to integrate other funds managed by the ETF (such as the Italian Trust Fund, and other projects that the ETF might implement).

**Gerhard SCHUMANN-HITZLER (DG ELARG)** informed the Board that when negotiating the multi-annual financial perspective, Member States sent a clear message to the EU to do more with less. Having the same level of expenditure with adjustments only with the rate of inflation, the EU 2015 budget will also have an impact on the ETF. It is likely to be lower and staff will almost certainly face a reduction in salary increase in line with the ruling of the Court related to the 2011 case. In this context, the ETF must plan its activities carefully and focus on the most important ones.

**Sara PARKIN (independent expert nominated by the European Parliament)** remarked that the provisional draft budget 2015 is a very good exercise of risk management. With an uncertain future, it is important to know where you want to go.

The **Chair** welcomed the ETF proposal for discussions with the EC and requested a note on staff reduction as a basis for such discussions.

**Micheline Scheys (Belgium)** stressed that Member States are also facing staff cuts and that it is important to make it clear that there are limits in performance when resources are cut and high level expertise is expected.

**The Governing Board adopted the ETF provisional draft estimate of revenue and expenditure and underlying general guidelines for 2015.**

## 7. 2013 amending budget

**Alastair MACPHAIL** presented the 2013 amending budget.

The main objective of this amending budget is to integrate the transfers performed under the authority of the Director.

- Revenue – no change;
- Expenditure – The activities performed to date are in line with the work programme adopted in November 2012, and revised by written procedure in February 2013. Three transfers were made before the first amending budget and four more have followed, making a total of seven transfers in 2013 and a transfer amount of €835,021 or 4.1% of the budget (compared to 11 transfers in 2012, for a total of €946,717 or 4.7% of the budget). Savings on administrative costs, in particular salaries, have made it possible to finance priorities placed in reserve owing to a lack of resources, thereby enhancing the ETF's impact and added value.
- Subvention – In the four budgetary transfers carried out since the previous amending budget (June 2013), amounts released from salary costs (arising from posts left vacant for longer than initially planned and delays in the start of service) and from monitoring and audit costs (owing to the internalisation of some monitoring activities and less expensive procurement for audit) were reallocated as follows: adjustment of salary related costs, linked to actual post occupation, increase in training provision to staff, increase in site costs linked to the distribution of costs deriving from the new contract with Villa Gualino, a small increase in hardware and software linked to data security and EC related systems (ABAC, TESTA), increased support for intranet development (the new intranet was launched on 1 September 2013), increased support for events, re-organisation of payment appropriations in Title 3 to match the updated payment schedule.

**The Governing Board adopted the ETF 2013 amending budget.**

## 8. Report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Governing Board on ETF governance costs

**Alastair MACPHAIL** highlighted the following elements from the report on ETF governance costs:

- Event costs (costs related directly to the organisation of the meetings), have fallen from an average of €55.7k in 2009-11 to €44.9k in 2012-13. The cost of the two meetings held in 2012 was kept below the €44k target. However, the June 2013 meeting was more expensive (€49.9k) for the following reasons: 1) general cost inflation, 2) higher costs for conference organisation under a new contract that came into force in 2013, 3) higher transfer costs owing to the location of the hotel (Lingotto).
- Interpretation costs have remained largely stable across the period (with a slight increase owing to inflation), except for meetings where one of the languages was not provided owing to the absence of the members concerned (which did not happen in 2012-13).
- Translation costs for the three meetings organised since 2012 have fallen in comparison with previous years from an average of €87k to €69k (-20%), even though the measures agreed by the GB in June 2012 were not put fully into effect until the meeting of November 2012.

- The most important measure, the avoidance of urgent translations, has required significant changes in the drafting and approval process for documents and was only partially successful in November 2012, when some 60% of documents were still translated under the urgent procedure. However, for the June and November 2013 meetings no documents were translated urgently.
- Concerning the length of documents, the ETF has been struggling with this issue, but cannot report a significant reduction in document length in 2012-13.

The ETF has implemented the actions agreed by the Governing Board at its June 2012 meeting. The overall cost of meetings has fallen by 20% from an average of €143k in 2009-11 to €114k in 2012-13.

