

MINUTES

GOVERNING BOARD

MEETING

24 NOVEMBER 2015



1. Introduction

The ETF Governing Board meeting was held in Turin on 24 November 2015 and was chaired by Michel SERVOZ, Director General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission (EC).

New members of the Board were welcomed: Stephane KUNZ, member and Nadine NERGUISIAN, alternate representing France; Michael KELLEHER, member representing Ireland; Jean-Paul HEERSCHAP, alternate member representing European Commission (EC), DG Devco; Ingrid MÜLLER-ROOSEN, member representing Germany; Muyesser SOLAK, member and Vladima POPOVA as alternate representing Bulgaria. From the EC, Jordi Curell, director (DG EMPL), Thomas BENDER, head of unit (DG EMPL), Christophe MASSON (DG NEAR) and Jean-Paul HEERSCHAP (DG DEVCO) were present. The ETF staff committee was represented by Shawn Mendes.

Representatives from Cyprus, Ireland, Malta, Spain, Slovenia and UK did not attend. The partner country observers did not attend.

2. Adoption of the agenda

On the invitation of the Chair, the ETF proposed a new point for adoption on the Rules on the secondment of national experts to the European Training Foundation. The Board adopted the agenda with the newly proposed item included under point 8 below.

3. Follow-up to previous meeting

i. Minutes of previous meeting

The Board adopted the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 June 2015.

ii. Follow up on action points and written procedures

The follow up points and the actions developed by the ETF to achieve them as well as the list of the written procedures since the last Governing Board meeting were tabled and no request for clarification was made.

4. Draft 2016 ETF Work Programme

Madlen Serban and Peter Greenwood presented the draft 2016 Work Programme.

ETF informed the Governing Board members that the draft 2016 ETF Work Programme was prepared in accordance with art. 12 of the (EC) Regulation no. 1339/2008 drawing on the Single Programming Document template but adapted to the ETF context. In this respect, the draft document was divided in three sections: 1. Policy context; 2. Multi-annual programming 2016-17; and 3. Operational activities.

The recommendations and observations formulated at the Governing Board meeting of 5 June, the observations made by the European Commission services during the inter-service consultation and during the structured dialogue organised on 7 October as well as the suggestions and recommendations made by the members of the Governing Board working group during their meeting on 7 October have been taken into account in the version submitted for adoption..

Reference was made also to the content of the first chapter, which assesses EU internal policies related in particular to Education and Training 2020, the EU Employment Strategy, migration and the role of entrepreneurship in industrial development. It also surveys key external relations policies governing EU assistance for accession, neighbourhood, and development cooperation in Central Asia.

The analysis also covers the changing needs and circumstances in partner countries informed by the Torino Process as well as relevant initiatives in international development policy. The analysis concludes with the identification of overall HCD reform priorities for for each of the partner country regions.

The ETF's 2016 programming builds on progress in implementing the 2014-17 mid-term perspective. For 2016, the annual objectives proposed are the following:

1. To reinforce capacity for human capital development in the partner countries through evidence-based policy analysis
2. To increase internal VET efficiency in partner countries through VET system multi-level governance, quality assurance, learning and teaching and support to the implementation and monitoring of related EC programming and projects.
3. To increase the external efficiency of VET in partner countries through support to qualifications and qualifications systems, work-based learning, employment skills and employability, enterprise skills and entrepreneurial learning.

The ETF continues to work through seven strategic projects. Each strategic project contributes primarily to one annual objective while the strategic project on support to EU assistance in the context of EU external policies contributes to different objectives depending on the request.

The main changes in the draft document since the last meeting of the Board in June were presented. They relate to an update of the European context; the annual objectives to more clearly link with strategic project/policy focus areas for 2016 and priority actions as follows:

- high priority to Enlargement countries and Eastern Partnership countries with Association Agreements (Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and countries with Association Agreements and an advanced cooperation status in the Neighbourhood South (Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia);
- medium priority to other Neighbourhood countries;
- low priority to Algeria, Israel, Russia
- low priority to Central Asia – only regional ETF projects
- No activities in Libya or Syria

Support to EU assistance will be provided on demand, while involvement in the Torino Process will be available for all countries on request.