**Micheline SCHEYS (Belgium)** raised the issue of interpretation provided in the five languages and the use of the interpretation during the meeting. She proposed that this issue could be raised again during a working group meeting of the Board.

**Torben Kornbech RASMUSSEN (Denmark)** supported the proposal.

**Reinhard NÖBAUER (Austria)** proposed that consideration can be given to reducing the translation costs while keeping interpretation during the meeting.

The **Chair** appreciated the proposals from the Board members and asked for a working group to be established in 2014 to look at these issues.

**Ingrid MÜLLER-ROOSEN (Germany)** argued that the discussions on translation and interpretation is not on the agenda of the meeting but a joint proposal of those who benefit from these services could be put for the attention of the next Board meeting in 2014.

**Torben Kornbech RASMUSSEN (Denmark)** asked that this topic to be introduced again in the agenda of next Board meeting and in this respect a new working group could make suggestions to significantly reduce costs.

**Gema CAVADA (Spain)** agreed on the need to reduce costs and suggested shorting documents significantly.

**Sara PARKIN (independent expert nominated by the European Parliament)** suggested translating only the executive summaries of ETF planning and reporting documents.

**Michel LEFRANC (France)** appreciated the idea of having a Board working group to discuss the issues and proposed adding ETF communication policy to the agenda of the group.

**Gerhard SCHUMANN-HITZLER (DG ELARG)** agreed with the proposal to create a working group to look ways of making additional savings. He recommended shortening documents and using detailed annexes in one language. Shorter documents may also have a wider readership.

**Tarja RIIHIMÄKI (Finland)** supported the working group proposal including the addition of communication policy related aspects.

The **Chair** appreciated the discussion and asked the ETF to establish a working group to look at translation, interpretation and the ETF communication strategy.

## 10. Any other business

**Mircea Copot**, ETF staff committee representative presented the impact of the new staff regulations that will come into force on 1 January 2014 on certain ETF staff

In accordance with the new regulation, non-EU staff with a place of origin outside EU will no longer be entitled to the annual travel allowance. There are eight non-EU ETF staff and seven of them have a place of origin outside the EU. The ETF staff committee considers this stipulation to be discriminatory which contradicts the staff regulations and the European Charter of Human Rights.

**The Chair** informed the Board members that at present the EC is working on Implementing Rules and both the ETF and the Governing Board have a limited capacity to intervene.

**Sara PARKIN** (independent expert nominated by the European Parliament) suggested that the Board could support an ETF request for a non-discriminatory provision.

**Gerhard SCHUMANN-HITZLER (DG ELARG)** informed that the provision affects officials from the EC too as well as staff in the EU Delegations all over the world. He suggested that the Board could express its concern about the impact of the new provisions.

The Board agreed to send a note expressing worries for the impact of this provision on the ETF staff.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Maurice Mezel, member representing France for his active contribution to the activities of the Board. His mandate will end at the beginning of 2014.

The Chair congratulated Jean François Mezières for being awarded by the French authorities with Chevalier de l'ordre national de la Légion d'Honneur on behalf of the Board.

## 12. Date of next meetings

The next meetings of the Governing Board will be held in Turin on 5-6 June 2014 and 20-21 November 2014.

### Follow up actions:

- Governing Board working groups on governance costs and communication will be established and recommendations presented at the next Board meeting;
- The ETF will reduce the length of planning documents taking into consideration the templates and instructions to be provided by the EC;
- The ETF will address the issue of increasing its visibility through adequate communication;
- The Board is to be informed on the measures the ETF will take to implement the staffing cuts.

# ANNEX

## Oral reports

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

**António SILVA MENDES** (DG EAC) presented the latest European Commission policies and programmes :

**Upcoming Bruges Reviews.** The report on the short-term deliverables will be prepared by Cedefop in cooperation with the ETF for the candidate countries and will be ready in June 2014. The definition and the review of the new set of short-term deliverables will be in line with the revision of the Education and Training 2020 review. It will be based on progress registered between 2011 and 2014, recent policy documents, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), European Area for Skills and Qualifications, as well as the ECVET and EQAVET evaluations.

**European Alliance for Apprenticeships.** The new European Alliance for Apprenticeships was launched in July 2013 in Leipzig and a Council Declaration was adopted in October 2013. The focus is on ensuring recognition and/or integration of apprenticeship in the formal system. Several ministries have already signed the memorandum and partnership is the key word. The signals are very encouraging. As an example, NESTLÉ pledged 10,000 placements for young people in their facilities and are encouraging companies in their supply chain to do the same. A network of business ambassadors has also been established.

**Youth Employment package and initiatives.** DG Employment is coordinating a series of actions for the Youth Employment package. At present, the EC supports the development of implementation plans for 19 pilot projects. As regards the quality framework for traineeships, a help desk has been established at [ec.europa.eu/social/youthtraining](http://ec.europa.eu/social/youthtraining). The apprenticeship is included in the EURES portal and in the pilot "Your first EURES job".

**Adult Learning/CVET.** The main concern of the Commission is to increase the level of competences and skills of the active ageing population. In this context, it supports the selection of a national coordinator in each Member State to facilitate cooperation on the adult learning agenda and the promotion of adult learning.

**EQAVET AND ECVET.** The EQAVET external evaluation was completed in July and the EC has reported the results to the European Parliament and the Council. For ECVET, the first external evaluation was launched in August and the first findings will be presented to the ECVET Users Group on 4 December 2013.

**European Area of Skills and Qualifications (EASQ).** At present the EC is carrying out online consultations, holding meetings and has launched a study on obstacles for recognition. In June 2014, a high-level conference is foreseen to be organised living the political initiative to the new Commission in the second quarter of 2015.

**Opening up education.** On 23 September the EC published a communication on the political impulse for innovation. The main objective is to promote the ICT as an important resource to be used in schools for both pupils and teachers.

**ESCO - European multilingual classification of skills, competences, qualifications and occupations.** ESCO is the multilingual classification of European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations. ESCO identifies and categorises skills/competences, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training in 22 European languages. ESCO is a

joint project which provides occupational profiles showing which competences and qualifications are relevant for an occupation. It has been developed in an open IT format that can be used by third parties. It can be accessed through the ESCO portal and is available free of charge to everyone. The EC DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion jointly with DG Education and Culture, coordinates the ESCO project.

**Internationalisation of VET and higher education.** The Commission has recently invested a lot in the policy dialogue and platforms. In the Eastern Partnership, platform 4 - people to people, in the Western Balkans, the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training (WBPET) as well as the policy dialogue with the Southern Mediterranean countries. The ETF is very active in all these activities.

In July 2013, the EC launched the Communication on European Higher Education in the World and by the end of 2014 the results of the study on Internationalisation of VET will be made available.

**Erasmus +.** The new Erasmus + programme was adopted on 19 November and the first call for proposals will be launched in December. The budget of the programme has been increased by 40%. Some international actions included in the call are related to youth actions, joint master degrees and Jean Monnet.

The new programme allows countries from outside the EU to participate in the actions related to: the Masters degree scheme, mobility for higher education for EU and non-EU beneficiaries, volunteering and youth exchanges, strategic partnerships between education/training or youth organisations and other relevant actors, knowledge alliances & sector skills alliances, e-Twinning, cooperation with third countries focussing on the neighbourhood, and policy dialogue with stakeholders, third countries and international organisations.

The main objectives in the field of VET will focus on common priorities for the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Education and Training 2020 framework, in particular links between VET and the world of work, VET's contribution to regional economic development and quality assurance.

As regards adult learning/CVET, activities will aim to reduce the number of low skilled adults through the validation of non-formal / informal learning, guidance systems and quality assurance.

**György SZENT-LÉLEKY (Hungary)** pointed to the fact that a first reading of the PIAAC results could indicate that the competences and skills acquired by higher education graduates are worse than those acquired by VET graduates. The Chair explained that although the PIAAC results are still being analysed, it is clear that the basic skills provided by education and training need to include more teamwork and problem solving. The PISA results will be published shortly too.

**Torben Kornbech RASMUSSEN (Denmark)** asked to what extent the ETF's work will benefit the Erasmus + programme. The Chair indicated that some of the countries that the ETF works with are eligible to participate as partners (not promoters) in some EC projects.