Confirmation of the budget following the adoption of the consolidated EU budget in late 2015 is necessary before the Work Programme, Implementation Plans and 2014-17 Country Strategic Perspectives can be distributed. A hearing at the Employment Committee of the European Parliament is scheduled for early 2016 for final complete approval of the Work Programme.

At the end of January 2016, the ETF will send out questionnaires to map Governing Board member readiness to cooperate with the ETF in the implementation of the work programme.

The Chair opened the floor for the discussion. Karin MEYER (Luxembourg) thanked the ETF for the quality of the document and in her role as representative on the Board of the EU Council Presidency she had not been asked to make any specific recommendations.

Micheline SCHEYS (Belgium) congratulated the ETF for the changes introduced after the discussion of the draft in the previous Governing Board meeting and the way the activities proposed are defined in accordance with the budget. She emphasised the importance of migration as a real issue and appreciated the fact that this topic is going to be addressed under the strategic projects 4 and 5. Mrs. Scheys asked the European Commission to indicate how the ETF can clearly contribute to the migration agenda.

Ingrid MÜLLER-ROOSEN (Germany) supported these remarks and congratulated the ETF for the quality and clarity of the work programme. The structure corresponds to the essential points and all the suggestions of the Board members formulated in June had been incorporated in the updated version. She also remarked how well the ETF reacted and adjusted its actions to the many evolutions and developments it faces. She encouraged the ETF to publish a shorter version of the work programme for communication purposes.

Liga LEJINA (Latvia) congratulated the ETF for the well-prepared document. She expressed an interest in practical activities linked to migration. As regards the reference to the Communiqué of the Ministers of Education from the EU and Central Asia held under the Latvian Presidency, she explained that the agreement was to implement all aspects included in the Communiqué into practice, not only what was agreed in the accompanying action plan.

The Chair also expressed his appreciation of the work programme and the way the changes suggested by different actors, especially those related to migration, had been accommodated in the updated version. In 2016 the document may have to be adapted due to the fact that migration related issues are an EU priority as a result of the current refugee crisis. The integration of immigrants into the labour market is essential and skills should be improved both within and outside the EU.

The Chair informed the Governing Board members that the EU skills agenda should be adopted in the first semester of 2016 and he was pleased that ETF priorities are in line with those in the skills agenda. As regards qualifications frameworks, this is a core issue at EU level and the ETF may contribute by highlighting good practice from the partner countries. The Chair also expressed his appreciation of the emphasis on entrepreneurial learning underlining the fact that after the economic crisis, many jobs had been lost and only a few new ones created. A new economic model is growing in importance with small companies being set up by individuals. Entrepreneurial learning is essential in this process.

Madlen SERBAN (ETF) made reference to the new objectives set in the revised European Neighbourhood Policy which talk about the importance of stabilisation in the neighbouring partner countries and the management of legal circular migration. The Enlargement package highlights the importance of human capital in supporting competitiveness and economic governance. Migration is mainly tackled under strategic projects 5 (Qualifications) and 6 (Employment) which help to ensure that the skills of potential migrants are readable, portable and transferable. Skills development should be part of employment policy in order to make sure that it is integrated effectively.

Micheline SCHEYS (Belgium) thanked the ETF for supporting the coordination of the strategies and asked the Commission to look at learning outcomes and links with qualifications.

Dimitrios PSYLLOS (Greece) urged the ETF to take steps in the area of migration both within the 2016 Work Programme, and in the longer term in the 2017-20 Single Programming Document.

Jan ANDERSSON (independent expert nominated by the European Parliament) also appreciated the importance of integrating skills, employment and migration policies but he remarked that this approach would only work if there was a common responsibility in the EU as regards migration.