**Gerhard SCHUMANN-HITZLER (DG ELARG)** focused his intervention on four areas of the enlargement process: progress and outlook; economic situation, regional cooperation and financial assistance.

**Progress and outlook.** The EC has adopted the Enlargement Strategy and progress reports. The new elements in the strategy paper relate to confirming the rule of law as a fundamental issue. The countries need to tackle issues such as judicial reform and the fight against organised crime and corruption early in accession negotiations. Other new elements are related to economic governance and competitiveness since the global economic crisis of the past years has underlined the need to

fundamentally review and strengthen their economic governance for all countries including the candidate countries.

The paper also stressed the importance of strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring inclusive democratic processes that support these institutions and reinforce principles and common EU values. All the countries of South Eastern Europe and Turkey need to undertake further reforms to ensure that the principles of freedom of expression and the protection of the rights of minorities, including Roma, are respected in practice. The ETF plays an important role in the areas linked to competitiveness and respect of human rights.

Updates as regards each of the country from the region are as follows :

**Albania** has made a considerable progress by adopting the remaining essential judicial, public administration and parliamentary reform measures, as requested by the EU. The parliamentary elections were organised smoothly. Progress has been also registered in the fight against corruption and organised crime.

The EC recommended that the Council grant Albania candidate country status and invited the Albanian authorities to continue reforming its judicial system and respecting fundamental rights.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** made very limited progress and there is no consensus among the political leaders on a common vision as regards their future in the EU. The country needs to implement European laws, change the Constitution and electoral law, and eliminate discrimination on the basis of nationality or ethnic origin. There is also a problem of coordination among the entities on using EU financial assistance. Given that no solution has yet been found on the EU co-ordination mechanism, the EC has postponed further discussions on IPA II until the country is back on track in the EU integration process. This decision may also affect the ETF FRAME project if there are no interlocutors to speak on behalf of the country.

**Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** has been a candidate country since 2005 but progress is not as fast as expected. The EC considers that the country meets basic requirements and has recommended starting accession negotiations. Unfortunately, there is no consensus among the two major communities but the EC recommended continuing the development of the European model of integration, based on key principles like non-discrimination and working together.

2013 has been a historic year for **Kosovo**<sup>2</sup> on its path to the European Union with an agreement between Belgrade and Pristina on a pragmatic way of working together. The EC will continue to help them to make progress both in economic terms but reforms should continue in tackling organised crime and corruption, pursuing judicial and public administration reforms and ensuring the rights of minorities.

**Montenegro** adopted comprehensive actions plans for the chapters on the judiciary and fundamental rights and on justice, freedom and security, in line with the new approach to tackle these chapters early in the accession process. Deep and lasting political reforms are necessary as are strong political will and enhanced administrative capacity.

2013 has also been a historic year for **Serbia** on its path to the European Union. The Commission has recognised the progress made on key reforms and the substantial efforts made by Serbia towards normalising its relations with Kosovo. In September, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement entered into force. The country needs to continue to make major efforts to reform the judiciary, fight corruption and organised crime, as well as public administration reform.

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<sup>2</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



Significant progress on reforms has been made during the year in **Turkey**. The fourth judicial reform package strengthens the protection of fundamental rights including freedom of expression. The government has started a process aimed at ending terrorism and violence in the south-east of the country. The latest developments show the importance of EU engagement and of the EU remaining the benchmark for reform in Turkey. On 5 November, the EU and Turkey opened negotiations on regional policy, which represents an important step forward.

**Iceland** had reached an advanced stage of accession negotiations when the new government decided to put the negotiations on hold, and the accession process has come to a standstill. The Government will make an assessment of the negotiations to date and will send it for discussion at the Parliament.

### **Economic situation**

The countries from the region are recovering after the double dip recession and Turkey's growth has slowed. Unemployment and especially youth unemployment is high in South Eastern Europe. The Policy Leaders' Forum organised by the ETF in October in Salzburg allowed countries to compare their analysis and identify positive solutions between themselves.

### **Regional cooperation**

On 21 November 2013, the ministers of economy of South Eastern Europe finally agreed in Sarajevo to the SEE 2020 strategy which sets targets similar to the EU 2020 ones. This is an important step forward and the ETF has a role to play in monitoring progress in human capital development. The FRAME project will also help countries to prepare their strategies.