The Chair concluded the discussion by thanking the ETF for the quality of the work programme which reflects the priorities of the moment and includes migration among them. He mentioned that the validation of learning outcomes is an important issue for the Member States and the Commission is working on this aspect within the framework of the EU skills agenda. He also mentioned the importance of having a short summary of the Work Programme.

The Governing Board adopted the 2016 ETF Work Programme.

5. ETF Draft Budget 2016

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) presented the 2016 budget. The current draft 2016 budget totals € 20 145 000.

Revenue

The 2016 draft budget is based on an overall contribution of €20 145 000 for both commitment and payment appropriations, composed of €19 956 000 contribution from the EU budget and €189 000 from the recovery of surplus related to 2014 budget execution.

Expenditure

The ETF's budget for 2016 is at the same level in nominal terms as all the previous budgets since 2011. This represents a decrease in real terms of approximately 10% compared to 2011. For Titles 1 and 2 (staff costs and administrative expenditure), the 2016 budget covers only mandatory expenditure, and Title 3 (operational expenditure) is reduced by 5%.

The ETF proposed the following breakdown:

- Title 1 for expenditure relating to staff working for the ETF: €13 867 400. Title 1 represents 69% of the EU contribution, with an increase of 4% compared to the 2015 amended budget. In 2015, the Title 1 budget was reduced for two main reasons: the unexpected and considerable decrease in the 2014 weighting factor for Italy and the blocked salary adaptations for two consecutive years, followed by a reduced salary adaptation of 0.8% in 2014. None of these reasons are expected to apply to the 2016 budget. If compared with the 2015 initial budget, the proposed budget for 2016 has been decreased by 1.6%.
- Title 2 for expenditure relating to infrastructure and general administration: €1 589 100 which represents 8% of the contribution, reflecting a decrease of 19% compared to the 2015 amended budget.
- Title 3 for expenditure related to operational activities: €4 688 500, corresponding to 23% of the subvention and a decrease of 5% on 2015.
- Title 4 for cooperation with other organisations. In 2013, the ETF signed a funding agreement with DG DEVCO for the implementation of the project 'Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean': The project is expected to end in 2016. As the amount of this earmarked expenditure is unknown at the moment of preparing the draft budget, it will be introduced at a later stage through an amended budget.

Karl WIECZOREK (Austria) asked why the costs related to IT have been reduced in 2016. The ETF informed that this was due to the fact that some IT needs were covered from the 2015 amended budget.

The Chair informed the Board that the ETF's 2016 draft budget will enter into force once the Budget Authority adopts the General Budget of the EU. The ETF is also playing its part in the staff reduction process agreed by the European Commission and applied to all EU institutions. The stability in the

2016 budget indicates that the European Commission is satisfied by how the ETF is managing its funds.

The Governing Board adopted the ETF 2016 Draft Budget.

6. 2015 amending budget

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) presented the second 2015 amending budget. The main objective of the amendment is to incorporate the new miscellaneous revenue and to reflect the last transfers.

There are no modifications to the subvention the ETF received from the European Commission or to the assigned revenue.

As from 2014, the ETF can incorporate the interest generated by the subvention received from the Commission (Art. 58 ETF Financial regulation). The amount accumulated as interest for the first three quarters of 2015 amounts to €9 041.65 and represents miscellaneous revenue.

Since the previous amending budget, the ETF carried out one budgetary transfer following a written consultation of the Governing Board (concluded with decision GB/15/DEC/011 of 16/09/2015) in order to adapt the budget to actual needs. The revenue from accumulated interest (€9 041.65) is proposed to be allocated for the refurbishment of the offices.

The Governing Board adopted the ETF 2015 amending budget.

7. i) Memorandum proposing to extend the validity of the cooperation agreement between the ETF and British Council by two years 2016-17

Peter GREENWOOD (ETF) presented the Memorandum informing the Governing Board that the first cooperation agreement was approved in November 2011 and entered into force in December 2011 for four years.

The Memorandum established a framework for cooperation in terms of: i) Knowledge sharing in thematic areas; ii) coordination and cooperation in regions and countries where both organisations and iii) participation in international events to disseminate information and encourage networking.

A brief analysis of the cooperation between the two institutions is presented in the memorandum. After analysing and assessing the cooperation together with British Council, the ETF proposed extending the cooperation agreement for a further two years (2016-17).

The Governing Board adopted the Memorandum of Understanding.

ii) Declaration of Intent between the ETF and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

Peter GREENWOOD (ETF) presented the draft Declaration which establishes a framework for co-operation to enhance human development policies for the period 2016-17 with a geographical focus on Turkey, South Eastern Europe and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

Cooperation will build on established common priorities: i) Small Business Act assessments in South Eastern Europe and Turkey, Eastern Partnership and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean; ii) the social and economic inclusion of youth; iii) knowledge sharing on approaches to women and entrepreneurship, and iv) close cooperation on skills matching, employability and social inclusion in Turkey.

The Chair remarked the importance of the cooperation with the EBRD due to its relevance to the partner countries and the opportunity to bring synergy between different lines of EU support to give more leverage and impact on partner country reforms. He expressed his hope that the partner countries with the support of the two institutions will manage to achieve the objectives set in the dialogue with the EU.

The Governing Board adopted the Declaration of Intent.

8. Implementing rules concerning unpaid leave for temporary and contract staff of the European Union

Henrik FAUDEL (ETF) presented the draft Implementing Rules concerning unpaid leave. Such rules on human resources issues should be adopted by the ETF as is the case for other agencies. These rules allow for unpaid leave of up to one year, but if the unpaid leave is for longer than six months the ETF can fill in the post. Individuals on unpaid leave can return, but only if a position is available.

In response to a question from Karl WIECZOREK (Austria) on what happens if a person on unpaid leave expresses the intention to return and there is no position available, Henrik FAUDEL explained that they would have to wait for a position to become available.

Madlen SERBAN (ETF) briefly outlined the proposed Decision on rules for the secondment of national experts to the ETF, which had been included as an additional agenda item at the beginning of the meeting. Ms SERBAN outlined the important potential added value for ETF from seconded national experts, and reminded the Board that ETF had budgeted for a seconded expert to join ETF during 2016.

Upon invitation of the chair, the Governing Board adopted both the Implementing rules concerning unpaid leave for temporary and contract staff of the European Union as well as the Decision on rules for the secondment of national experts.

9. Preliminary findings of the ETF external evaluation

Thomas BENDER (DG EMPL) informed the Governing Board that following the public call for tender organised by the European Commission in July 2015, the contract for the external evaluation of the ETF was signed with ECORYS. Since then the first Inception Report had been received and showed good progress. A number of Governing Board members representing both the Commission and Member States have already taken part in the consultation process.

Andrew MCCOSHAN and Valentina PATRINI, the representatives of ECORYS presented the preliminary findings.

The objectives of the evaluation are as follows:

- To assess the achievement of the implementation of the Regulation, the results obtained by the ETF and its working methods in the light of its mandate, objectives and functions as defined in the Regulation;
- To assess the correspondence between work programmes, annual reports and the mandate of the ETF;
- To assess the continued relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, coherence, sustainability and added value of ETF interventions (Mid-term perspectives 2010-13 and 2014-17, Work Programmes 2011 to 2014);

- To review the existing ETF objectives/functions framework, proposing a new intervention logic clearly disentangling general, specific and operational objectives;
- To suggest a system for measuring the impact of the ETF's interventions in its partner countries in the context of EU development support and assistance;
- To assess the extent to which the recommendations made by the last external evaluation/other relevant evaluations have been put into practice;
- To provide recommendations to enable the ETF to face the challenges and strengthen its focus to contribute to VET for employability and structural reforms.

The methodology of the evaluation was presented with details given on the desk research, interviews, survey research, case studies and cost effectiveness analysis.

The evaluators shared the preliminary results of the survey that was launched in mid November and sent to more than 800 stakeholders. A total of 100 replies had already been received.