### **IPA II**

There are some delays in approving the package of financial instruments for external action due to the European Parliament's request to be involved in the planning process. Preparation for implementation has started and draft multi-country and country strategy papers have been prepared for wide consultation. Education and training are high on the agenda as key factors that contribute to sustainable growth. The ETF made an analysis of the countries and helped them prepare coherent strategies.

**Françoise MILLECAM (DG DEVCO)** presented the latest information in the area of development policy.

In May 2011 and March 2013, following recent developments in both the Neighbourhood East and South, and in particular the Arab awakening, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the EC issued two communications that have deeply revised the framework of relations between the EU and its neighbours. The new approach is based on mutual accountability and a shared commitment to the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The EC proposal for the new European Neighbourhood Instrument is based on the principle of "more for more" and mutual accountability, notably through provisions on differentiation for financial allocations - partners who make more progress in implementing democratic reforms will receive more support.

In the last years, and especially in the context of the Arab Awakening, policy dialogue and interventions in Neighbourhood countries have had a strong focus on employment and VET.

The new relationship framework will have an impact on the ETF. Firstly, because more attention is now devoted to jobs – both in terms of job creation and job transformation. Furthermore, particular attention is given to the Southern Neighbourhood which faces a job growth rate that has not kept pace

with size and aspirations of the working age population. As a result this region is struggling to meet the needs of its large young population.

With limits to public sector employment growth, the lack of jobs in productive private sector activities is a big challenge for young people in the region. A lot of effort is needed to support governments to foster job creation in productive private sector activities and improve the access of young people to meaningful employment opportunities.

In the Neighbourhood East, the problems are quite different: the region has negative demographic growth, and will face the social and economic consequences of an ageing population. Overall, the limited availability of jobs and poor wages have been key factors for labour migration, which has now become a feature of the region, while VET systems are facing difficulties to adapt to economic development and the need to provide employment opportunities to young people inside the country.

The success of capacity development promoted by the EC depends on partner ownership and commitment to the change process. The EC intends to facilitate rather than lead change - EU support in absence of ownership and commitment will not work.

With this in mind, cooperation between DEVCO and the ETF has significantly increased in the last year in the European Neighbourhood countries, where VET, employment and youth feature in the country strategies of most partner countries.

The ETF is considered as a centre of excellence having a positive impact on the quality of reforms in partner countries. In particular, the Torino Process had a high impact in partner countries in terms of capacity building and participation of stakeholders. This is of paramount importance to ensure the ownership and relevance of interventions.

Moreover, a recent assessment of the bilateral projects promoted by DEVCO within the study "TVET and skills development in EU development cooperation" stresses the high quality of the design of projects when the ETF was directly involved in upstream activities (identification and formulation).

The technical competencies of staff, the methodology of regularly engaging key VET stakeholders in the partner countries through a structured, consultative process, effective networking in the countries and among countries via regional, sub-regional and thematic consultations and capacity building all increase the added value of the ETF to VET reform.

For the future, DEVCO recommends that the ETF adopt a more result oriented approach rather than a process oriented approach as well as targeting visibility and dissemination to relevant key actors at economic and policy level in the partner countries and Member States and at the EC and international organisations to enhance and maximise the impact of the ETF's analysis and findings. Following this approach, the ETF should be encouraged to present result based budgeting that would facilitate decision making on financial allocations.

There is room in the future to deepen relations, in particular on the DEVCO side to update the ETF on the next programming cycle and on upcoming EU interventions and cooperation priorities in VET, skills development and labour market analysis, and on the ETF side to present its analysis and findings from a geographic and thematic perspective and encourage the exploitation of ETF evidence-based analysis that will be an input to programme formulation not only in VET but also in terms of the necessary structural changes that the EU might support in the future.

The ETF will also be involved in spreading information about the next "Investing in People" call for proposals, through which the Commission has supported human development between 2007 and 2013. The last call for proposals will be published in December 2013 with a portfolio of €44 million. It will be entitled "Empowerment for better livelihoods, including skills development and vocational

education and training, for marginalised and vulnerable people and people dependent on the informal economy".