The preliminary findings included:

- A review of the existing ETF objectives/functions framework, proposing a new intervention logic clearly disentangling general, specific, operational objectives. The new intervention logic was distributed to the Governing Board members;
- On the specific objective of governance, systems and policy making, an increased quantity and quality of participation by social partners and civil society in policy-making processes at all levels was identified, as was more effective and efficient policy-making cycles and VET systems with better data collection and analysis, coordination of relevant bodies and funding mechanisms. In answer to the question as to what extent ETF activities contributed to the development of initial and continuing VET in a particular country, from 72 replies received 7% indicated that the ETF was the main driver for change and 64% believed that the ETF provided significant support;
- On the specific objective VET provision and quality assurance, the evaluators found evidence for an increased quantity and quality of work-based learning, improved teacher/trainer training and a greater use of quality assurance. In answer to the question as to what extent ETF activities contributed to the main developments of initial and continuing VET in the country, from 72 replies received 6% indicated that the ETF was the main driver for change and 53% believed that the ETF provided significant support;
- On the specific objective qualifications and qualifications systems, there is evidence that the ETF work on national qualifications frameworks in the partner countries is based on learning outcomes and the validation of prior learning. In answer to the question as to what extent ETF activities contributed to the development of initial and continuing VET in the country, from 72 replies received 6% indicated that the ETF was the main driver for change and 49% believed that the ETF provided significant support;
- On the specific objective entrepreneurial learning and enterprise skills, increased quantity and quality of entrepreneurial learning and teaching to develop enterprise skills (especially for youth, women and SME owners) and greater use of quality assurance were identified. In answer to the question as to what extent ETF activities contributed to the development of initial and continuing VET in the country, from 72 replies received 10% indicated that the ETF was the main driver for change and 29% believed that the ETF provided significant support;
- On the specific objective labour market information systems and skills for employability, the evaluators mentioned improved mechanisms for anticipation and matching of skills to labour

market needs (including at sectoral level), improved mechanisms to support young people's transition to work, improved migrant support measures. In answer to the question as to what extent ETF activities contributed to the main developments of initial and continuing VET in the country in the field from 72 replies received 7% indicated that the ETF was the main driver for change and 26% believe that the ETF provided significant support;

In answer to the question on how the quality of the ETF activities in the country could be assessed, 67% indicated them as being of high quality.

The Chair commented that the ETF should be pleased because there are very positive findings and he expressed hope that the final results will be the same. He also asked the evaluators to look for areas for improvement.

Dimitrios PSYLLOS (Greece) asked for details about the sample used in the evaluation. A total of 800 stakeholders were selected from contact data provided by the ETF, the European Commission, and the EU Delegations. The number covers the different categories of the stakeholders in a balanced way.

Micheline SCHEYS (Belgium) asked the evaluators for their opinion as to why the percentage for significant ETF support is higher in the case of governance than with the other objectives. The evaluators explained that governance affects several areas of VET systems but also that it is important to wait for the final results to have the explanations. They will investigate more on the results.

The Chair concluded by informing the Governing Board members that the final report will be presented and discussed in June 2016 and he hoped that it will remain positive and provide relevant recommendations.

10. Single programming document 2017-20

Madlen SERBAN and Peter GREENWOOD presented the document.

The Governing Board was informed that the 2017-20 programming document was prepared according to the guidelines and common programming template for all EU decentralised agencies. It is structured around three components: the multiannual policy context; the multiannual objectives and strategic areas of action for the period 2017-20; and, finally, the annual objectives and activities for 2017.

It is informed by a series of annexes required by the template which provide detailed mid-term and annual projections regarding ETF resources and performance management.

The first section sets out the EU internal policies related in particular to Education and Training 2020, the EU Employment Strategy, migration and the role of entrepreneurship in industrial development. It also surveys key external relations policies governing EU assistance for accession, neighbourhood, and development cooperation for Central Asia. The analysis also covers the changing needs and circumstances in partner countries largely informed by the Torino Process. It also introduces the international development policy context, and in particular the expectation that the Sustainable Development Agenda will play an increasing role in shaping human capital development in ETF partner countries.

The second section goes on to present the main dimensions according to which the ETF draws up the programming document.

As regards the geographical dimension, the ETF maintained the negative priorities agreed with the Board for 2016. This included :

- high priority to Enlargement countries and Eastern Partnership countries with Association Agreements (Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and countries with Association Agreements and an advanced cooperation status in the Neighbourhood South (Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia);
- medium priority to other Neighbourhood countries;
- low priority to Algeria, Israel, Russia
- low priority to Central Asia – only regional ETF projects
- No activities in Libya or Syria

ETF will provide support to EU assistance on demand and involve partner countries in the Torino Process on request.

The second dimension focuses on the ETF statutory functions: all ETF interventions in support of human capital development in partner countries are shaped by one or more of the functions defined in the founding regulation. These are:

- provision of support to the European Commission in the entire project and programming cycle as well as in policy dialogue and policy progress monitoring related to external assistance to the partner countries in the framework of EU external policies and assistance programmes;
- delivery of capacity building;
- provision of evidence-based policy analysis and policy advice;
- knowledge dissemination and networking, facilitating exchanges of information and experience in the international community and between partner countries.
- The third dimension is the thematic areas of intervention. For the period 2017-2020, ETF intends to focus on:
 - Effective policy making in VET for economic development and social cohesion.
 - Modernisation of VET for employability and competitiveness
 - Transition to work.

As regards the financial resources, overall, ETF resources are aligned with Commission Communication COM(2013) 519 final of 10.7.2013, reflecting a freeze in the EU contribution until 2018, followed by a 2% increase until 2020. As regards human resources, the ETF's planning confirms a gradual implementation of a 10% reduction in the establishment plan to reach a total of 86 posts in 2018.

As revenue, the ETF relies on the EU contribution together with the recovery from surplus from previous years. Other sources of revenue could be specific projects implemented through delegation agreements, but none is currently envisaged.

An outline of the background, objectives, geographical focus and main actions for operational activities in 2017 was made available.

Dimitrios PSYLLOS (Greece) asked for the issue of migration to be considered a horizontal issue, to be dealt with in all strategic projects and not only in four and five as mentioned in the presentation. He asked also about the lessons learnt on formal vocational schools and the growing importance of

informal and non-formal learning. In response, the ETF explained that its work on migration is related mainly to the circular legal migration having in mind that is important to make sure that people remain at home so it cannot become a horizontal issue. The ETF is seeking to move further from the focus on formal providers also towards more non-formal learning;

Lars MORTENSEN (Denmark) suggesting including a better reflection on the methods and mechanisms for implementation in the document, with indications as to how the ETF actually supports the partner countries. He recognised that is in the sole power of the partner country to implement the policy but it might be useful to see how the implementation of a policy is supported by the ETF. The ETF agreed that in the next Governing Board meetings the ETF will seek to present examples that illustrate our working methods.

Tarja RIIHIMÄKI (Finland) also raised the issue of working methods in the context of the interview she had with the external evaluators on the impact of the ETF work. She remarked that information was provided using the key performance indicators but asked for specific time at the next Governing Board meetings to reopen the discussion on the indicators. The ETF explained its use of country progress indicators that feed into the assessment process.

Peter VAN IJSSELMUIDEN (the Netherlands) drew attention to the issue of “stability” mentioned in the executive summary and suggested a reformulation to underline the fact that the programming exercise responds to the challenges of the EU neighbourhood.

The Chair concluded the discussions as follows:

- All the recommendations and observations would be taken into account;
- Implementation issues are very important and have to be well reflected in the programming phase;
- The issue of indicators raised during the discussion should be introduced in the updated document
- Stability issues should also be taken into account in the revised version of the document

12. Any other business

The Chair also reminded the Board members who have not yet provided their CV and declaration of commitment of interest to do so as soon as possible as the European Parliament asked for the publication of the Board members’ declarations of interests and curriculum vitae by 1 December 2015.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Governing Board will be held in Turin in June 2016.