Finally, DG DEVCO thanked ETF for its support in implementing the study "TVET and skills development in EU development cooperation". A draft was delivered by the external experts to the EC at the beginning of November and the final one is expected by mid-December.

The study will be sent to the ETF and all relevant actors as soon as possible (waiting for revisions), along with a concept note on VET, to provide guidelines and a common conceptual framework for DEVCO staff and EU Delegations about VET.

## Trends and developments at the ETF

**Madlen SERBAN** presented the latest developments at the ETF. Detailed information can be found in the Spotlights publication distributed to Governing Board members.

### The ETF and the European Parliament

The ETF has developed various activities with the Employment and the Education and Culture Committees of the European Parliament:

- The Joint EP – four agencies seminar organised by EP EMPL, ETF, Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA on "The European Social Model, a Key Driver for Competitiveness", with the participation of the Deputy Prime Minister of Moldova, on 25 September;
- Participation of the chair of the EP EMPL Committee and of the Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM as speakers in the ETF Policy Leaders' Forum on Public Management of Education, in Marseilles on 6 October;
- ETF participation in the Parliamentary seminar "Youth and Education in the Balkans" with the parliaments of the pre-accession countries and the European Parliament, 6-7 November;

### The ETF and the European Commission

EU Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou participated in the SEMED Policy Leaders' Forum on Public Management of Education, in Marseille on 6 October. DG EAC, DG ELARG and DG EMPL participated in the South Eastern Europe and Turkey Policy Leaders' Forum on long-term policy making for HRD with a view to SEE 2020 and Europe 2020 strategies, in Salzburg, on 9 and 10 October. DG EAC also participated in the International Expert Panel on Work-based Learning organised by the ETF in Turin on 19 September. The entire list of events that the ETF contributed to can be found in the Spotlights publication.

Several activities have been developed with the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee:

- Participation of CoR – ARLEM in the Advisory Board Meeting of ETF's Entrepreneurial Communities initiative on 30 September;
- Participation of CoR –ARLEM in the SEMED Policy Leaders' Forum on Public Management of Education, in Marseille on 6 October;
- The ETF presented the coordination between the employment and education strategy in the Seminar on Employment Policies organised by CoR, EC and TAIEX on 18 October;
- The ETF gave a presentation on youth employment and macro-economic policy at the Euromed Summit of Economic and Social Councils in Barcelona organised by EESC on 11-13 November;

## Stakeholder cooperation

Two consultations with Governing Board members on the ETF strategic documents took place in 2013 on 23-24 April and 2 October. The ETF has recently signed Declarations of Intent with IVETA (21 June) and the ILO International Training Centre in Turin (7 August).

In order to ensure better coordination with the EU presidencies, the ETF met with current and future EU Presidency countries: 2013 - Ireland and Lithuania; 2014 - Greece and Italy; 2015 Latvia.

Several institutions active in the area of human capital development from Austria, Portugal, Belgium, France, Germany, UK, Romania, Estonia, Italy, Spain supported the ETF in the implementation of its work programme.

The ETF and the Lithuanian Presidency have cooperated closely on several TVET events and the Greek Presidency has agreed to include the ETF corporate conference on qualifications (8-9 April) on their Presidency agenda.

The ETF has already initiated discussions with the future Italian Presidency and the following ETF events will be on their agenda:

- 19-20 November 2014 – Conference on the Internationalisation of VET. Entrepreneurial Learning and Multilevel Governance.
- 20 November 2014 – ETF 20 years anniversary event

Cooperation continued with Cedefop and Eurofound, with Cedefop participating in the ETF Torino Process event, Turin 8-9 May and the ETF speaking at the Cedefop conference on work-based learning, Thessaloniki, 11-12 June. The ETF and Cedefop organised a peer learning exchange in the area of administration and have participated in each other's Board meetings. Cedefop also attended the ETF event on Work-based learning, Turin, 19 September. Eurofound contributed to the ETF GEMM methodology and both institutions exchanged relevant studies, research and publications on entrepreneurship, migration, etc.

Joint activities developed with different EU member states and international organisations, regional institutions, networks and civil society are presented in detail in the Spotlights publication.