Follow up actions:

- Revise the programming document 2017-20 following the recommendations of the members of the Board;
- The final report of the ETF external evaluation will be discussed at the Governing Board meeting in June 2016;
- The issue of the impact indicators at country level to be discussed in one of the next meetings of the Board.

ANNEX

11. Oral reports

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

Christophe MASSON (DG NEAR) presented the new policy frameworks in the Enlargement and Neighbourhood countries.

He referred to the Economic Reform Programmes (ERP) in the Enlargement region, with the first ERPs submitted in January 2015 based on the Pre-Accession Economic Programmes (PEP) and with a new focus on structural reforms to boost competitiveness.

Mirroring the European Semester, the overall purpose of the ERP is to strengthen macro-fiscal frameworks, enhance long-term growth and boost competitiveness. In this context, the ERPs will strengthen capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU (Copenhagen economic criteria).

An assessment of the ERPs was made by DG ECFIN and DG NEAR and the Joint Conclusions were adopted by ECOFIN Ministers on 12 May 2015. The ERPs are also expected to be adopted by the governments of the Western Balkans, discussed in sub-committees and updated in 2016.

The previous Employment and Social Reform Programmes (ESRP) which were managed by DG EMPL are now incorporated in the ERP for all countries. This means a stronger focus on employment and expands the scope of structural reform priorities to include social inclusion, poverty and equal opportunities. However, only a limited number of reform priorities are included with a strong focus on job creation.

Mr MASSON also stressed that the region has been seriously affected by the refugee crisis and the European Commission is looking to increase its cooperation with Enlargement countries, especially Turkey which is managing more than 2 million Syrian refugees.

As regards the European Neighbourhood Policy, on 18 November 2015, the European Commission presented the main lines of the review of the policy. Stronger partnerships with the neighbours is a key element. The review is based on five pillars: economic development and job creation, security sector and stabilisation, migration, cooperation on energy and cooperation with the neighbours of the neighbours. The principle of differentiation continues and the EU is investing in partnerships to create more opportunities for youth. The priorities will be discussed with the partner countries and the member states and then the impact on the work of the ETF may be assessed. At present pillar one: economic development and job creation, and three: migration are key to the ETF's work.

He presented the budget support programme and sector reform contracts for VET with a promise that at the next meeting in June a concrete case on cooperation between the ETF and an EU Delegation would be presented.

Jean-Paul HEERSCHAP (DG DEVCO) informed the Governing Board members that the ETF continued to provide significant support for the EU Delegations in the countries where DG DEVCO operates i.e. Central Asia. The ETF participated and contributed to the workshop organised by DG DEVCO for the EU Delegations on VET and education.

Mr Heerschap announced two new upcoming programmes:

- DG DEVCO, active in VET in about 25 (non-ETF) countries for a total value of about € 500 million, will make €10 million available to analyse VET and education systems in Africa and other parts of the world. DG DEVCO may build this analysis on the basis of the experience of the Torino

Process and framework. This analysis might be implemented by a Member State or a UN agency.

- DG DEVCO has reserved €1.8 billion for a Trust Fund addressing the root causes of migration, whereby VET is envisaged as one of the possible pathways to address these root causes.

Thomas BENDER (DG EMPL) informed the Governing Board about the latest developments in the area of employment focusing on the Enlargement countries. Other updates were included in the presentation distributed to the Governing Board prior to the meeting.

In 2016, the EU will continue to conduct the new annual process for economic governance with the enlargement countries. By January 2016 economic reform programmes (ERPs) will be submitted by each country to the Commission, covering macrofiscal policies and structural reforms in different policy areas, including employment and social policies. This covers human capital development with a specific focus on links to the labour market.

Following the Commission assessment, in May the Council will discuss the ERP assessment together with the enlargement countries and adopt joint conclusions, including guidance to the countries for the coming year.

The employment and social affairs platform was developed to assist the Western Balkan countries with employment and social policy reforms in their pre-accession process. It lasts for three years (2016-19) with a total budget of €3.45 million and an EU share of €3 million.