## Entrepreneurial communities initiative

With the support of **Namig MAMMADOV**, observer Azerbaijan, the ETF launched a call for good practice proposals in the area of entrepreneurial communities.

This ETF initiative seeks to learn more about entrepreneurial communities in the partner countries in partnership with COR, ARLEM, CORLEAP, U4M, EESC, EVTA, RCC and Eurochambers. An Advisory Board will include these organisation as well as three representatives of ETF partner countries engaged in the Small Business Act assessment on a rotational basis. The key objective is to capture good practice to inform policies that support entrepreneurial communities, what drives entrepreneurial communities, how they create space for cooperation, develop entrepreneurial capacity, use and develop skills, inform policies and are supported by policies.

The call for proposals and selection of examples of good practice targets local communities that foster skills, entrepreneurship and job creation. Up to 30 examples of good practice will be presented in an interactive atlas and an Entrepreneurial Communities Digest publication which will be published in 2014. An Advisory Board will select up to six good practitioners with outstanding learning value to undergo an in-depth study. In November 2014 a two-day conference will bring together 30 partner countries, international organisations, EU Member States and institutions, experts and practitioners.

## The Lithuanian Presidency and the upcoming Greek Presidency

### Lithuanian Presidency

**Aleksandra SOKOLOVA (Lithuania)** presented the achievements of the Lithuanian Presidency. The overall theme of the Presidency was a credible Europe with credible financial and economic policies, a growing Europe with a commitment to growth and competitiveness and an open Europe - the EU as a global model of openness and security.

In education and training, the efforts of the Presidency focused on quality and efficiency focussing on areas such as the internationalisation of higher education, leadership in education, open educational resources and digital learning, efficiency in financing of higher education and inclusive VET.

At its meeting of 25 November, the Council was planning to discuss the internationalisation of higher education, with the objective of adopting Council Conclusions on the global dimension of European higher education, effective leadership in education and open educational resources and digital learning.

The calendar of the events was as follows:

- 6-7 June, High Level Group on Education and Training;
- 15-16 July, Education Committee;
- 23-24 September, Meeting of the Directors General for Higher Education;
- 7-8 November, Bologna Follow-up Group;
- 11-12 November, Meeting of the Directors General for Vocational Education and Training;
- 2-3 December, Meeting of the Directors General for Schools;
- 5-6 September, Conference “European Higher Education in the World”;
- 9-10 September, Conference “Leadership in Education”;
- 11-12 October, Comenius Conference 2013;
- 24-25 October, Erasmus+ Conference;
- 4-5 November, Conference “Skills dimension of the EU’s global approach to migration and mobility (GAMM)”;
- 12-13 November, Conference on Vocational Education and Training;
- 9-10 December, Conference on Adult Learning
- 12-13 December, European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network ELGPN plenary meeting

### Greek Presidency

**Ioannis VOUTSINAS** (Board member) and **Cristina PRAPA** (ad hoc representative) presented the priorities of the upcoming Greek Presidency:

- The priorities are quality assurance, social cohesion, efficiency and innovative education and training, entrepreneurship and higher education
- The topics proposed for the 24 February 2014 Council meeting are: conclusions on efficient and innovative education and training to invest in young people and entrepreneurship, the results of

PISA and PIIAC in relation to skills and employability. The May Council meeting conclusions will be on quality assurance at all levels of education and training and teacher education.

- As regards the policy and governance groups, the focus will be on the annual growth survey, the Education and Training 2012 monitoring report, the open method of coordination and mandates of the technical working groups, PIIAC, assessment of the TVET peer review, and the role of structural funds.
- The meeting of the directors general for VET is scheduled for March and the topics proposed for discussion are the interim analysis of Bruges and quality assurance. Also in March the meeting of directors general for school education will be organised with topics including quality assurance, early childhood education, teacher education and CSR in school education. The meeting of the directors general of higher education is to be organised in May and will discuss topics such as cross border quality assurance, merging higher education institutions, CSR.
- On 27-28 March in Athens, a conference on addressing the skills mismatch between supply and demand in VET will be organised.
- Under the auspices of the Greek Presidency, the ETF will organise the meeting on qualification frameworks in April.