The project will be implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The RCC component aims to support the preparation and implementation of the Employment and Social Reform Programmes, enhance policy making capacity and strengthen public employment services. The ILO component focuses on enhancing the capacity of labour inspectorates and strengthening social dialogue at national and regional levels. The ETF will be a key partner in the project and will provide expertise to the platform activities.

The Chair thanked all the presenters and highlighted the importance of the work related to ERP's which is inspired by the EU Semester.

Micheline SCHEYS (Belgium) remarked on the quantity of work on skills development but stressed the importance of qualifications in this process.

Trends and developments at the ETF

Madlen SERBAN and Anastasia FETSI made a presentation on "Win-Win-Win Skills and Migration".

Two key issues have an impact on the ETF's work on migration: the transformation of VET systems in partner countries should take migration into account and the EU's interest in legal circular migration. Most qualified migrants do not choose Europe as a destination, choosing countries with closer linguistic and cultural links. For the partner countries migration has a big impact and policies should consider this as a loss.

The ETF has worked extensively in countries that have concluded Mobility Partnerships with the EU such as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan with Belarus and Lebanon in the pipeline.

The ETF focus on migration is on:

- Evidence for decision making;
- Adaptation of employment policies and VET systems for development and use of migrant skills;

- Structured legal circular migration management

The ETF presented its work in this area in the period 2007-12, when the focus was on understanding the link between skills and migration. Outputs of this work included a database, methodologies, reports, survey and statistics. The studies showed that the majority of migrants had low or middle level qualifications, and that employment perspectives and standard of living are the main reasons for migration. They also showed that migrants accumulated skills in the countries they migrated to but those who returned had difficulties in reintegrating.

Since 2013, the ETF focus has been on understanding what produces a win-win-win situation in migration for partner countries, the EU and migrants. This situation is a product of:

- Skills related policy measures to improve labour market integration
- Policy measures to enhance the skills matching of migrants

The results include a global inventory with a focus on the countries of origin and a collection of more than 300 migrant support measures from an employment and skills perspective.

In terms of lessons learnt, the involvement of employers, the attention given to qualifications and guidance and the involvement of local authorities are key. At the same time, investing in skills pays. Unfortunately, skills related policies and measures that improve labour market integration is marginal in migration management, largely donor driven, not integrated and with high operational costs.

Updates on the Luxembourg Presidency

Karin MEYER (Luxembourg) presented the outcomes of the Luxembourg Presidency.

The Council of Education, which following the tragic events in Paris on 13 November 2015, included a point for discussion on the need to prevent radicalisation by reinforcing social inclusion and preventing the marginalisation of young people.

On migration and refugees she thanked the ETF for preparing and presenting basic tools during a special meeting called by the Presidency on the issue.

The conclusions of the meeting of the directors general for VET will be published shortly on the website.

Updates on the upcoming Dutch Presidency

Mr Peter VAN IJSSELMUIDEN (the Netherlands) presented the objectives and main events to be organised under the Dutch Presidency, which will focus on innovation, contributing to growth and jobs and will involve citizens and societal actors. The policy emphasis will be on VET and higher education policies (modernisation, excellence, skills and employability).

The formal Education Councils will be organised on 24 February and 30 May 2016 and will cover the issue of skills and if possible, the EU Skills Agenda.

The meeting of the directors general for VET will be organised on 15-16 February in Amsterdam and will address the following topics: the European Skills Agenda, boosting VET mobility focusing on the mobility scoreboard, first results Erasmus+, additional efforts of member states; performance based funding for VET and the partnerships between education and training institutions and businesses (follow up to the Pact for Youth).

The meeting will be followed by a conference entitled 'Skills for a Lifetime - Towards a future proof VET', on 16-17 February 2016. The following themes will be tackled:

- Excellence in VET. Flexible solutions in a changing labour market.
- Facilitating careers in VET. Equipment for lifelong learning.
- Transnational mobility in VET (including mobility outside of the EU)